

# PROPERTY MODIFICATIONS

## Policy Statement

Eastcoast Housing is committed to ensuring properties are fit for purpose and consistent with renter needs.

In allocating Eastcoast Housing will consider property location, applicant's preference for area, property type and the current and future health needs of applicants

To this end prior to housing someone an assessment should be made by the Housing Workers of future anticipated needs ie. If a person presents with a degenerative condition that today they are able to manage steps, however it can reasonably be anticipated that within a period of time their condition will degenerate further, rendering a property with steps as unsuitable then this allocation would be considered unsuitable and another option should be considered.

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## 1. Minor Modifications

A renter may request maintenance works that will improve the access and/or amenities of their property for a disabled member of their household. These works are generally requested because the existing housing presents a health and/or safety concern for the household member with special needs.

A request for disability modifications must be accompanied by support documentation from a health care professional such as an Occupational Therapist (eg. Medical Assessment Form). Request the renter provide one and refer them to the nearest Health Care Centre if necessary.

The documentation must confirm the need and urgency for the modifications, and detail the type of modifications required. Where the Health and Safety of renters or household members are placed at risk, works are to be completed as urgent works.

***Note: Where the health and safety of the renters or household members are placed at a serious risk, works are completed as urgent works.***

If the modifications are going to be costly and require technical expertise or consideration of alternative accommodation options, arrange for a property inspection. Prepare a report to the Managing Director requesting either the works be completed as soon as possible, or further technical advice sought regarding suitable upgrade or other options. If the works do not require technical specification, a maintenance request is completed as per responsive maintenance.

These modifications may include, but not limited to:

- Handrails
- Lever type taps and handrails
- Thermostatically controlled mixing valves
- Hand held shower sets
- Minor entry ramps (3 steps or less)
- Slip resistant flooring
- Visual alarm systems for hearing impaired renters

## 2. Full/Major Modifications

Major/full modifications such as bathroom upgrades, major access works or specialised works require a structural permit or certification must be referred to the Managing Director for approval.

The suitability of the existing property for full/major modifications must be assessed before such modifications are undertaken.

When making a decision regarding the viability of any property as suitable to designate and therefore undertake a major upgrade to meet the needs of clients with disabilities, Eastcoast Housing considers the following along with the individual needs of the particular current or prospective renter:

- Access to the property, our standard ensures that the property must have easy level access from the street. This access must suit non-motorised wheelchair access and the frail aged. Driveways must not be inclined and must be suitable for the range of clients with disabilities and the elderly.
- Distance and gradient from local facilities such as Post Office, local shops to services. The property must be located within a reasonable distance from local facilities etc. The property should not be located downhill or uphill from these facilities and must be able to be traversed in a non-motorised wheelchair.
- The previous use and designation of the property. Has the prior need for this type of accommodation reduced? What are the likely future needs in the area the property is located. Wait list assessment will need to be considered.

Eastcoast Housing recognises individual renter's special needs and gives a commitment to consider these needs when considering applications for housing with us. However, the decision rests with Eastcoast Housing whether or not to proceed with full/major modifications and we may at times determine that this is not possible. In these instances Eastcoast Housing workers will work with the renter to make referrals and assist the renter in considering other more appropriate housing options.

Accordingly we are also eager to participate in a coordinated approach to renter's rehabilitation and accommodation needs and therefore will request contact details regarding renter's Case Managers and support providers.

## 3. Other modifications

In recent years renter and stakeholder expectations have escalated. Increasingly we are getting demands for major disability modifications, installation of air conditioners and other non-standard items such as NBN, digital TV, alternate fuels, solar energy.

Recently Eastcoast has considered a strategy for managing these increasing expectations. Whilst Eastcoast is not against providing for these increasing demands, consideration must be given to the costs associated with these demands and whether or not they reasonably could be expected to be provided.

Generally Eastcoast Housing does not supply cooling appliances to our properties. Renters are encouraged to use portable appliances. However, at times renters have installed split systems without permission which they must then maintain themselves.

***Note: Documentation in Property File (Chintaro) where it is noted that a renter has undertaken unapproved modifications to the property. Advise renter they must restore property upon vacating to original condition.***

Eastcoast will consider the installation of a split system if there is no other alternative available for heating, in which case the appliance is maintained by Eastcoast Housing.

Some renters are approaching their medical practitioners asking for a letter in support of the installation of cooling on medical grounds. In the first instance, Eastcoast will encourage the use of portable appliances.

If there is the expectation that Eastcoast supply and install air conditioning on medical grounds the veracity of this request must be assessed. Discussion with the doctor must confirm the medical need and why this cannot be satisfied with a portable appliance.

Eastcoast can also seek, from the doctor or medical practitioner, a three monthly report detailing the improvement to the renter's health after installation, if approved by the Asset Management Team. If the medical practitioner is unprepared to provide this then the installation, at Eastcoast's expense, will **not** proceed.