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| Maintenance and Property Management Practice Manual |
| Department-owned Specialist Disability Accommodation:  May 2022 |
| OFFICIAL |

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# Overview

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (department) is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider of Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).

The purpose of this Practice Manualis to outline the processes that department staff (staff) follow when managing and maintaining department-owned SDA.

This Practice Manual supplements the [Maintenance and modification guidelines](https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sda-maintenance-and-modification-guidelines) which provide more instruction and detail on the topics in this document. Find out more on our website <https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sda-maintenance-and-modification-guidelines>.

This Practice Manual does not apply to SDA that is not owned by the department, or to services provided by resident’s Supported Independent Living (SIL) providers. Residents, or their nominated contact person, can contact those organisations directly for information about their services.

## Glossary

The following terms are used in relation to this policy.

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Department | Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing |
| NDIA | National Disability Insurance Agency, the Commonwealth statutory agency that implements the NDIS |
| NDIS | National Disability Insurance Scheme |
| Participant | A person with a disability who has met the access requirements to become an NDIS participant |
| Resident’s support network | People who support residents with decision making and could include their nominated contact person, advocate or guardian. |
| Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) | Housing provided by an NDIS-registered SDA provider to participants needing specialist housing to help with the delivery of their supports. SDA is the dwelling itself and not the supports provided there. |
| SDA resident | A participant currently residing in an SDA |
| Staff | Employees of the department |
| Supported independent living (SIL) provider | Provider of support to participants, including help with or supervision of the tasks of daily life. |

# SDA Property management

Department-owned SDA will meet the requirements of the design type (for example fully accessible or robust), category and other standards that applied when the property was enrolled with the NDIA. It is important to note that NDIA make changes to the design requirements from time to time and that these requirements vary between existing and newly built SDA.

The department is also responsible for ensuring all SDA properties are maintained in a good state of repair. This includes ensuring SDA dwellings are compliant with relevant Commonwealth, Victorian and departmental requirements, including the Residential Tenancies Act 2007 (RTA), building codes and NDIS-specific legislation.

Mechanisms that the department will implement to ensure these requirements are met include:

* a responsive and preventative maintenance program (including cyclical maintenance)
* completion of an annual property risk assessment that includes emergency preparedness
* completion of a property condition report summary when a new SDA is established or is added to a Collaboration Agreement for the first time, and a program of review. More information about Collaboration Agreements is available in the *Residency Management Practice Manual*.
* an SDA Coordinator allocated to each SDA who will manage property maintenance, refurbishment works, and individual requests for modifications.
* the provision of automatic fire sprinklers and interconnected smoke alarms. Fire protection equipment installed and owned by the department is routinely serviced and checked by a qualified contractor in accordance with the applicable Australian Standard.

# Maintenance in SDA

## Types of maintenance the department carries out

Most maintenance falls into the following three categories:

* responsive maintenance
* cyclical maintenance (also referred to as periodic or preventative maintenance)
* other works (includes refurbishment works and modifications)

### Responsive maintenance

Responsive maintenance is day-to-day maintenance and repairs. It includes urgent repairs, replacement of broken items and inspections.

### Cyclical maintenance

Cyclical maintenance is the regular maintenance activities that keep the SDA in a good state of repair. This includes actions like:

* servicing fire service systems
* servicing gas ducted heating units
* cleaning gutters.

The department also conducts audits of electrical and gas fixtures every two years.

Additional cyclical maintenance may be required for some SDA, such as additional garden maintenance on larger acreage properties.

**Note**: Generally, all gardening activities within the boundaries of the fence line are the responsibility of the residents (excluding larger foliage like trees).

Where the department undertakes specific gardening maintenance on larger acreage properties, it will be through prior agreement between the department and the resident’s SIL provider.

### Other works

Other works are carried out occasionally and can include refurbishment and modification. These works are generally identified through inspections or assessments. They are planned well in advance, in consultation with residents and their SIL providers.

