



## **Housing Choices South Australia**

### **Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability Policy**

#### **1 Intent**

Housing Choices SA (HCSA) is committed to providing quality service delivery to all its customers. The Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability Policy sets out the basis upon which HCSA provides appropriate modifications to its housing stock (where that housing is suitable for modification) for customers with disabilities.

HCSA will endeavour to provide modifications that are deemed to be essential subject to the conditions outlined in this policy. These modifications will be maintained by HCSA (with exception of the replacement of light globes).

#### **2 Context**

HCSA recognises that modifications may need to be made to a rental housing property to meet the needs of a customer with a disability. Modifications that are deemed essential by HCSA will be provided within financial and budgetary constraints.

The Housing Transfer Management Deed between SAHT and HCSA, states that (variation to Schedule 6, clause 5.1.1):

##### **Disability Modifications**

- The CHP must develop a disability modification policy that is consistent with the SAHT *Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability Policy*.
- The CHP is responsible for financing disability modifications approved in accordance with the above policy.

#### **3 Risk**

This policy mitigates the risk in non-conformance with relevant legislation for persons with a disability. It reflects HCSA's customer service and access & equity principles by providing customers with independent living conditions.

#### **4 Reference Documents**

##### **4.1 Directive Documents**

- Conditions of Tenancy
- Australian Standards AS 1428.1
- Building Code Australia (BCA)
- Development Act (Building Rules) (SA) 199

##### **4.2 Supporting Documents**

- Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability Procedure (MNT040)
- Housing Modifications Application Form

- Housing Modifications Special Needs Assessment Form 4.3 Related Documents and Resources
- Allocations and Vacancy Management Policy
- Customer Debt Management Policy Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability
- Maintenance Policy (Cost of Maintenance Party Responsible)
- Maintenance Accommodation Standards
- Provision of Heating in Dwellings Policy
- Relocation Policy
- Transfer Policy
- Water Usage Policy

## **5 Scope**

This policy applies to all customers with a disability.

## **6 Definitions and Terminology**

- “accessible” means that a “person with a disability” is able to enter and exit at least the front and rear doors of the dwelling safely and live in the dwelling without obstruction and with enhanced independence and increased mobility and circulation around the home.
- “balustrade” is a structure which assists continuous movement and safety provided at the open side of stairs, landings, balconies and the like where the distance of fall is greater than 700mm. A balustrade is a requirement of the Development Act (Building Rules) (SA) 1993 and must be designed to comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and/or the South Australian Housing Code. A structural handrail designed in accordance with the BCA must be provided along a least one side of a stairway (see also handrails).
- “climate control appliance” is one that provides both heating and cooling, such as a reverse cycle air conditioning unit.
- “desirable” means that the modification is not essential, but will improve the quality of life.
- “DCSI” is the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.
- “dwelling” can be referred to as dwellings; property or premises that are owned by the Housing Trust.
- “electric mobility aid” is a device powered by a rechargeable battery and may include wheelchairs, motorised scooters (three or four wheeled vehicle with a steering mechanism mounted in front of the driver) or other similar devices.
- “essential” means that without the housing modification the person would be unable to access the dwelling and utilise the facilities within the home or their independence may be compromised requiring additional services.

