

## Repairs and Maintenance

### Purpose

This policy explains how Bridge Housing will provide repairs and maintenance services to its tenants.

Bridge Housing believes that providing a good standard of maintenance improves the wellbeing of our residents and ensures that the amenity and value of properties is retained.

This policy cannot be viewed in isolation. Instead, it forms part of a suite of asset related policies all focused on improving the tenant experience and the quality of the homes we manage and own.

Through this policy, Bridge Housing will ensure that we:

- Meet our obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Provide a high quality, consistent maintenance service to our tenants and their families
- Keep all social housing properties at a benchmarked standard for safety, function and amenity
- Retain and improve the quality of the homes we manage and own, and
- Provide an efficient and effective maintenance service.

### Scope

This policy applies to all properties in Bridge Housing's portfolio, except for the Community Housing Leasehold Program (CHLP) and our Fee for Service portfolio. Bridge Housing undertakes maintenance for its Fee for Service portfolio in accordance with the respective agreements with property owners. This means the delivery of asset maintenance services can vary in some instances.

### Our Strategic Approach

Bridge Housing recognises the importance of protecting and preserving the condition of the properties it manages so that they continue to meet the needs of its current and future tenants. To this end we adopt a strategic planning approach to our maintenance programs. This approach is underpinned by our Asset Management Framework.

Bridge Housings' approach to maintenance aims to:

- Minimise the volume and cost of unplanned, responsive repairs
- Meet all legislative requirements including building, health and safety standards
- Meet our contractual obligations
- Protect Bridge Housing's long term financial sustainability
- Maximise the life of the homes we manage
- Protect the assets of our partners where Bridge Housing has responsibility for the long-term maintenance of their properties, and
- Continue to meet and improve the tenant experience in relation to the maintenance of their homes.

## Tenant Responsibilities

Bridge Housing tenants will have a responsibility to promptly report repairs and maintenance required to their property, and to allow access for completing required work. They will also be responsible for ensuring they notify Bridge Housing of any damage to their property and for meeting the cost of repairing any damage caused by the neglect, misuse, wilful or accidental damage by a resident or visitor to the home.

Tenants are responsible for undertaking minor repairs in their dwelling including:

- replacement of light bulbs in the property,
- replacement of smoke alarm batteries,
- replacement of lost keys or resultant change of locks to doors and windows where keys are lost,
- and repairs to any items that have been erected/installed by themselves (eg hooks and air conditioning).

Tenants are also responsible for general upkeep and property care of their dwellings and any private open space attached to their dwelling.

## Bridge Housing's Responsibilities

Bridge Housing is responsible for ensuring that maintenance is undertaken on the properties and common areas of the properties we manage or own, to ensure that they are safe and all amenities are maintained in a proper working order. In doing so, we undertake maintenance in three broad categories, being Responsive Maintenance, Planned Maintenance, and Cyclical Maintenance.

Bridge Housing defines **Planned Maintenance** as the scheduled replacement, upgrade or renovation of major items in a property. This includes Vacant Maintenance.

Bridge Housing defines **Cyclical Maintenance** as a series of regular checks and inspections to ensure that properties comply with health and safety, legislative and duty of care obligations.

Bridge Housing defines **Responsive Maintenance** as time critical repairs necessary to reinstate a building or component to a safe or functional level of service. This also includes routine repairs that cause inconvenience or could become a risk to health and safety if left unattended.

## Planned Maintenance

Bridge Housing believes that a planned approach to maintenance, rather than a responsive approach, is more cost effective, delivers better maintenance solutions and causes less disruption to tenants.

Planned works are scheduled based on the following considerations:

- Any legislative requirements must be met
- Life cycle upgrade timeframes as identified through our 3 yearly technical scoping inspections
- Risk assessment for each property undertaken through our technical scoping inspections
- Overall budget allocation in line with our 20-year forecast model

Wherever possible, Bridge Housing will involve tenants in decisions about work proposed for their homes. For example, tenants may have a choice in the use of colours and materials used in our planned maintenance upgrades to their home. Throughout the process tenants will be kept informed about what work is required and when it will be done.

Instead of replacing property elements like-for-like, when scoping planned maintenance works, Bridge Housing will actively undertake value adding enhancements to improve amenity where economically viable, e.g. improving car-parking facilities, widening driveways and altering kitchen and bathroom layouts.

Scheduled maintenance is sometimes brought forward or deferred to suit tenant needs and other priorities. Properties that require upgrades for safety and security issues will be prioritised.

Where a property becomes vacant, Bridge Housing will consider the feasibility of bringing forward the work to minimise the impact on future tenants. As a minimum Bridge Housing will ensure that the property is clean, safe and habitable for the next tenant. This includes:

- carrying out compliance assessments for smoke alarms, electrical safety and window restrictors
- ensuring that your property is appropriately secured and change locks if required
- ensuring all appliances are functional.

## Cyclical Maintenance

Our cyclical maintenance program is divided into three categories as follows:

### **Lawns and Grounds Cleaning Program**

Regular maintenance is carried out on common areas, grounds and/or gardens of apartments and townhouse complexes. Works include general upkeep and cleaning of internal common areas, lawns and gardens.

### **Compliance/Safety Program**

This includes maintenance programs to ensure that Bridge Housing meets legislative and regulatory requirements to maintain the safety and security of tenants. These include electrical safety, preparation of Annual Fire Safety Statements, smoke alarm inspections and lift safety.

### **Preventative Maintenance**

Bridge Housing defines preventive maintenance as regularly scheduled work that is undertaken to avoid breakdown and deterioration of the property. By undertaking preventative maintenance effectively, Bridge Housing will reduce the amount of responsive, planned and structural work that may be required. Works include roof and gutter inspections, tree pruning and termite inspections.

