



CatholicCare NT

Tenant Handbook

Healthy families
connected communities
honouring culture

WELCOME

Welcome to CatholicCare NT Community Housing. This Handbook is for tenants who rent with us. We hope the information in it will be useful for:

- **people signing new leases**
- **current tenants**
- **people in social housing**

Important numbers:

CatholicCare NT

Community Housing:

(08) 8944 2000

After-hours emergency:

(08) 8944 2020

Emergency Services:

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WHAT WE DO

CatholicCare NT Community Housing:

- **provides and maintains affordable, secure housing,**
- **manages tenancies for a range of social housing options in line with the Residential Tenancy Act,**
- **allocates housing openly and fairly, to match the needs and circumstances of eligible people to available properties,**
- **supports you to live well in your community,**
- **values respect, hope, commitment, integrity and accountability, excellence and social justice, and**
- **uses the national community housing standards best practice guidelines which are used by the tier 2 accredited community housing sector throughout Australia.**

Every tenant has a Tenancy Worker

The Tenancy Worker's role is to:

- **be your main point of contact with us**
- **assist you with the initial viewing and sign-up process**
- **contact you to tell you any important information (e.g. about rent reviews or inspection times)**
- **conduct property inspections**
- **check that rental payments are up-to-date and put processes in place if they are not**
- **provide information about your lease and your tenancy.**
- **Provide information on support services you may require.**

Tell your Tenancy Worker of any changed circumstances that may impact on your lease or your rental payments.

Contact your Tenancy Worker by phoning the office on (08) 8944 2000.

Your Tenancy Worker is:

PART 1: Before you move in

When you are offered a home it is up to you to decide if you will accept it or not. A Tenancy Worker will arrange to meet with you to view the property. You can ask questions, ask about modifications and repairs, or say you do not want to rent the property.

What to expect as a tenant

Your Tenancy Worker will tell you what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant. This will include information about:

- payments such as the bond, rent and rent arrears
- maintaining your property
- improvements and repairs
- how to request alterations, repairs and maintenance
- the importance of being a good neighbour and what to do if disputes or conflicts occur with neighbours.

Keeping pets

Before accepting a property you must tell us if you want to keep pets. Written permission is needed before an animal can be kept at a property at any time during your tenancy.

If pets are agreed to, you must:

- comply with council regulations and register all dogs
- make sure your pets are not a nuisance or a danger
- agree that you are responsible for any harm to people or property damage your pet may cause
- agree that permission to keep a pet may stop if there are reasonable grounds.

Before you move in

Your lease agreement

When you accept a property, you sign a fixed term lease called a Residential Tenancy Agreement.



The lease is a legal contract that we'll both sign. It sets out rights and responsibilities for you as the tenant, and for us as the landlord. If you need help to understand this lease, or if you are not sure about any items in it, you can ask your Tenancy Worker. Also, you can bring a support person with you when you sign the lease.

The lease includes details about:

- rent amount and how to pay it
- repairs
- who can live at the property and how you can use it
- how the lease can be ended.

The lease also has useful information about your obligations such as paying rent, keeping the property clean and tidy etc. so keep your copy of the lease in a safe place as it's a useful document that you may want to refer to later.

For more advice about the lease call:

- CatholicCare NT (08) 8944 2000
- Consumer Affairs NT on (08) 8999 1999
- Darwin Community Legal Service - Tenants Advice Service 1800 812 953

Before you move in

When you sign the lease, you will need to pay two weeks rent up-front, and rent is always paid in advance.

Your rent amount

This is how we work out what your weekly rent amount will be:



For Social Housing

Rent is income-based, so we match the rent to your household income. It is calculated to be the lower of either of these:

- 25% of assessable household income + Commonwealth Rent Assistance. This is called a tenant contribution.
- market rent, as assessed by independent valuation.