- “grab rail” is a rail added to assist a person to stand from the sitting position such as by a bath or toilet, or to steady/assist them as they step over an up stand such as the side of a bath or to step up a single or double step. The grab rails are to be designed and fixed in accordance with Australian Standards AS1428.1).
- “handrail” (as applicable to modified access), is a rail along the side of a stair, ramp or landing that is designed to assist people with mobility difficulties. Handrails must meet the requirements of the Building Code Australia (BCA) and be designed and fixed in accordance with Australian Standard (AS1428.1) (see also “balustrade”).
- “health professional” means a person who is recognised in the area of access and disability issues and/or who is currently registered with their professional registration board (e.g. Physiotherapist, General Practitioner or Occupational Therapist (OT)).
- “heating appliance” is defined as a heater which is fixed (not portable), is either gas or electric, and with sufficient capacity (i.e. heat output) to heat the living room as determined by HCSA.
- “housing modification” is a structural alteration (e.g. widening doorways, changes to wet areas) or an item affixed to the property (e.g. handrails, lever taps) or treatment to floors or painting. Housing Modifications for Persons with a Disability Page 3 of 9 For Official Use Only – The information printed in this document is only accurate as of the displayed print date 6-05-2015 2:28:45 PM. The South Australian Department for Communities and Social Inclusion does not accept any liability for misinformation, injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this print copy. To avoid risk, please refer to the most up-to-date version on the DCSI intranet.
- “Housing Trust” is the South Australian Housing Trust (property titles are held by the Housing Trust).
- “minor modifications (level 1)” is any of the modification(s) where a health professional is not required (e.g. clothes line, grab rail, lever door handles, lever taps, paving, re-new toilet pan, sensor light, reverse a door, install a half step etc).
- “major modifications (level 2)” is any modification(s) where a health professional is required (e.g. handrails, widening doorways, ramps, toilet / bathroom / kitchen modifications, bath removals).
- “person with a disability” is any person with an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical functional impairment that is permanent or likely to be permanent and can be episodic, regardless of causality (e.g. injury, chronic health, congenital, age related) which impacts on the housing needs of that person including building design, amenity, proximity to support services and management of the tenancy.
- “tenant” is the tenant of the dwelling, but may not be the “person with the disability”
- “wet areas” mean bathrooms, toilets and laundries

## 7 Policy Detail

### 7.1 Eligibility



To be eligible to apply for housing modifications under this policy, a person must:

- Have an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical functional impairment that is permanent or likely to be permanent and can be episodic, regardless of causality (eg injury, chronic health, congenital, age related) which impacts on the housing needs of that person including building design, amenity, proximity to support services and management of the tenancy;
- Be a tenant or a member of the tenant's household who is approved by HCSA to reside in the Housing Trust dwelling; and,
- Be a resident of South Australia.

#### 7.1.1 New applications for allocation

Prior to offering a dwelling to an applicant, the dwelling must be assessed by the Maintenance Inspector to determine if it is suitable for persons with disabilities and/or suitable for modifications, refer to 7.1.

#### 7.2 Applications

All applications for housing modifications must be made in writing and must be verified by a health professional who is familiar with the person's condition or disability. The applicant or proxy must complete the Application for Housing Modifications Form.

#### 7.3 Needs Assessment

HCSA, Maintenance Operations will assess the need to provide the proposed housing modifications. The modifications must be essential. This means that there is no viable alternative. Without the housing modification, the person would be unable to access and utilise the home, or their independence is compromised, resulting in being admitted to a hospital, residential service or made homeless, or increasing home based services. In the case of requests from eligible applicants involving major modifications (level 2), a special needs assessment must be undertaken by an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or other appropriate agency such as Domiciliary Care, Disability Services, Regional Country Health Services (if the person is eligible for services from that agency).

Where a special needs assessment is required under this policy, the cost of the assessment will be borne by HCSA, Maintenance Operations UNLESS the person with a disability is EITHER:

- Eligible for services from another agency such as Domiciliary Care, Disability Services, Regional Country Health Services (in which case, the agency responsible will carry out the assessment at their own cost); OR
- If residing in a country location, in these instances the cost of the assessment will be borne by Regional Country Health Services.
- Entitled to compensation intended to cover future housing needs (in which case the cost of the assessment will be borne by the insurer or the person with the disability if payment of compensation has already been made).

#### 7.4 Provision of housing modifications

##### Provision

Where the person with the disability is eligible to receive housing modifications and the modifications are determined as essential, the modifications will be provided subject to the conditions outlined in Sections 7.5 to 7.9 of this policy.

