

# Alterations to properties

## Overview

This policy explains what alterations are, how tenants can apply for permission to alter their property and how we manage requests for alterations.

## Scope

This policy applies to all properties managed by the St George Community Housing and its subsidiaries (we, our and us).

This policy does not cover modifications. Modifications are changes that we make to a property because an applicant, tenant or household member has an identified need which means their current property is no longer suitable. Refer to our Modifications policy for more information.

## Definitions

### **Alterations**

Alterations are works and improvements to a property that are done by a tenant at their expense.

### **Swimming pool**

A swimming pool is any excavation, structure or vessel which can be filled with water to a depth of more than 300 millimetres (30 centimetres), that is used for swimming, wading, paddling or any other water activity. Swimming pools include inflatable and/or portable pools and spa pools.

## Types of alterations

The following are some examples of alterations:

- Internal or external structural changes
- Painting
- Cable/pay television, satellite dishes and antennas
- Ducted air conditioning
- Air conditioners, heaters and other fixed appliances
- Security shutters and screens on windows and doors inside and outside the property

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- Built-in cupboards and wardrobes
  - Carpet, floor and wall tiles
  - Floor coverings including timber boarding and vinyl tiles/sheeting
  - Pergolas, fences, gazebos
  - Kitchen and bathroom renovations and alterations including taps, switches and lighting
  - Sheds
  - Picture hooks
  - Window blinds and curtains
  - Skylights
  - Landscaping
  - Carports, garages, driveways and paving
  - Rainwater tanks
  - Built in appliances that involve modifications or adjustments to the property and/or its fixtures
  - Light fittings
  - Security alarm systems
  - Security cameras
  - Reconfiguration of rooms and property layouts

## Requesting permission to make alterations

Tenants who want to make any alterations to their property must ask us for approval before any work commences. Tenants can ask for approval by completing an Alterations Request and submitting any supporting documentation, quotes, drawings and photographs.

Tenants may install a few picture hooks and make minor changes to gardens without getting approval from us.

For safety reasons, we do not allow our tenants to have or install swimming pools in our properties.

## Assessing requests to make alterations

We will respond to all Alterations Requests within 28 days. If there is a reason why a decision cannot be made within 28 days, the Asset Officer will advise the tenant of the reasons for the delay and the expected timeframe for us to make a decision.

When assessing requests, we will consider the following factors:

- Safety of our tenant and their household

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- Suitability of the property
  - Whether we own, lease or manage the property
  - Any program, contractual, regulatory or environmental standards, restrictions or rules that apply to the property (for example, tenants may not be allowed to install air conditioning or heating at the premises)
  - Whether the tenant has, or can get, the necessary approvals from the relevant local council, strata and the owner of the property (if applicable)
  - Whether the works will meet all relevant standards
  - Whether the alterations can be satisfactorily removed at the end of the tenancy
  - Whether the contractor that will be engaged by the tenant has all relevant insurances and has provided relevant safe working method statements in accordance with current work health and safety requirements
  - Any relevant privacy issues

Once a decision has been reached, our Asset Officer will advise the tenant of the outcome in writing. If we decline a tenant's request, the letter will also advise the tenant of their right to appeal.

Decisions regarding installation of security cameras will be made on a case by case basis and will take into consideration the privacy of neighbours and any other relevant factors. We may approve an application from a tenant to install security cameras if:

- The security camera will be installed on the tenant's property
- The camera will not face a neighbouring property or any common areas
- The camera will not be in breach of any relevant laws or regulations

We may also approve installation of security cameras if there are legitimate concerns for personal safety and these concerns can be substantiated (e.g. domestic violence, harassment), or on advice from police.

The number of cameras approved will depend on the size and type of property.

## Conditions for approval

Before we approve a request for alterations, the tenant must agree to being responsible for:

- Any costs associated with the alteration, including
  - The cost of subscribing to any required services e.g. pay television.
  - The cost of installation, connection, disconnection and ongoing maintenance relating to the alteration.
- Repairing any damage that is caused to the property because of the alteration.
- Compliance and any ongoing compliance requirements

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- Removing any alterations when they move out and restoring any damage caused to the property from removal of the alteration.
  - Paying for the costs of our contractors to remove any alterations and return the property to its pre-altered state, fair wear and tear excepted.

## Unauthorised alterations

If the tenant has altered the property without our approval, we will ask them to submit an Alterations Request or remove the alteration and return the property to its original state.

If an Alterations Request is submitted, we will then assess the request as normal and advise the tenant of the outcome.

If we refuse their alterations request, we will give the tenant a reasonable amount of time to remove the alteration and fix any damage caused. If the tenant does not remove the alteration and fix the damage caused, we will apply to the tenancy tribunal to have the matter resolved.

If a swimming pool has been installed, we will immediately ask the tenant to remove it. If the tenant doesn't remove the swimming pool within the timeframe given, we will apply to the tenancy tribunal for an order to have the swimming pool removed.

## Relevant legislation

- [Residential Tenancies Act 2010 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Swimming Pools Act 1992 \(NSW\)](#)

## Related documents/resources

- [Policy: Modifications](#)

## Policy Information

<b>Version:</b>	5
<b>Approved:</b>	August 2020
<b>Amended:</b>	August 2020
<b>Reviewed:</b>	August 2020
<b>Review frequency:</b>	24 months
<b>Responsible team/position:</b>	Customers and Communities