How to pay your rent

Using your **unique payment account number**, you can pay rent each week or fortnight by:

- Centrelink CentrePay
- EFTPOS payment at our office or over the phone
- BPAY

We don't take cash payments. We recommend paying rent with an automatic payment, and we can help you set this up.

Before you move in

The condition report

At the start of your tenancy your home will be clean and in good repair.

When you sign your lease a condition report is provided to you. It describes the state of the property. You then check it and let us know if there is anything you don't agree with. A copy is kept on file.



The bond

A bond (called a Security Deposit) is a payment made by a tenant before moving in. It is security against unpaid rent or damage to the property. We will let you know how much the bond will be.

The bond payment is made – along with two weeks rent in advance – at the start of the tenancy.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act (NT) your bond is held in a tenancy trust account. The tenancy trust account holds the bond until you move out.

The process for you to reclaim your bond, or for us to make a claim against your bond at the end of your tenancy, is set out in your lease agreement.



Before you move in

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

If you receive a Centrelink benefit you may be eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). CRA is a Federal Government contribution to your rent. You can claim CRA through Centrelink.

Your personal information is kept private

We respect your privacy and we keep your personal information confidential. Only those who need the information can see it.

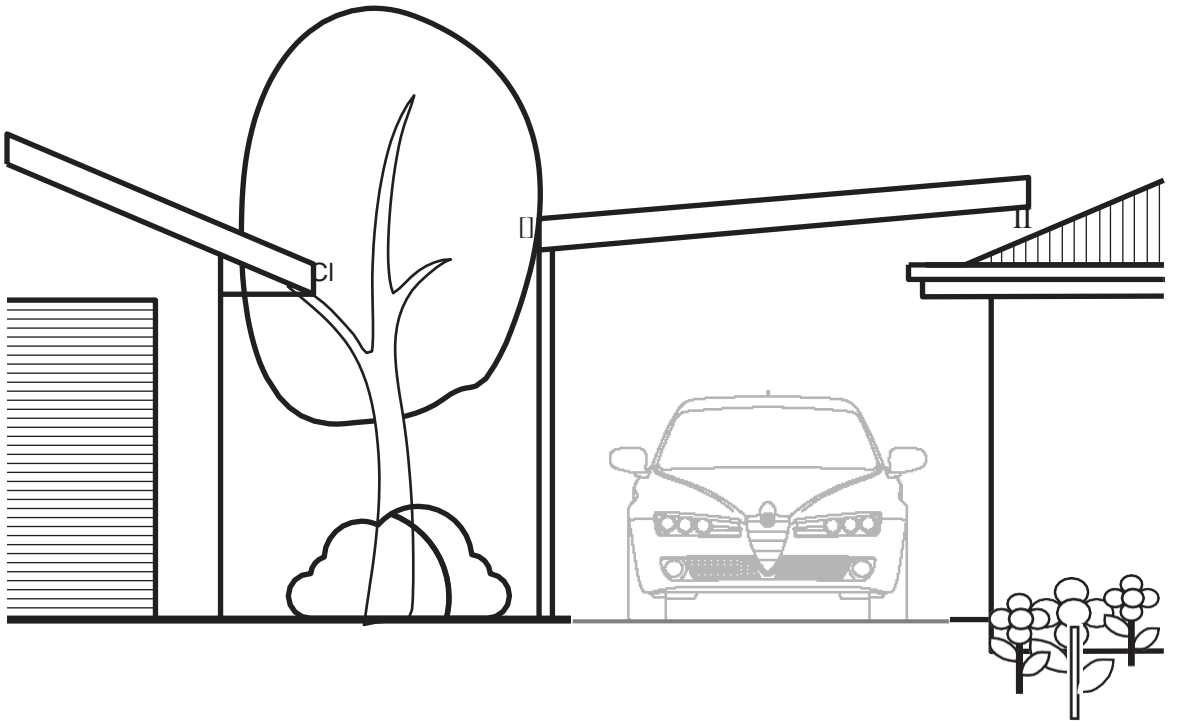


If you visit our office and we need to collect information of a personal nature from you, we will offer a private place to do this.

