

## Disability Modifications Policy

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### Introduction

Veteran Housing Australia (VHA) houses many customers with a disability or mobility impairments and is committed to ensuring the accommodation in which they are housed is appropriate for their needs. VHA understands that a customer's needs can change over time and seeks to support residents with a disability or mobility need affecting their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, to live independently in their home and enjoy a good quality of life.

### Aim

The Disability Modifications Policy aims to ensure consistent property practices. It includes standards and principles for the management of non-standard fixtures and terminology, definitions and reporting to be applied across VHA nationally in the application of our integrated business systems and tools. Where a property is enrolled as Specialist Disability Accommodation with the NDIA then this policy also applies.

Disability modifications cover a number of items, which include but are not limited to:

- Grab rails
- Suitable access options
- Flick mixer tapware
- Switch mechanisms
- Level access showers

This policy will support VHA operations to:

- Provide appropriate adaptations to allow for independent living.
- Ensure consistency through the development of a national approach.
- Improve internal communication between departments of VHA.
- Improve tools and training for all VHA staff working in operational environments.
- Enhance the ability of asset maintenance and housing teams to communicate effectively with renters/tenants.
- Reduce maintenance costs.
- Ensure consistent use of terminology across jurisdictions.

### Principles of VHA Disability Modifications Policy

These principles guide the overall management of all disability modifications. This standardised approach ensures the organisation can apply a national standard within each jurisdiction, including compliance with National and State based regulations, industry standards, contractual obligations, legislation and organisation policies and procedures.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF NEED

Tenants can make requests for adaptations and modifications to better meet their needs and VHA will formally assess all requests for disability modifications. Requests should be through the Tenant Liaison Officer or Area Manager.

Area Managers can assist tenants to make requests where appropriate. The tenant will need to demonstrate that the request is for mobility, health or safety reasons and obtain the relevant supporting documentation. VHA will support tenants where possible, to access funding for major works such as widening of doorways, air conditioning systems or accessible facilities.

Requests made must be accompanied by an Occupational Therapist's (OT) report and/or a letter from the tenant's general practitioner, specialist, or other healthcare professional. In some cases, minor requests such as grab rails may be considered without an OT's report or supporting documentation, at VHA's discretion.

Completed requests will be assessed by VHA Board of Directors. As part of the assessment, the General Manager (GM) may need to inspect the property to assess the building for the modifications requested.

Should a tenant wish to install adaptations, either permanent or temporary in nature, for facilitating independent living in their home, VHA will not unreasonably deny such a request.

## DETERMINATION OF APPROPRIATE ADAPTIONS

The General Manager will make a recommendation for appropriate adaptations based on:

- The circumstances of and the evidence supplied by the tenant
- A sound knowledge of building regulations and asset maintenance.
- The total cost of the required upgrade.
- Whether VHA has authority to make modifications to the property, dependant on the program and/or contract under which the property is managed.
- The cost-effectiveness of the upgrade in relation to the economic life of the dwelling.
- Consultation with the tenant and/or health care professional.
- Alternative strategies, including re-housing the tenant in more appropriate housing.
- The likelihood of further adaptations or modifications being needed by the tenant in the near future.

A response will be provided to the tenant in writing, within 10 business days of receipt of the request. If external assessment is required for the modification, we will ensure the tenant is kept informed of progress.

## RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Tenants have a right to appeal any decision made by VHA they believe is incorrect, unfair or unlawful. Tenants who wish to appeal a decision made by VHA can do so using the VHA Appeals Process.

## Related legislation

### EXTERNAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

<b>National Community Housing Standards</b>
<b>National Regulatory Code</b>
<b>Victorian Building Regulatory Framework</b>
<b>NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission</b>
<b>Department of Social Services, NDIS Quality Safeguarding Framework</b>
<b>Disability Services Commissioner</b>
<b>DHHS Client Services Charter</b>
<b>DHHS (Vic) Better Regulatory Practice Framework</b>