

Alterations and Modifications Policy

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Policy owner: Director Asset Management

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all requests for Alteration and Modifications are assessed and delivered in accordance with legislative and Unison standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all requests for alteration and modification raised by Unison staff, tenants or their advocate. This policy applies to tenants who live in a Unison owned or managed property, including DHHS General Lease properties. This policy does not apply where the tenancy is provided through our homelessness services (e.g. Crisis Accommodation or Head-lease program), THM (Transitional Accommodation), DHHS (Public Housing), Housing SA (Uno Apartments), UPC (Private Rental) or where requests are managed by another party through other commercial agreements.

Principles

Unison tenants can make requests for alterations and modifications to their Place Manager. Requests can be made directly or through a nominated agent or advocate (e.g. support worker or family member). Unison will consult with the tenant, or their nominated agent, to adequately assess requests and will consider all requests in the context of the following:

- Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) requirements
- Conditions and standards defined by relevant authorities (e.g. Local and State Government Departments and Authorities)
- Tenant's acceptance of responsibility and conditions
- Cost and extent of the works required
- Future use of the property

Where alterations require third party approvals (e.g. Building Permit, authorisation from building owner), Unison will only provide approval after considering the requirements for and obtaining relevant approvals.

Tenants will be required to bear the cost of works for all Alterations and Modifications, unless otherwise agreed by Unison. A payment plan or contribution may be provided by Unison in some cases, such as where a modification is expensive.

Essential Alterations and Modifications

Essential works are defined as works that will provide a significant improvement to how the tenant lives in the unit and are typically raised following assessment by an occupational therapist or support worker. Examples include installation of support rails or mobility aids.

Non-Essential Alterations and Modifications

Non-Essential works are defined as adding limited improvement to how the tenant lives in the unit. Requests do not require supporting documentation and can be raised by anyone. Examples include flooring upgrades, repainting, and cabinetry modifications. Non-Essential works require full payment by the tenant prior to works commencing.

Application

Responsibilities and Conditions

An alteration to a property, fixture or fitting without written permission breaches the RTA and action can be taken in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to request that the tenant remove the alteration, repair any goods damaged by the removal of the alteration or to terminate the tenancy.

Tenants must accept the following conditions:

1. Tenants must not, without Unison's consent:
 - a. Install any fixtures on the rented premises
 - b. Make any alteration, renovation or addition to the rented premises.
2. Submit a completed [Request for Modifications Form](#) for approval
3. Submit a completed [Tenant Modifications & Fixtures Request Form](#)
4. Works will only be delivered by an approved contractor provided by Unison
5. Any modification/alteration to fixture or fittings, at the end of the lease, becomes the property of Unison.
6. Modifications/alterations must **not** impact on the following:
 - a. Current design of property (internal and external)
 - b. Entry and exits
 - c. Adjoining neighbours
 - d. Asset standard
 - e. Structural integrity
 - f. Property Compliance
7. Request will be declined when the modification/alteration:
 - a. Cannot be maintained or removed easily
 - b. Involves major internal or external changes to the existing property
 - c. Is prohibited under any law or fails to comply with any caveats or covenants



Legislation and Compliance

Unison and tenants must comply with their rights and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

If a tenant disagrees with a decision Unison has made, they should first discuss their concerns with their Place Manager. The next step, if the tenant is still of the opinion that the decision was unreasonable, is to refer the matter to the place managers Manager for review and if the matter is still not resolved to the tenants satisfaction, have the matter heard by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Glossary

RTA – Residential Tenancies Act (1997)

VCAT - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years as delegated by the responsible Director.