Tenant information is stored securely and only kept for as long as necessary. When the information is no longer needed it is disposed of in a secure way.

We will only share your private information with certain services, for example personal support services, with your consent.

There may be legal situations where we are required to share your information with other organisations. Our Privacy Statement and our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy gives more details about when we can share this information and you can read about these on our website.



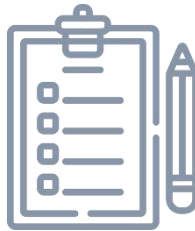
PART 2: Moving in

Check the condition report straight away

The lease is signed, and you have your keys!

The first step is to check that the condition report is accurate. Do this before you move your belongings in so you can easily check walls and floors. Note down anything on the report that you disagree with, sign it and return it to our office within five (5) working days of signing your lease. If the report isn't lodged with us in the first five days, we will assume you agree with it.

The condition report will be used at the end of your tenancy to assess any damage to the property, and the impact it may have on your bond.



Keep this Handbook handy

Keep this Handbook close by and phone us if you have any questions about your property or neighbourhood.



Moving in

Check your smoke alarms

When you move in there will be a working smoke alarm in your home.

Test your alarms and if any do not work, call us straight away. From now on, test your alarms every six months by holding down the test button. Keep alarms clean.

Smoke alarms save lives, so it's essential that no-one removes or interferes with the operation of an alarm.



Always call us if you have any questions or concerns.

Your Tenancy Worker will be in touch

A few weeks after you move in, your Tenancy Worker will contact you to see how you're settling in. This is a chance for you to ask any questions about your property, and go over the terms and conditions of your lease.

Your Tenancy Worker will chat with you about the responsibilities you agreed to when you signed your lease. These include:

- paying your rent on time, in full and in advance
- maintaining your home and knowing how to request repairs (see Part 3 for more details about requesting repairs)
- settling into the neighbourhood.

The first formal property inspection happens in the first three months after your tenancy starts, and then usually once a year unless otherwise required. Your Tenancy Worker will let you know more about this.

Moving in

Getting your services connected

Before moving in, you need to arrange for services to be connected in your name, such as:

- electricity
- gas (if applicable)
- telephone and internet.



Connection fees, ongoing charges and costs for lost, damaged, or stolen equipment supplied by those services is your responsibility. Your CCNT tenancy worker can assist you with making these arrangements if required.

Change your address

Let other services such as Centrelink and the Electoral Office know your new address. If you want mail redirected from your old address to your new one, arrange this with Australia Post.

Get to know about local services

Find out about services in your neighbourhood such as:

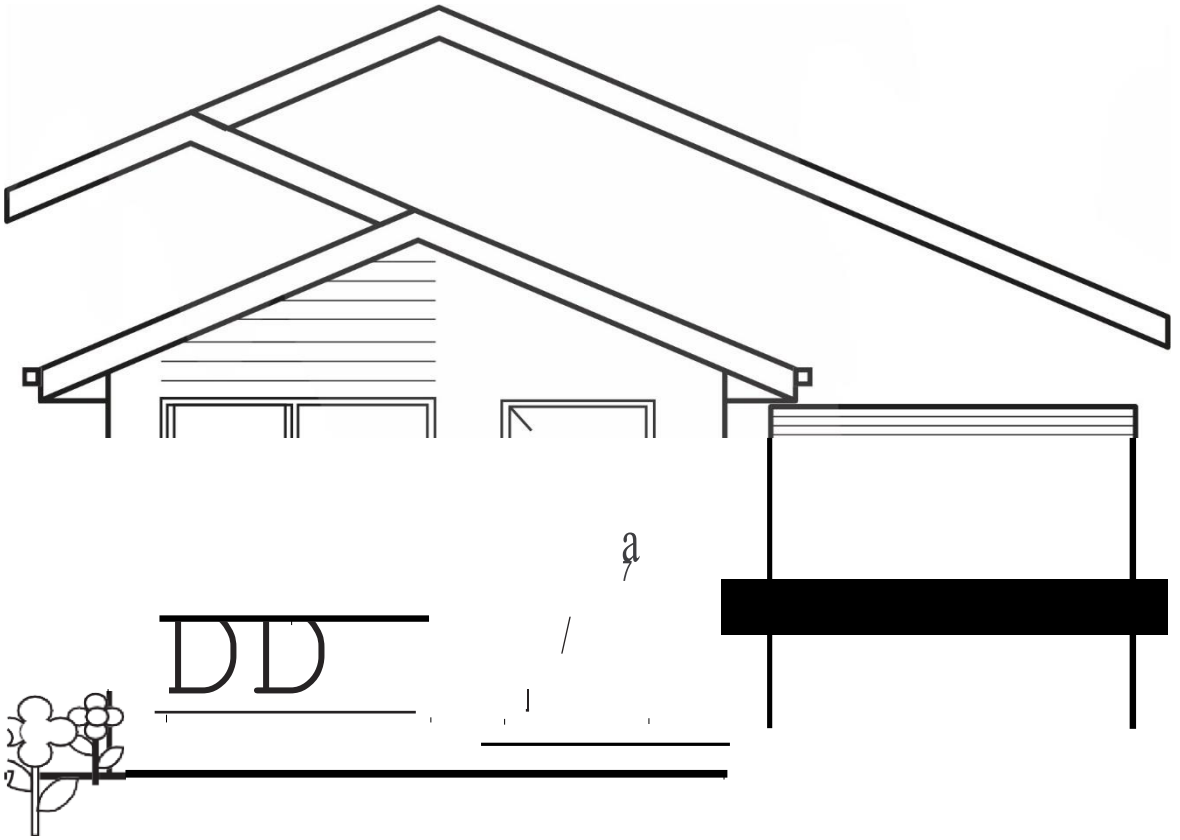
- schools, playgroups, neighbourhood house, library
- bus stops near you and timetable
- Police and emergency services
- local tip, bin types and collection days
- registration rules for dogs, noise etc.
- community garden or pantry.

Property keys

At the start of your tenancy you get a full set of keys and sign for them.



If your keys are lost, you will need to pay for replacement or the cost of fitting new locks. Please contact us to arrange this if it is required.



PART 3: Living in your home

We are here to support you to live well in your home and enjoy a stable tenancy. If you have any questions about your lease or your property, please contact our office.

In this part of the Handbook we have answers to the most common questions tenants ask us. There is also lots of extra information about your tenancy and your lease.



Your rent account

Your Tenancy Worker can tell you about your rent account, and you can ask about your rent account balance at any time.

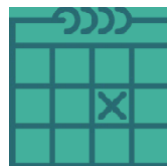
You must advise us if you have any changes to your household income or circumstances, for example, the birth of a child, a new job or when someone else is moving in or out.

When these types of changes happen, you must let us know, so please call us or call in at our office to speak to a Tenancy Worker.

You must pay rent

You must pay rent as agreed, either weekly or fortnightly, by the due date and in advance.

If you experience financial hardship don't just stop paying your rent – talk to your Tenancy Worker as they may have useful advice or be able to put you in touch with services that can help. Non-payment of rent is a breach of your Lease Agreement



You may be evicted if rent is not paid.

Living in your home

Other payments you must make

You are responsible for the cost of damage to the property that is caused by you or your visitors.

In many tenancies you are also responsible for water use charges. If you are not currently responsible for water use charges, we may impose those at any time, especially if your water use is considered to be unusually high.



Your Tenancy Worker can talk to you about your payment options.

If damage occurs

Report any damage that occurs at the property to us as soon as possible. If you, a member of your household, or a visitor to your home causes damage to the property, you must pay the costs of repairs.



CatholicCare NT is your nominated repairer. If anything needs repairing or replacing, you must contact us on 08 8944 2033.