If the person with a disability is under shared care (i.e. foster care, separated parents) and is cared for or resides in two or more Housing Trust dwellings, only one dwelling will be modified. Consideration will be given to portable equipment to solve identified needs.

##### Cost

The person with the disability will not be required to contribute any payment for work carried out to modify their Housing Trust home in accordance with this policy EXCEPT where a compensation payment is anticipated and part of that payment will have funds made available specifically for changed or future accommodation needs OR where security items are requested (refer 7.7).

Where the person with the disability is entitled to compensation (through WorkCover, Compulsory Third Party or Public Liability Claim, insurance or other similar payment for a disability) intended to cover future housing needs, modifications will be carried out to the extent that will assist independent living provided that the person agrees to repay HCSA the full cost of the modifications.

#### 7.5 External modifications

##### Drying areas and clothes lines

Drying areas and clothes lines will be supplied where they are deemed essential and will provide enhanced independence. Consideration must be given to other people living in the home environment who will also be using the facilities.

##### Electric mobility aid

Individual assessments of each request for the provision of shelter for electric mobility aids (i.e. scooters) will be undertaken providing the property already has modifications to cater for an existing tenant or resident with a disability or mobility condition, or the tenant is eligible for modifications. The assessment will involve an inspection of the property by HCSA, in consultation with an Occupational Therapist, to identify the most economical option for providing shelter for the scooter.

Options may include but are not restricted to:

- Provision of access to the interior of the dwelling (i.e. laundry) to enable overnight storage and charging of the scooter battery;
- Partial enclosure of front porch areas (or a secure waterproof area), installation of an external power point and the provision of a ramp to access the porch (if required);

- Construction of a shed in the rear yard of a property only as a last resort (largely due to budget implications as this option would require a concrete slab, and purchase and construction of a shed).

In some instances it will not be possible to provide shelter for an electric mobility aid (scooter). This may include some cottage flats where there are numerous steps or insufficient porch or private yard area to enable the construction of a shelter or enclosure (refer section 7.9).

#### External lighting

External lighting (sensor) will be installed where it is deemed essential. The extent and standard of lighting will be specified by HCSA.

#### Fencing

New fencing and/or gates will not be supplied under this policy unless HCSA deems it essential to do so to prevent or minimise the likelihood of a member of the household (and particularly a child) with a disability from leaving the property unsupervised and in doing so placing themselves at genuine risk of injury or harm. Where encumbrances restrict the installation of a fence any Acts or Regulations take precedence.

#### Handrails (access and egress)

Handrails will only be provided to the main front door, main rear door and one other access point where appropriate.

#### Ramps

Where the person with a disability is unable to independently use the existing steps, or manage with the aid of a handrail, ramps for two access / egress points with the following provisos will apply:

- Where a person is unable to mobilise a wheelchair, HCSA will only provide one access point. This will be done in consultation with the OT.
- Ramps will not be provided where the floor height exceeds 1,000mm (based on appearance and the requirement for full balustrades as per Australian Standards). Where the floor height exceeds 1,000 mm, consideration must be given to relocating the tenant.
- Where the sum of floor heights to the main front and rear door exceeds 1,500mm, only one (1:14) ramp will be provided to the egress of least height, and where there is sufficient space to install the ramp. An emergency egress ramp of (1:8) may be provided to the egress of greater height, in addition to a landing and adequate stairs.
- Concrete ramps will be provided to a maximum height of 600mm (based on the maximum height of a single run ramp of 1:14). For ramps above this height, consideration must be given to the use of alternative materials (eg timber). Any timber ramp will be maintained by HCSA.

#### Renal dialysis machines



All necessary fittings and fixtures will be supplied for the installation of renal dialysis machines.

#### Skylights

Where deemed essential, skylights will be provided. The extent of modification will be subject to the feasibility of installation.

