

Independent Living Modifications Policy		Tier: 3	
		Revision: 2.1	Date Approved / Effective: 16/03/2023
Prepared by: Business Performance Manager	Reviewed by: GM Housing Operations	Approved by: Executive Management Team	Review Date: 20/08/2027

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- assist tenants to remain in their current property where practical; and
- consider alternative solutions if modifications are not approved.

2. Definitions

Independent Living Modifications ('modifications')	Changes Centacare Evolve Housing makes, or allows to be made, to a property in response to the needs of its tenant or residents
Tenant	A person responsible for maintaining a Tenancy Agreement (Lease)
Leased Properties	Properties leased from a private landlord and/or real estate agent
Resident	A person who permanently resides at a Centacare Evolve Housing property, but who is not the tenant

3. Scope

This Policy relates to tenant requests for Centacare Evolve Housing to carry out modifications to the property they live in. Requests can relate to the tenant or other resident(s) of the property.

4. Policy

Providing independent living modifications can allow people to remain in their home rather than seeking alternative living arrangements. Centacare Evolve Housing is committed to complying with its legislative obligations,¹ and approving modifications where it is possible and practical to do so.

5. Types of Modification

Modifications are grouped into two categories:

Minor Modifications: involve non-structural work, such as:

- Fitting grab rails;
- Lowering a towel rail;
- Removing or re-swinging cupboard doors;
- Fitting a hand-held shower; or
- Installing lever taps.

¹ Including its obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

Major Modifications: usually these involve structural changes, such as:

- Widening doorways;
- Installing access ramps;
- Modification / replacement of the kitchen, bathroom or laundry;
- Work requiring electrical or plumbing alterations;
- Replacement of flooring / floor coverings; or
- Work that requires a Development Application (DA) or other regulatory approval.

6. Requesting Modifications

Some minor modifications can be requested without the need for an independent assessment. However, the correct positioning of grab rails needs to be assessed before any installation can be actioned. Tenants should submit a Tenant Alteration Request Form:

- via our website <https://centacareevolve.com.au/tenants/maintenance/report-a-repair>
- by calling us on (03) 6173 0060
- by visiting one of our office locations around the state during regular business hours.

Major modification requests need to be supported by a health or allied health professional who must provide details of the request - including specifications, diagrams and the level of priority for each component of the request.

7. Assessing Modification Requests

In assessing modification requests, Centacare Evolve Housing may take the following steps:

- Consider the tenant's ability to sustain their tenancy – e.g. condition of property, rent history, outstanding debt.
- Arrange for a maintenance officer to inspect the property to assess whether the request is feasible and/or practical.
- Consider the attributes of the property in light of the request to determine if it is likely to suit the longer term needs of the tenant/residents – i.e. is there a likelihood of further major modification need.
- Consider whether it is economically viable to undertake the modification by:
 - estimating the overall cost of the work – possibly in relation to the capital value of the property;
 - considering the ongoing maintenance obligations associated with the requested modification;
 - considering the impact of the modifications on future property allocations and whether there could be a future need to reinstate the property to its current condition;
 - understanding what external funding options are available or have been sought by the tenant or their support professional (e.g. NDIS, Home Care Packages);
- Consider what alternative options are available – particularly the option of relocating the household to a more suitable property.
- Assess whether it is feasible for the tenant to arrange and pay for the modification – either with required approval for work or via a 'do and charge' arrangement.
- Consider whether management discretion should be applied.

Major modification requests involving properties that Centacare Evolve Housing manages on behalf of Homes Tasmania need to be assessed in line with their Asset Modification Request (AMR) Practice Framework. Approval may need to be sought from Homes Tasmania before an assessment can be completed.

Centacare Evolve Housing may need to discuss major modification requests with the tenant and their support professional as part of the assessment process.

Centacare Evolve Housing will not undertake modifications to properties it subleases to residents, but we may negotiate with the landlord on behalf of the tenant to undertake modifications. If a need for a major modification has been identified and the landlord has declined the request, Centacare Evolve Housing can consider alternative options such as a transfer when a suitable property becomes available.

8. Notifying decision

The tenant will be contacted when a modification request has been assessed and a decision has been made. Centacare Evolve Housing aims to notify tenants within three weeks of receiving the request. More complex requests may take longer to assess, in which case the tenant will be advised of the likely timeframe.

9. Outcome Actions

If a modification request is approved, the tenant will be kept informed about the timeframe for actioning it. If there is external funding attached to the approved request, Centacare Evolve Housing will need to liaise with the tenant or their support professional to coordinate the work and payment process.

If the resident who requires the modifications moves out of the property, Centacare Evolve Housing may require the tenant and any remaining occupants to transfer to a different property in order to appropriately reallocate the modified property.

Modification requests are sometimes assessed as not being possible or practical when considered in line with the above process. Depending on the circumstances and the nature of the modification request, Centacare Evolve Housing may offer the option of a transfer to an alternative property that better suits the needs of the household. If agreeable, the tenant will be placed on our transfer list and advised when a suitable property becomes available. If the tenant wishes to consider a transfer to areas or properties not managed by Centacare Evolve Housing, they can contact Housing Connect.

10. Disputing Modification Decisions

Tenants have a right to appeal any decision in line with our Complaints and Appeals Policy, available on the Centacare Evolve Housing website.

11. Related documents

- Maintenance guidelines
- Complaints and appeals policy
- Complaints and appeals procedure
- Diversity and inclusion policy
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)