Things you must tell us

You must let us know if:

- your household income changes
- you would like to change who is living in your home, including anyone who lives there on a part-time basis.

Living in your home

Rent reviews

The amount of rent you pay is reviewed every year or whenever we are notified of a change.

You will be asked to confirm your current income and the income of all household members. If you are participating in Centrelink Income Confirmation, we will be able to obtain your income details on your behalf, with your consent.

We will give you notice if the market rent or your rent contribution is going to be changed.

Take care of your property

Keep your home:

- clean
- safe
- free from damage, pests and vermin.



Keep your garden tidy by:

- mowing any lawns or arranging to have them mown
- removing garden waste and lawn clippings.

Decorating your home

Your home can be decorated to your taste as long as it can be returned to its original condition at the end of your lease. Curtains, floor rugs and pictures can be added. Make sure you get our written permission first before making any alterations to the property – this includes garden sheds and other outdoor alterations. You are not permitted to move fixtures and fittings, build on to, or add to the property.





"Who pays for repairs
and
maintenance?"

We pay for wear and tear* repair of:

Fluorescent lights, inaccessible light globes, heat lamps and downlights

Common area lights (in complexes only)

Stoves

Locks

Smoke alarms (notify us if there is a battery-type smoke alarm at your place)

Doors and fittings

Taps

Fixed floor coverings

Internal and external painting

Clothes line

Downpipes, gutters and drains (except for blockages caused by you)

Boundary fences

Servicing heat pumps, hot water cylinders

*wear and tear is the result of everyday normal use

"It depends on the
of repair and the type of
damage."



As well as damage you** cause, you are responsible to pay for:

Replacement of accessible light globes

Testing and cleaning of smoke alarms (notify Maintenance if faulty)

Broken windows, as specified under the Residential Tenancy Act and reflected in
your lease

Damage and holes in walls, doors and floors

Faulty appliances that are not listed as our responsibility and cause the power
supply to trip

Blockages to sinks, toilet and drains (where caused by you or your visitors, even if
it's accidental)

Pest and vermin control

Maintaining gardens, lawns and tree pruning, and removal of garden rubbish
including lawn clippings and garden waste

Replacement of lost or stolen keys – if you are locked out of your home,
contact a locksmith to gain entry

Repairs to any items that you have installed

Cleaning of heat pumps and heat pump filters, as required

**includes members of your household and visitors to your property

Living in your home

How to request repairs and maintenance

When repairs are needed, you must contact us first because we are your landlord and nominated repairer.

To report damage from vandalism, please phone the Police first then contact CatholicCare NT Tenancy Worker with the police incident report details.

To request repairs:

- **Phone us on 08 8944 2000 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday**
- **URGENT after-hours repairs phone 8944 2020**
- **Email: darwin@catholiccarent.org.au**

You will need to tell us your name, address and telephone number. We'll ask you to describe the problem and tell us what you need repaired. We will arrange a Works Order or an inspection by our Maintenance Team or a Contractor, depending on the urgency and nature of the repair and we'll give you an expected timeframe for the work or inspection to be done.

Identification of maintenance staff

We use a range of different companies for repair works, so you should follow these guidelines:

- you should already know of any works we have organised at your property
- the tradesperson will have a work order from us with your name and contact details
- CatholicCare NT staff will give you prior notice of their visit, and they will identify themselves immediately on arrival.

When in doubt, refuse entry and contact us immediately.

Living in your home

How fast are repairs done?

This depends on the type of work required and its urgency.