## Who completes the work?

The department ensures a state-wide response to maintenance by using the Housing Call Centre that engages the relevant contractor to undertake the work.

The contractors cover all trades and will respond within set timeframes, determined by the nature of the maintenance and its urgency.

The department will engage specialised contractors and consultants to respond when required. For example, a specialist contractor will respond to all maintenance of fire-safety systems.

All contractors used by the Housing Call Centre are selected following a competitive selection process, have current and relevant qualifications and insurance. They must abide by a code of conduct. More information about the code of conduct for contractors is available on [Housing.Vic’s Who fixes my maintenance problem? page](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/who-fixes-my-maintenance-problem) <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/who-fixes-my-maintenance-problem>.

## How to request maintenance

The following table summarises the different types of maintenance and how resident’s SIL providers can request this work. Residents or their nominated contact person can also contact the Housing Call Centre directly if required using the provided numbers.

| Maintenance | Work needed | Contact details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Responsive maintenance | Repair of broken or malfunctioning fixtures or heating/cooling servicing requests | Housing Call Centre:   * Phone: 1300 292 512 * Email: SDA.Maintenance@dffh.vic.gov.au |
| Fire services (also backup generators) | * Fire services * Generators * Carbon monoxide and fire alarms * Fire sprinklers * Door strikers | Celsius Fire (external contractor):   * Phone: 9543 8999 |
| Cyclical maintenance | * Servicing fire service systems * Servicing gas ducted heating units * Gutter cleaning | Contractors will schedule cyclical maintenance directly with resident’s SIL providers.  If a change to a scheduled date is required, SIL providers can contact the relevant contractor directly. |
| Other works | For example   * Installation of a handrail, additional power points * Landscaping | SDA Coordinator:   * Email: SDA.coordinator@homes.vic.gov.au |

## Timeframes for responsive maintenance

Different types of work have different response and completion timeframes.

This is to ensure that more urgent works – like failure of essential services (such as gas, electricity and water) – are responded to as soon as possible. Other works may take more time, such as guttering.

The following table summarises the different priority levels and timeframes for completion. The timeframe will be assigned by the Housing Call Centre when requesting the maintenance.

The Housing Call Centre may escalate the priority level if there are site-specific requirements raised at the time the maintenance request is made.

For more information on priority criteria see the [Maintenance and modification guidelines](https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sda-maintenance-and-modification-guidelines). Find out more on our website: <<https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/sda-maintenance-and-modification-guidelines>>

| Priority | Timeframe for completion |
| --- | --- |
| Critical | Completed within 8 hours |
| Urgent | Completed within 24 hours |
| Priority | Completed within 7 days |
| Normal | Completed within 14 days |

## Residents or their SIL provider are unhappy with the quality of the work

Residents or their SIL provider should contact the **Housing Call Centre on 1300 292 512** or email **SDA.maintenance@dffh.vic.gov.au** for any unsatisfactory works.

If issues cannot be resolved with Housing Call Centre, residents or their SIL provider can follow the department’s complaint process. Find out more on the [department’s Making a complaint page](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint) <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint>.

## Maintenance the department does not do

There are items that the department does not maintain, including:

* **assistive technology** – repairs and replacement of assistive technology (such as wheelchairs, ceiling hoist equipment and tracking, and bedding)
* **whitegoods and furniture** – repairs and replacement of whitegoods (such as fridges, washing machine, and dryers) are not the responsibility of the department. The department does maintain ovens, dishwashers, height-adjustable and hydraulic baths, and blinds, curtains and other fixtures
* **tag and testing** of electrical equipment – the department does not carry out tag and testing of whitegoods or other electrical equipment that the department is not responsible for maintaining. The department will ensure electrical and gas equipment it is responsible for maintaining is audited every two years*.*

Resident’s, or their SIL provider if a charge is collected for this purpose, are responsible for the repair, maintenance and replacement of assistive technology, whitegoods and furniture. If a resident requires a particular type of equipment, whitegood or furniture due to their disability related support needs, the resident may be able to use their NDIS funding to assist with any additional cost that may apply (that is over and above a person’s usual day to day living costs). An example is the repair, maintenance or replacement of a ceiling hoist motor unit and tracking. Information about [NDIS funded assistive technology is available on their website](https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology) <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology>.

