

From: [Sector support COVID-19](#)
Subject: Message from Community Sector Partnership Team - housing specific
Date: Friday, 3 April 2020 10:55:17 AM
Attachments: [RCD and Smoke Alarm Fact Sheet.pdf](#)
[Fact Sheet - Reporting Essential Maintenance.pdf](#)
Importance: High

Message from Community Sector Partnership Team

Department of Communities



HOUSING INFORMATION

We would like to share with you some important temporary changes to housing policies. The changes have been made to support the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limiting COVID-19 exposure

- All property inspections will be cancelled. They will be re-scheduled after State and Commonwealth COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.
- Face-to-face interaction between housing officers and residents will be minimised. Interaction will be by phone, SMS, mail or email wherever possible.
- Housing officers and regional service providers can now complete forms on the behalf of residents.
- Verbal or SMS consent is now accepted, rather than a signature (excluding tenancy agreements).
- Support meetings will be cancelled. They will be rescheduled after State and Commonwealth COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.
- If an emergency property visit is necessary, housing officers and regional service providers will follow the social distancing and hygiene practices recommended by the [Department of Health](#).

Financial hardship

- Tenant liability will not be charged for emergency repairs carried out while State and Commonwealth COVID-19 restrictions are in place.
- Increases to Centrelink payments and the one-off \$750 payment will not be included in rent calculations
- Community members returning home from towns are considered visitors and their income will not be included in rent calculations.
- Residents who are self-isolating in another house will not pay rent at home while they are self-isolating.
- Housing officers will continue to follow up on tenancy debts and payment arrangement defaults, to help reduce tenancy debt. Breach notices may be issued.
- Legal action will not be pursued. Any legal action currently before the courts will be withdrawn and re-assessed after State and Commonwealth COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

Housing maintenance

Maintenance will only be carried out if there is an immediate risk to health and safety, such as:

- Smoke alarm or residual current device (RCD) fails to test.
- Exposed electrical wires are present, or an electrical shock has occurred.
- Smoke alarm or residual current device (RCD) fails to test.
- No power to a property, but there is credit on the meter.
- No water or hot water to a property.
- Gas leaks.
- Blocked toilets, or more than one drain.
- Overflowing or leaking septic waste.

Major water leaks, where the flow is consistent with a tap turned on full.

Maintenance contractors are following safe work procedures, including hygiene and social distancing recommended by the [Department of Health](#). Before attending a work order, the contractor will contact your community to confirm they are allowed access. If the contractor is not allowed access to your community, this will be recorded and the work order will be cancelled. To report maintenance requirements, please contact your housing officer, regional service provider or **Housing Direct on 1300 137 677**. Fact sheets are attached, for your information.

Emergency temporary occupation of vacant properties

With the return of community members from regional towns, some remote community houses have become overcrowded. We are working with remote communities to identify properties that are suitable for emergency temporary occupation. Before allowing a property to be occupied, please speak with your housing officer or regional service provider to confirm that the property is suitable, which means that a test of electrical safety devices has been done in the past three months; and there are no known structural faults to the property.

You will also be provided with an Electrical Safety Device Fact Sheet and asked to test electrical safety devices before you allow anyone to occupy the property. These conditions will apply:

- A decision to occupy a property is at the discretion of the Community Council.
- No tenancy agreement will be signed.
- Rent will not be charged.
- Only essential maintenance will be carried out.
- An electrical contractor must complete a full electrical safety check.
- In consultation with Community Councils, occupants may be given 30 days' notice to vacate the property after State and Commonwealth COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

Thrive Service Providers

The moratorium on termination and eviction in this stressful period alleviates some pressure for our most vulnerable clients. The instruction of no home visits for our Housing staff can exacerbate the anxiety of many of our most vulnerable clients in the Thrive program who already feel socially isolated. It's important that some form of ongoing contact continue with these clients.

Your organisations have moved on instructing your staff on approved forms of client contact to maintain their and the client's health and wellbeing.

It's essential we proceed together by collaborating with each Housing office management team to reach agreements.

More information

For more detailed information about temporary changes to housing policies, please contact your housing officer or regional service provider.

For general information about COVID-19, you can contact the COVID-19 Information Hotline on 1800 020 080 or visit www.wa.gov.au/covid19

We encourage you to share this email with anyone who might need it.

The Department of Communities acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Western Australia and their connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their elders past and present.

The Department of Communities (Communities) formed on 1 July 2017 and is responsible for the delivery of child protection and family support, community grants, funding and initiatives, education and care regulation, disability services, housing and regional services reform. During the transition phase emails sent from the Housing Authority domain will be converted to the Communities email address. This message may contain privileged and confidential information and is intended for the exclusive use of the addressee(s). You must not disclose this communication to anyone without the prior consent of Communities. If you have received this email in error, please notify us by return mail, delete it from your system and destroy all copies. Communities has exercised care to avoid errors in the information contained in this email but does not warrant that it is error or omission free.