

Policy name	Alterations & Modifications
Policy date	August 2020
Authorisation	General Manager, Operations
Policy owner	National Manager, Maintenance Services
Policy type	Mission Australia Housing Operational Policy
Policy setting	

## 1 Purpose

### 1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This policy sets out the principles to be followed in Alterations & Modifications to properties managed by Mission Australia Housing (MAH). Our aim is to ensure a process that:

- Is fair and transparent.
- Provides new tenants with the information they need with regards to Alterations & Modifications, including their rights and responsibilities.
- Protects the assets managed by MAH; and
- Complies with the specific legal and contractual obligations placed upon MAH by government, funders, and other housing partners; and Complies with Local Government Planning and Building legislation, policy codes and standards and follows the Local Government Planning & Building process

### 1.2 Coverage

1.2.1 This document is a national policy and covers both Mission Australia Housing (MAH) and Mission Australia Housing Victoria (MAHV). All references to Mission Australia Housing, MAH and Housing include both MAH and MAHV unless specifically stated otherwise. Where state based variations exist in policies and procedures, these will be identified in the document.

1.2.2 This policy applies to all forms of housing provided by MAH including social, affordable, and transitional housing.

### 1.3 Information on procedures and other related policies

- 1.3.1 This policy focuses on why certain things need to be done. It is supported by procedures that provide more detail on what to do and the steps involved in managing alterations, modifications and property upgrades.
- 1.3.2 This policy is one of a number of interlinked policies that support MAH's delivery of housing services. To assist you, these are identified where relevant in this policy and the supporting procedures.

## 2 Scope

### 2.1 Parts of Mission Australia that this policy covers

- 2.1.1 This policy applies to MAH staff responsible for working with MAH clients, tenants and properties.

## 3 Definitions

- 3.1.1 Key terms used in this policy are defined in the following table.

Term	Definition
<b>Agent</b>	Any third party who carries out functions on behalf of MAH or a tenant of MAH. Agents include but are not limited to contractors, advocates, and other tenants.
<b>Alterations - Minor</b>	An alteration made to property elements requested and paid for by the Tenant. This may include hanging pictures, securing furniture or adding fly screens. Minor alterations, can be removed at the end of the lease.
<b>Alterations - Major</b>	An alteration made to property elements requested and paid for by the Tenant. It also includes upgrades to the property to improve the tenant's comfort, such as pergolas. Major alterations are a fixed change and will remain in place after the lease has ended.
<b>Condition report</b>	A report form that is used to detail the condition of a property at the start, during and at the end of a tenancy. Condition reports are used to gauge changes in the condition of a property during a tenancy.
<b>Modification</b>	A change or upgrade to property elements to allow a Tenant to live independently. This may include hand/grab rails, ramps, lever door handles.
<b>Occupational Therapist (OT)</b>	Occupational Therapists are training professionals that focus on enabling people to live satisfying and meaningful lives by helping them participate in the occupations they want to do, need to do, and are expected to do.

Term	Definition
<b>Tenant</b>	Under state-based residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation, a tenant is a person who has entered explicitly into a lease agreement. The term is used more broadly in this policy to refer to tenants and residents under rooming accommodation agreements, unless explicitly distinguished.

## 4 Policy

### 4.1 Guiding principles

- 4.1.1 Decisions are to be made in accordance with MAH's vision and strategic objectives.
- 4.1.2 Transparent processes enable the organisation to be accountable in all decisions made regarding property Alterations & Modifications.
- 4.1.3 The processes comply with relevant laws and procedures:
  - MAH fully complies with the jurisdictional requirements of the states and territories in which it operates.

### 4.2 Alterations

- 4.2.1 Tenants can request consent to make alterations to the property in which they live.
- 4.2.2 MAH will not unreasonably withhold consent for requests for the following alterations:
  - Securing furniture to a wall, other than a tiled wall, if it is necessary for the safe use of furniture
  - Fitting childproof latch to an exterior gate of a single dwelling
  - Inserting flyscreens on windows
  - Installing or replacing internal window coverings
  - Installing cleats or cord guides to secure blinds or curtain rods
  - Installing child safety gates inside the property
  - Installing window safety devices for child safety
  - Installing or replacing hooks, nails, or screws to hang pictures
  - Installing a carriage service for connecting a phone line or accessing the internet
  - Applying shatter resistant film to windows or glass doors.
- 4.2.3 Tenants must obtain written permission before work commences.
- 4.2.4 Tenants must arrange for the work to be completed by a qualified tradesman.

- 4.2.5 If the tenant causes any damage installing or removing a fixture, the tenant must repair the damage. For more information on tenant damages, see the **Responsive Repairs Policy** and **Managing Tenant Payments Procedure**.
- 4.2.6 Housing Officers can approve tenant request for alterations listed in 4.2.2. All other requests should be passed to the Asset Team for their review and approval.

#### 4.3 Modifications

- 4.3.1 Tenants can request Modifications to be made to the property to enable the property to meet their needs.
- 4.3.2 Modification decisions will be made in line with the organisations Business Plan and Strategic Asset Management Plan and budget.
- 4.3.3 When assessing property modification requirements, the organisation will consider the tenant's needs and how the organisation can best meet those needs.
- 4.3.4 Tenants will need to show Occupational Therapist recommendations and where possible, apply for NDIS funding for the modification.
- 4.3.5 MAH will ensure compliance with the relevant housing building codes and standards during the development and modification of MAH Housing properties.
- 4.3.6 MAH may decline modification requests that are extensive and or costly and where an alternative suitable property is available. In these instances MAH would support the tenant to relocate to the suitable property.

#### 4.4 Leasehold Properties

- 4.4.1 For Leasehold properties, MAH will require property title holder approval before consent can be provided for Alterations and Modifications.

#### 4.5 Information

- 4.5.1 The organisation will keep all records of tenant requests and the decision outcome on the tenant's file in the IT system.

#### 4.6 Decision Making

- 4.6.1 Tenants and other stakeholders who are not happy with a decision made about alterations, modifications and upgrades can appeal a decision as set out in the **Complaints & Appeals Policy**.

## 5 Responsibilities

#### 5.1 Housing staff, including Housing Officers and Client Service Officers, are responsible for:

- Receiving and approving requests from tenants for alterations
- Referring tenants for OT assessments and receiving OT reports

- Determining modification requirements
- Submitting documents to the Asset Team for modification approvals

**5.2 Asset staff are responsible for:**

- Approving requests for modifications in-line with delegations
- Providing advice/feedback to Housing if a modification request is refused
- Raising Work Orders for modifications
- Visiting and inspecting properties to ensure work is carried out to the agreed standard or above.

**5.3 Team Leaders/Regional Manager/Assets Manager are responsible for:**

- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff induction and training.
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to this policy and associated procedures.
- Escalating feedback about this policy to the policy owner and/or policy writer.

**5.4 The National Manager, Maintenance Services/National Manager, Maintenance Services are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that MAH complies with this policy and associated procedures.
- Recommending any changes to this policy and associated procedures.