#### Water consumption

Where a household is experiencing high water usage due to the person with a disability, nonstandard taps will be provided where deemed essential. In cases of exceptionally high water usage due to the person with a disability, tenant may be referred to other government agencies (eg. Family and Youth Services) for advice and assistance and, if determined appropriate by an inter-agency group, may extend the excess water allowance for the household (refer to the Protocol for Tenants with Special Needs (Disability) under the Water Usage Policy). Excess water allowance extensions will be subject to annual review.

#### Water temperature regulation

Water temperature regulation devices (over and above regulators fitted to the water heater during manufacture) may be installed in dwellings if they are deemed to be essential. The device may be installed so as to be online to one area of the home or to all areas, depending on the level of need.

### 7.6 Internal modifications

#### Bathrooms

Where the person with the disability is unable to use the existing bathing facilities, bathrooms will be modified where all other options (e.g. bath boards, lower baths, installing a step(s), and shower alcove) have been investigated and it is determined that none of the options is a viable alternative.

#### Bedrooms

Additional bedrooms will not be constructed, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- The nature of the disability means that sharing a room is unacceptable or inappropriate;
- Household occupants cannot use a portable sleepout or other transportable structure;
- Structural modifications within the home assists the household's living arrangements;
- Transfer will result in severe dislocation from supports;
- The provision of additional rooms is consistent with the future planning intent of the property.

#### Flashing doorbells

An appropriate flashing doorbell will be installed in newly constructed or modified dwellings. Persons with a hearing loss greater than or equal to 90dB will result in an appropriate device being installed. Maximum of two (2) flashing lights will be installed.

### Heating / cooling

Installation of heating appliances is restricted to all tenancies in designated areas as outlined in the Provision of Heating in Dwellings Policy. Installation of climate control appliances is restricted to tenancies, irrespective of location, where at least one household member has a particular disability involving a low tolerance to temperature change that can become life threatening. In such cases, climate control appliance will not be provided by HCSA. The decision to provide the appliance rests with Disability Services. Refer to Provision of Heating in Dwellings Policy.

Where heating/cooling is provided through another funded program HCSA may assist with installation at the time of other modifications taking place.

### Internal lighting and switches

HCSA may install special light fittings and switches for people with visual impairment, in doing so HCSA will consider the recommendations of Health Professionals / Occupational Therapists and other appropriate advisers in relation to the positioning and type of internal light fittings.

### Internal painting

Where it is deemed essential architraves and doors shall be painted in colours with a minimum 30% contrast to provide people with visual impairment with the ability to move about the dwelling with ease.

### Kitchens

Kitchens may be lowered to suit wheelchair access of persons suffering from achondroplasia (dwarfism). NOTE: Complete kitchens will not be raised. Thicker bench tops may be utilised to modify a section of bench cupboard where deemed essential. Where a tenant cannot access lower cupboards, installation of an extra pantry cupboard or an extra overhead cupboard is recommended. Installation of "lazy-susans", pullout shelves, hanging brackets or down lights are not allowed.

### Kitchen appliances

The modification of electrical appliance is not allowed under this Policy.

### Laundry

Laundry modifications will be supplied where deemed essential. Consideration must be given to other people living in the home environment who are able to assist with laundry tasks and to people's independence and safety.

### Modified smoke alarms

An appropriate smoke alarm system will be installed in newly constructed or modified dwellings in line with State Government Legislation. The system will be specific to the person's requirements. It is the person's responsibility to provide HCSA with appropriate advice or details from a health professional. A Vibralarm will be installed where hearing loss is greater than or equal to 90dB.

#### Remote door-opening device

This device will only be provided in cases of Quadriplegia or where a particular disability results in the same loss of mobility equivalent to Quadriplegia.

#### Steps / stairs

Clear markers on internal steps and stairs including common stairwells will be provided where deemed essential. In external environments, appropriate marking will be provided for people with visual impairment in line with the Australian Standards.

#### Toilets

Wherever possible, the dwelling will be modified to enable the person with the disability to access the existing toilet. This may involve major modifications to the wet area to create sufficient space for wheelchair access (subject to future planning intent considerations). If the dwelling cannot be modified to provide access to the toilet or the property will not be retained in the long term, the household will be relocated to suitable alternative accommodation that can be modified as a matter of urgency (i.e. Category 1 Transfer).

