

Tenant Upgrade Policy

Purpose

This policy covers how Foundation Housing Ltd (FHL) responds to requests from tenants to undertake alterations to their properties, where:

- The tenant will be carrying out the work themselves or organising for the works to be undertaken by others; and
- The tenant will pay for the full cost of the works.

This policy also covers considerations regarding tenant requests for FHL to fund modifications. All requests for modifications are to be made in writing via Tenant Improvement Request Form or Form 26 – Minor modification request form.

Tenant Modifications

FHL recognises that tenants may want to make alterations to their property. Tenants must seek approval from FHL before initiating any alterations.

Criteria for approval:

- all works must be completed to a tradesman-like manner;
- where tenants are replacing existing services, the quality of materials used must be at least consistent with existing;
- the tenant must prove that they are able to meet all legal requirements in relation to the works, e.g. the use of licensed tradespeople where required or gaining approval from the local council;
- documented proof of any necessary approvals or permits must be obtained by the tenant;
- the tenant will remain liable for making good any defects in relation to the works;
- there must be no interference with the safety, peace or enjoyment of their properties by neighbours or others; and
- requests from tenants living in properties for which FHL does not have full control, e.g. leasehold or strata properties will be subject to approval from the property owner/agent/strata company.

Applications will be assessed and approved / declined by the Property Services team. Approvals and declinations will be made in writing.

If the modification is on the list of allowable modifications, FHL will only be able to decline the request if:

- a law or strata rule prevents the change
- it will disturb asbestos
- there is a heritage listing
- FHL can prove one of the listed reasons to the Commissioner for Consumer Protection.

Approved applications may include certain conditions required by FHL.

In all circumstances of approval:

- the tenant will be responsible for all costs associated with tenant-initiated works, including application fees, materials and any additional works required (FHL will not reimburse tenants for tenant-initiated upgrades / alterations); and
- when the tenant leaves the premises, the tenant will be required to restore the property to its original state, at the tenant's cost, unless FHL agrees to the improvements being left for the benefit of the next tenant.

The following alterations can be completed without written approval from FHL:

- installation of telephones
- planting of gardens and lawns
- reasonable installation of picture hooks and hanging devices.



Allowable Modifications

To help make a rental feel like a home, small, personalised changes will be allowed in most cases, however tenants must still seek permission.

Minor Modifications - Tenants

Form 26s apply for minor modifications only.

Tenants can complete the following modifications themselves:

- Picture hooks
- Screw for wall mount, shelf or bracket
- Wall anchoring device e.g. for TV or furniture
- Water efficient shower head or handheld shower head
- LED light bulbs that do not require new fittings
- Window covering (e.g. curtains or blinds) and curtain / blind cord anchors
- Adhesive child safety lock on drawers / doors
- Pressure mounted safety gate
- Child safety device on window
- Lock on letterbox or gate
- Wireless doorbell
- Vegetable or herb garden
- Flyscreens on doors / windows
- Draughtproofing

Minor Modifications - Tradesperson

FHL can require the following modifications to be completed by a qualified tradesperson:

- Lever style taps
- Phone or internet connections
- Painting a room
- Non-permanent window film
- Security lights or cameras (alarm code to be provided to FHL)

Applications for any modifications that are not captured under Form 26 will need to be made via Tenant Improvement Request form.

Family and Domestic Violence

Where a tenant is a victim of Family and Domestic Violence, and this has been determined in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1987, the tenant may choose to install additional security devices, such as security screens, CCTV and alarm systems, to their home without the prior permission from FHL. At the end of the tenancy, FHL has the right to request the removal of the

devices, and the property to be returned to its previous condition, at the tenant's expense.

Pay TV, Satellite Dishes and Antennas

The installation of pay TV, satellite dishes and antennas is deemed to be an alteration to a property. Tenants must not authorise the installation of pay TV services without obtaining prior written approval from FHL.

Approval by FHL may be subject to approval by the property owner, bodies corporate, land developer, or the local council.

Dishes will only be approved to be installed on the property's roof and cannot be installed on a balcony under any circumstance.

When granting approval, FHL will not complete the standard landlord approval form used by most pay-TV providers. A written certificate will be provided that grants approval subject to the provider remedying any defect as a result of the installation.

No costs will be borne by FHL for any additional works that may need to be completed in relation to an application for approval. These will all be the responsibility of the tenant.

Internal Painting

Where a tenant requests approval to paint the internal premises, approval may be given subject to:

- the finished works must be of a tradesman-like quality and must meet FHL standards for internal painting; and
- the paint colour/s chosen by the tenant must be acceptable to FHL.

Security Bars, Grills and Shutters

FHL will generally not approve requests for the installation of security bars, grills and shutters as their installation can undermine the safety of the residents if they need to evacuate the dwelling in an emergency.

Where approval is given, all devices must be:

- operable from the inside or not cover the entire window;
- meet regulatory and safety standards; and
- if applicable, acceptable to the body corporate or relevant covenants.

Property Services will inspect all devices immediately after installation to ensure that these standards are met.

Where a tenant installs bars, grills or shutters without FHL's consent, and the above standards are not met, the tenant will be advised in writing that the device must be immediately removed.

Floor Coverings

Approval may be given to change the property's type of floor coverings, e.g. from carpet to tiles, where it is considered that the changes will not detract from the property, affect the quiet enjoyment of adjoining tenants, and all other approval conditions are met.

Swimming Pools

FHL does not permit the installation of swimming pools.

FHL Modifications

FHL understands that a tenant's needs may change as a result of illness, injury, age or disability. In line with FHL's Positive Tenancies Framework there may be occasions where FHL agree to approve and fund modifications to a tenant's home to sustain their tenancy, where it is feasible and economically viable to do so.

FHL make this commitment to significantly improve tenants' quality of life to enable them to continue to live safely in their home.

When assessing a request for FHL modification, FHL will consider:

- the type of modification (minor or major);
- any detailed assessments of tenant's needs from a suitably qualified person e.g. Occupational Therapist;
- total cost of the modification;
- the cost-effectiveness of the upgrade in relation to the economic life of the dwelling;
- alternative strategies, including relocating the tenant to more appropriate housing; and
- any other relevant circumstances.

Minor modifications that do not require structural changes to a property include:

- A handheld shower set
- Lever style taps
- Grab rails

Major modifications that result in permanent and / or structural changes to a property include:

- Widening doorways
- Modifying the kitchen, laundry or bathroom

- Providing entrance and exit ramps

Any alterations will need to be in line with any relevant building codes and Livable Housing Australia (LHA) guidelines.

Note: Where FHL is not the owner of the property, prior approval for the modification must be obtained from the owner.

Form 26 and Tenant Improvement Request Forms

Form 26s and Tenant Improvement Request Forms are to be submitted for any alterations or modifications. All applications will be responded to in writing and tenants will be advised whether their request is approved or declined.

All approved applications will be noted on Chintaro and saved in SharePoint.

Relevant Legislation

- Residential Tenancies Act 1987
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2024
- Livable Housing Australia (LHA) guidelines
- National Construction Code

Related Documents

- Positive Tenancies Framework
- Form 26 – Minor modification request form
- Tenant Improvement Request Form