Historical leasing arrangements, such as Disability Leasing Model or Group Housing Agreements, may assign different maintenance responsibilities for these items. In these cases, the department will develop an alternative approach following consultation with residents, their nominated contact person and their SIL provider.

# Property damage

## Damage by a resident or SIL provider

### Resident-caused property damage

Resident’s SIL providers should request the repair of any resident-caused damage using the [**responsive maintenance**](#_Responsive_maintenance) process.

The SIL provider should also inform the department when property is damaged by a resident by emailing [**myhome@homes.vic.gov.au**](mailto:myhome@homes.vic.gov.au).

If the damage is likely to occur again, staff will meet with the resident’s SIL provider to discuss strategies to prevent or limit future damage.

Staff may also meet with the resident and their nominated contact person to discuss how to prevent or limit future damage. This may include people who help residents manage their behaviour.

### Property damage caused by the SIL provider

Resident’s SIL providers should request the repair of property damage caused by them through the [**responsive maintenance**](#_Responsive_maintenance) process.

The SIL provider must pay for damages – excluding fair wear and tear (within the meaning of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*) – done to the SDA property by its staff or contractors they have engaged to deliver support at the property.

The SIL provider must inform the department when the damage occurs by emailing [**myhome@homes.vic.gov.au**](mailto:myhome@homes.vic.gov.au).

Staff will contact the SIL provider to discuss:

* the details of the damage
* type and cost of responsive maintenance that was needed to repair the damage
* payment options, considering any extenuating circumstances.

## **Damage by the department or its contractors to residents’ or SIL providers’ property**

Where the department or contractors it has engaged are responsible for damage caused to a resident’s or SIL provider’s belongings or property, the SIL provider should request the repair of the damage through the [**responsive maintenance**](#_Responsive_maintenance) process.

The SIL provider should give the department details of the damage and how it occurred by emailing [**myhome@homes.vic.gov.au**](mailto:myhome@homes.vic.gov.au).

The department will manage all repairs and costs.

# Communication with residents about maintenance and other works

## **Notice to residents about maintenance works**

If urgent repairs are needed, staff or contractors can enter the SDA without notice to ensure the health and safety of residents or others. Every effort will be made to conduct the work at a convenient time if possible.

Other responsive and cyclical maintenance will be coordinated through the residents’ SIL provider at a time that is convenient for residents.

For responsive and cyclical maintenance, residents can agree to the contractor entering the SDA when they arrive.

For other planned works, the department will give residents and their SIL provider at least **seven days’ written notice** following consultation with residents and their SIL provider about when the works can occur.

Any rescheduling or changes will be communicated by phone to the nominated SIL provider staff and the resident’s nominated contact person.

## Consulting with residents about refurbishment works

More significant refurbishment work may be needed to keep the property in good condition. This may include some structural work or upgrades to bathrooms or kitchen areas. These works are planned well in advance and will depend on factors like the current age and condition of the SDA.

The department will make reasonable attempts to consult with residents and their SIL provider’s while planning these works to ensure that their views, preferences and needs are considered.

If the work requires residents to be relocated temporarily, a notice of temporary relocation will be issued. More information on notices of temporary relocation is in the [Residency Management Practice Manual.](https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/residency-management-practice-manual-may-2022) Find out more on our website**:** <<https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/residency-management-practice-manual-may-2022>>

To receive this document in another format, [email My Home](mailto:myhome@homes.vic.gov.au) <myhome@homes.vic.gov.au>, or phone 1300 161 485 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required.

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