Where, as part of their assessment, an occupational therapist or physiotherapist recommends the need for an additional toilet, consideration will be given to the request subject to:

- The extent of the disability being such that the need for an additional toilet is “essential” for the other household members, and the need cannot be met through the provision of appropriate equipment; and
- The installation of the additional toilet being viable in terms of the available space within the dwelling and access to the existing sewer services.

#### 7.7 Other modifications

##### Security items

Where security items are requested, the Application for Housing Modifications Form must be accompanied by a signed declaration from the tenant acknowledging the repayment arrangements and egress issues. Structural alterations HCSA will endeavour to provide structural alterations to areas where others have supplied equipment. In these circumstances HCSA will, where possible, provide suitable strengthening modifications for the effective utilisation of the equipment.

#### 7.8 Exclusions

##### Excluded modifications

The following modifications will not be provided:

- Additional Mirrors
- Bath (removal on raft slabs or upper floors and WUF)
- Blinds (internal and external)



- Carports / garages
- Change tables
- Chair lifts
- Clothes dryer
- Covered walkways
- Curtains
- Disability aids
- Double window glazing and/or safety window glazing
- Establishment of gardens
- Fixed shower seat
- Floor coverings (installation or removal)
- Garden – establishment of garden – maintenance
- Installation of baths, hip baths or spa baths
- Installation of dishwashers
- Installation of R/W tanks and taps
- Installation of shower screens
- Light switches (two way) and/or light dimmers
- Lazy susan
- Microwaves ovens
- New fences and/or gates
- Pergola, vergola
- Pet doors
- Polished floors
- Pull out shelves and wire baskets
- Range hoods
- Redecoration (Note: Minimal redecoration may be provided in order to complete a specific modification)
- Remote control garage doors
- Safety devices

- Security items
- Shelving / hooks
- Solar hot water
- Stable doors
- Swimming pools
- Toilet raiser

#### 7.9 Relocation / transfer

##### HCSA initiated transfer

Where HCSA decides that modifications to a particular dwelling are impractical (eg: structure of house, slope of site) or the future intent of the property impacts on the extent of modifications, HCSA will relocate the person to more suitable accommodation.

In line with the future intent of the property, the option to transfer the tenant should be considered, if the dwelling is to be redeveloped in less than ten (10) years, and the estimated cost of modifications is not consistent with the current Maintenance Expenditure guidelines.

For HCSA initiated relocation transfers, HCSA pays for electricity and gas connection fees, mail redirection and the reasonable removal expenses for tenants (Cost category 72), and also pays for telephone reconnection fees and in specific circumstances reasonable compensation for the tenant's improvements to the dwelling and the packing and unpacking of household items.

##### Tenant initiated transfer

A tenant already living in modified accommodation may apply for a transfer. The request will be assessed in accordance with the Transfer Policy. The provisions of the Relocation Policy do not apply to tenant initiated transfers.

##### Tenant supports

Where necessary, and with the person/tenant's consent, HCSA will inform the appropriate support agencies that the person/tenant is being transferred.

#### 7.10 Modifications by tenant / person with a disability

**Modifications** In accordance with the Conditions of Tenancy, a tenant /person with a disability caused by age, injury, disease or any other medical condition, may make certain alterations and additions to the premises as he/she may reasonably require to assist him/her in safe and comfortable occupation of the premises.

In these cases, the tenant need not obtain prior written permission under Conditions of Tenancy Clause 7(h) but the tenant must obtain any approval required by law for any such work and, where any work is required by law to be carried out by a registered or licensed



person, must ensure that the work is carried out by a person holding the required registration or license. (refer clause The Trust Agrees 3(c) of the Conditions of Tenancy).

Where the tenant / person with a disability carry out any modifications to the dwelling, he/she will be responsible for the cost of those modifications (see also section 7.9).