

Good Neighbour

Bridge Housing provides homes for a diverse range of people with different lifestyles. It is important to build positive relationships with your neighbours. Being a good neighbour means being mindful and respectful of others. You can do this by minimising noise, managing your pets and the behaviour of visitors and sharing common areas including parking places, laundries and gardens.

Tenant rights and responsibilities

As a tenant you have a right to the peaceful enjoyment of your home and access to information and services to enable you to peacefully enjoy your home.

Under the Residential Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for your own conduct as well as the behaviour of all other household members and any visitors to your property.

What kind of behaviour is not ok?

Behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to other people is not ok. This is behaviour that unreasonably interferes with other people's rights to use and enjoy their home and community such as:

- Loud noise, particularly in the evening
- Abuse, intimidation or harassment
- Aggressive and threatening language or behaviour
- Vandalism
- Noise or nuisance caused by vehicles such as where they are parked or the way repairs are undertaken
- Noise or nuisance caused by pets
- Any type of criminal activity.

Be considerate to your neighbours when you are doing something noisy. Let them know before you start and try to avoid making noise when people are likely to be sleeping.

What can you do about noisy or difficult neighbours?

If you are having a problem with your neighbours it is always a good idea to talk to them about the problem first – they might be unaware that they are upsetting you.

These conversations can be difficult and sometimes you don't get the response you were hoping for. If you feel unsafe stop the conversation and leave.

If you are experiencing ongoing problems with your neighbours it is important that you report this to your Housing Manager at Bridge Housing. Your Housing Manager can provide advice on the services that are available to investigate complaints and assist you.

Other options include:

- The Community Justice Centres on 1800 990 777 that can assist you to sort out a dispute with your neighbour – Community Justice Centres provide free independent mediation.
- The Police on 000 if you suspect or witness criminal activity, for complaints about noise including rowdy behaviour, if you experience violence or feel threatened
- Your local Council if your complaint relates to dumped rubbish or aggressive or noisy pets
- The Police Assistance Line on 131 444 if you are worried about your own or someone else's mental health – they may be able to assist by getting the Mental Health Crisis Team involved.

What will Bridge Housing do if there is a problem?

Bridge Housing will work closely with tenants, service providers and external mediation services to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. We aim to assist neighbours to resolve disputes early to avoid the issue from escalating.

Bridge Housing will investigate neighbourhood complaints in a transparent manner. This involves contacting all parties involved to gain their perspective and reviewing evidence from external services such as the NSW Police. We will keep all parties informed of the outcome of the investigation.

If the problem relates to a breach of tenancy that is negatively affecting you, your Housing Manager may ask you to keep a Nuisance and Annoyance diary. This is a document that records the date, time and details of any incident that occurs. Bridge Housing cannot take action at the Tribunal without evidence and this diary forms part of the evidence.

If you do not feel safe to discuss the problem with your neighbour we will keep your details confidential, so the person you have reported will not know it was you who complained. This may limit the action we are able to take to resolve the matter.

Depending on the circumstances, Bridge Housing will take the following action:

- Refer neighbours to mediation at the Community Justice Centre to attempt to resolve the problem.
- Organise a block meeting to discuss and resolve issues amongst neighbours if the issue affects multiple tenants.
- Write a warning letter to the person responsible to remind them of their responsibilities and consequences of behaviour.
- Referral to a support agency who may be able to help the person causing the problem to change their behaviour.
- For ongoing and serious breaches of the tenancy that are proven by evidence, we will take action at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

If we feel that the problem is a personal dispute between you and your neighbour, we may not take any further action than suggesting that you both consider mediation in order to resolve the matter.

If further action is necessary, we will usually consider a combination of methods to deal with the problem **before** applying to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Bridge Housing cannot take direct action where the problem in your neighbourhood or block of units involves criminal activity. However, once a criminal conviction occurs then Bridge Housing can take action.

Taking the issue to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal

If the antisocial behaviour continues, the case may be referred to the NCAT. We can only take the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal if there is clear evidence that a tenant has caused problems. Evidence may be presented at the NCAT from both sides of the dispute.

The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal can make orders that the behaviour must stop, or in extreme circumstances, that the tenancy ends.

Further information can be found in the Bridge Housing Good Neighbour Policy on the website: www.bridgehousing.org.au or by ringing the Housing Team on **8324 0885**.