## Responsive Maintenance

Bridge Housing will provide a responsive repairs and maintenance service, appropriate to both tenant and portfolio needs. Our responsive approach will have four categories, which comply with obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*. These categories will be subject to regular review to ensure they are up to date with legislative requirements and meet customer expectations.

Repair Category	Response Time
<b>Emergency</b> Repairs that cause serious health or safety risk to the tenant and/or property, including gas leaks, broken sewer pipes or serious flooding.	Within 4 hours of being notified
<b>Urgent</b> Repairs that pose a serious health and safety risk or inconvenience to the tenant such as failure or breakdown of electrical or hot water supplies to the property.	Within 24 hours of being notified
<b>Priority</b> Repairs that may pose a risk to health and safety if left unattended within a reasonable period. These include limited malfunctions in electrical and water supplies such as a dripping tap or a plug socket not working.	Within 5 days of being notified
<b>Routine</b> Repairs that do not cause a health or safety risk such as tiling repairs and minor fencing repairs. Bridge Housing will aim to complete non-urgent repairs and maintenance as promptly as possible, subject to the inconvenience to the tenant and the potential for the repair to become a risk to health and safety if left unattended.	21 business days, taking into account the age and remaining life of the property.

For emergency repairs, a contractor will aim to attend and, wherever possible, complete all necessary work within four hours. In circumstances where this is not possible, the contractor will make sure that the fault is temporarily fixed and arrange for the permanent maintenance to be undertaken within the appropriate timeframe. The tenant will be informed why the issue could not be fixed immediately and when the work is likely to be completed.

Where a number of routine responsive maintenance requests are received in a short timeframe for a common area or block, Bridge Housing reserves the right to “batch” these so that they are all completed together. This will be more cost effective and cause less disruption to our tenants.

## Requesting Repairs and Maintenance

It is important that tenants report any maintenance issues as quickly as possible. Timely reporting ensures our tenants can continue to enjoy their home fully and can reduce the likelihood of repairs issues escalating. Our Tenancy Advisory Group has been an integral in helping shape how this can be made easy.

Bridge Housing operates a 24 hour, all year round telephone service for all our tenants through our internal call centre and an external provider for out of hour’s requests. This enables our tenants to speak with a real person regardless of the time of day. Tenants may be asked to call back during office hours for non-urgent repairs requests.

Tenants can simply and easily report repairs by:

1. Lodging a request online via our Request a Repair Service
2. Calling our maintenance call line 24/7 on 02 8324 0800 and press 1 for a repair .
3. Face to face by visiting our office, or at an outreach office location.

Bridge Housing also provides a free interpretation service for tenants who are having difficulty communicating their repair or maintenance request.

Each repair request is assessed by Bridge Housing staff or their representative to determine the nature and priority of the work to be undertaken.

Bridge Housing then assigns responsibility for completing the work to one of its contractors or contacts the landlord or agent to inform them of the repair request for leasehold properties.

Bridge Housing will ensure that there is clear communication with the tenant, contractor or landlord/agent throughout the repairs process to ensure that the work is completed in a timely and professional manner.

## Repairs and Maintenance Requests for Leasehold and Fee for Service Properties

Bridge Housing will expect landlords and agents that it rents properties from to meet their responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. Bridge Housing will advise the appropriate landlord or agent with details of any repair or maintenance request. The landlord or agent is then expected to contact the tenant to advise what action it will be taking and when.

Bridge Housing will always encourage landlords to complete repairs within the timeframes stated above.

Where a landlord or agent persistently fails to complete work in accordance with their obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 201, Bridge Housing will use a range of actions to resolve issues. This includes:

1. Make a formal urgent request to the landlord or agent, advising them of a breach of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and proposing a timeframe for completing the work
2. Complete the work and claim reimbursement from the landlord or agent and/or
3. Applying to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal for an order to remedy

Bridge Housing will ensure that the tenant is kept informed throughout the process.

In rare and exceptional circumstances where matters cannot be resolved, Bridge Housing may offer the tenant a transfer to another property.

## Ensuring Quality Services

All staff and Bridge Housing contractors must comply with Bridge Housing's Code of Conduct. The Code outlines our expectations of behaviours to ensure all residents are treated with respect and courtesy and that receive the best possible service with the minimum disruption to their household.

In addition, Bridge Housing undertakes a number of actions to ensure that our maintenance services meet the standards that we expect:

- **Tenant maintenance survey** – Bridge Housing sends out a survey to all tenants following responsive maintenance works. Where a negative result is obtained, we contact the tenant and investigate as part of our continuous improvement regime
- **Inspections by our technical officers** – each month we inspect a sample of all responsive maintenance works completed
- Submission of **photographic evidence** with all invoices from our contractors to demonstrate works
- **Tenant sign off** and certification that works have been carried out
- **Tenant feedback** through our Annual Tenant Satisfaction Surveys, tenant representation on our Maintenance Management Committee and tenant advisory group structures
- **Internal audits** to ensure we are providing an optimal service.

## Compliments, Complaints and Appeals

This is an appealable policy. If a tenant is not satisfied with a service provided by Bridge Housing or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review. Bridge Housing's *Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy* outlines how we will undertake a review of our decision. A copy of our policy and information leaflet, is available from Bridge Housing's office or downloaded from our website [www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au).

Bridge Housing also welcomes compliments on our service delivery. To give Bridge Housing staff or a contractor a compliment you can call and speak with our reception team over the telephone or alternatively by emailing [customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au](mailto:customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au)