

# Property Alterations and Disability Modifications Policy

## 1. Introduction

Wayss houses many renters with a disability or mobility impairments and is committed to ensuring the accommodation in which they are housed is appropriate for their needs. Wayss understands that a renter's needs can change over time and seeks to support residents with a disability or mobility need affecting their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, to live independently in their home and enjoy a good quality of life.

Wayss will manage requests from renters to make alterations or disability modifications to a property. Wayss will ensure that each application is responded to in a fair, transparent and systematic way that clearly explains options, choices and decision-making processes.

The *Office of Housing* is responsible for disability modifications to properties that are not owned by Wayss. In Head Lease properties, the approval of the property owner/agent will be required. In both of these cases, Wayss will contact the appropriate party to seek permission for the alteration or modification to be approved. All other Wayss owned properties are of the responsibility of Wayss.

Wayss is a Child Safe organisation and child safety is at the forefront of our program delivery. Our policies ensure that child safety is a primary part of everyday thinking and practice. All employees, contractors and volunteers have an obligation to ensure we keep children safe from harm and abuse.

We're committed to upholding the rights of all of our stakeholders and creating a workplace that fosters inclusion and diversity. We believe that by bringing our authentic selves to Wayss, we can contribute to building strong teams, cultivating leaders, and creating an organisation that is well-suited for every individual. It's essential to us that we establish an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can be themselves and feel safe, valued and respected. Regardless of whether you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or LGBTIQ member, are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, or a person living with a disability, as an individual associating with Wayss, you have the right to participate and engage in an environment that is free from discrimination and bias, and we strive to create a workplace that honours that commitment.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all renters in social housing and rooming houses managed or owned by Wayss.

## 3. Policy Statement

### 3.1. Policy Principles

These principles guide the overall management of disability modifications. This standardised approach ensures the organisation can apply a national standard, including compliance with regulations, industry standards, contractual obligations, legislation and organisational policies and procedures.

Principles for managing non-standard fixtures include, but are not limited to:

- assessment and evidence of needs
- determination of appropriate adaptations
- Wayss Asset Standards Guidelines applied

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The organisation uses this policy as a governing document to support the process of handling non-standard fixtures effectively and efficiently and with clear communication, ensuring the delivery of safe, clean and habitable properties to future renters.

### 3.2. Disability Modifications

Wayss acknowledges that the needs of renters (and/or other household members) may change due to illness, injury, age or disability and as a result, changes to the structure or layout of the home are necessary in order to provide safe passage and movement around their home.

Minor modification are changes that do not affect the structure of the property. Some examples include (but are not limited to):

- handrails and grab rails
- lever taps
- handheld shower heads
- minor ramps

### 3.3. Assessment and Evidence of Need

Renters (or a registered householder) can make requests for adaptations and modifications to better meet their needs. Wayss will formally assess all requests for disability modifications for properties owned by Wayss, and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) will conduct a similar process for all departmental housing stock. Requests should be lodged through their Support Worker using the DFFH *Application for Special Accommodation Requirements* form and forwarded to Wayss Property Services team who will then submit this to DFFH.

Property Services Workers can assist renters to make requests where appropriate. The renter will need to demonstrate that the request is for mobility, health or safety reasons and obtain the relevant supporting documentation.

Requests made on the standard form must be accompanied by an Occupational Therapist's (OT) report and/or a letter from the renter's general practitioner, specialist, or other healthcare professional. In some cases, minor requests such as grab rails may be considered without an OT's report or supporting documentation, at Wayss' discretion.

Completed requests will be assessed by Wayss Property Services team and the renter's support worker. As part of the assessment, Property Services Workers may need to inspect the property to assess the building for the modifications requested.

Should a renter or registered householder wish to install adaptations, either permanent or temporary in nature, for facilitating independent living in their home, Wayss will not unreasonably deny such a request.

### 3.4. Determination of Appropriate Adaptions

For properties owned by Wayss, the Property Services Worker will make a recommendation for appropriate adaptations based on:

- the circumstances of and the evidence supplied by the renter and/or householder.
- a sound knowledge of building regulations and asset maintenance.
- the total cost of the required upgrade.
- whether Wayss has authority to make modifications to the property, dependant on the contract under which the property is managed.

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- the cost-effectiveness of the upgrade in relation to the economic life of the dwelling.
- consultation with the Property Services Worker, renter and/or health care professional.
- alternative strategies, including re-housing the renter in more appropriate housing.
- the likelihood of further adaptations or modifications being needed by the renter in the near future.

A response will be provided to the renter in writing within the timeframes stipulated in DFFH policies and procedures. If external assessment is required for the modification, we will ensure the renter is kept informed of progress.

### 4. Rights and Responsibilities

#### 4.1. Renter Rights

All renters have the right to request alterations or modifications be made to the property they are renting.

#### 4.2. Property Alterations

Renters should supply all necessary information in their application to make alterations.

Once the request is approved, the renter is responsible for

- paying for the costs of the alteration
- repairing and maintaining the alterations
- paying for any damage caused by the alteration
- paying for any council permits
- paying for and restoring the alteration to its original condition at the end of the tenancy

Prior consent is required from DFFH for Director Owned properties or the Rental Provider for Head Lease properties.

Renters may not be responsible for minor modifications required for them to live independently in the property (see disability modifications section).

### 5. Complaints and Appeals

Wayss welcomes its renters to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a renter wishes to provide feedback to Wayss and/or believes a decision made by Wayss is incorrect, the first step is to request that the complaint be reviewed, or that the decision be reconsidered by Wayss as per our **Client Feedback and Complaints Policy**.

### 6. Collection Statement

All personal information Wayss collects will be done in accordance with our **Client Privacy Policy**.

### 7. Review

Wayss will review this policy every three years or sooner if there are legislative changes, or Wayss receives feedback or complaints about service delivery that may impact on this policy.

## 8. Related Resources

### 8.1. Legislation

*Housing Act 1983 (Vic)*

*Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*

*Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*

*Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)*

*Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018 (Vic)*

*Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 (Vic)*

### 8.2. Wayss Related Policies and Documents

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

Client Privacy Policy

Maintenance, Repairs and Renter Recharge Policy

## 9. Change History

Date	Version	Summary of changes	Approver
31/03/2023	1.0	Initial Draft	General Manager, Homelessness and Housing
24/04/2023	1.0	Draft Approved	CEO