Under Part 7 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*, repairs are categorised as either Emergency Repairs or Non-emergency repairs. All responsive repairs will be undertaken within the response times outlined below and in line with Part 7 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*:

Category	Example	Response Time
Emergency/ Urgent	Burst water service Blocked or broken toilet system Serious roof leak Dangerous electrical fault Gas leak Flooding or serious flood damage Burst water pipes Serious storm, fire, or impact damage Breakdown of the gas, electricity, or water supply A failure or breakdown of an essential service or appliance for water or cooking A serious fault in a staircase or lift that makes it difficult for a resident to access or use their premises. Anything that could hurt somebody Fault or damage that makes the premises unsafe or insecure	After notification from the tenant, CCNTR will within 5 business days have either had the repairs carried out made arrangements for the repairs to be made and notified the tenant accordingly The repairs will be completed out within 14 days.
Non-emergency	Repair to clothesline Internal doors that won't close An air conditioner or fan not working Leaking taps, shower pressure decreasing	Within 7 days of being notified CCNTR will have either Had the repairs carried out; or Made arrangements for the repairs to made and notified the tenant accordingly. Non-emergency repairs will be completed within 21 days.

CatholicCare Northern Territory (CCNT) will action emergency items straight away and take reasonable steps to fix the issue within 14 days.

Living in your home

Property inspections

Property inspections happen at different times and for different reasons. A new inspection report will be done after each inspection. We will make arrangements with you before every inspection, and we always respect your privacy.

Inspections will happen:

- at least once each year, sometimes more often
- each time your lease is due for renewal
- before and after complex repairs
- when assessments for planned works, structural issues or other property condition assessments are being done
- if we have concerns about the condition of your property, including follow-up inspections.

Extra guests

If someone wants to stay at your home for longer than four weeks, or on a regular basis, you must let us know so we can assess approval of an additional occupant and adjust your rent, if needed. Approval depends on the type of housing you have and the circumstances, and it may be subject to conditions.

Being away from your place

If you're going to be away from your home for longer than four weeks, please let us know. We understand there may be good reasons for you to be away, such as:

- a holiday
- hospitalisation of you or an immediate family member
- incarceration

If you're going to be away for more than four (4) weeks, talk with your Tenancy Worker about your particular situation.

Living in your home

If you are ill or injured

If you become ill or injured, we will do what we can to support you to keep your tenancy. This may include modifying your property, offering a property more suited to your needs, or assisting you to access in-home support and care services.

If the tenancy can't be maintained, we'll work with other support services and agencies to help find alternative solutions.

We will also support you if you need home modifications due to ageing or disability. We may be able to modify the property ourselves or assist you to access other home modification services and funding (e.g. through government departments or disability services), or look for a more suitable property.

Tenant support is available

We support all our tenants to manage and maintain their tenancy, and to live well in the community.

If you need extra assistance, talk to your Tenancy Worker. They may refer you to our tenancy support workers who can talk with you about the support options available to you internal and external to CatholicCare NT.



Living in your home

Being a good neighbour

Every community is diverse. You may have neighbours who are families or singles, of different ages and stages of life, or from different backgrounds. Just like you, they make choices about their own lifestyles. While neighbours may not always agree with each other's choices, everyone has a right to live peacefully in their home.

We are dedicated to working with all tenants to achieve successful, stable tenancies and peaceful, respectful neighbourhoods and communities where everyone can thrive.

As a tenant and good neighbour you and your visitors must follow the conditions outlined in your lease. These include respecting the peace and comfort of your neighbours by:

- not creating a disturbance in or around your home
- not holding noisy parties
- not revving loud cars or motorbikes or doing burn-outs
- not using offensive language
- being considerate and respectful of others when using shared spaces such as parking, common rooms and gardens.

Reporting criminal activity

Always report criminal activity to the Police.

You can also call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or via their website at www.crimestoppersnt.com.au.

Living in your home

Neighbourhood complaints

You must respect your neighbour's right to peace, comfort and privacy. If you are bothered by a neighbour's behaviour you can, if you feel safe to, talk things over with them. If you have a dispute with your neighbour, you can contact your Tenancy Worker who will work with you to understand the cause of the problem. If it is a personal dispute, they may refer you to other support including mediation services.

CatholicCare NT cannot get involved in personal mediation as an advocate or a third party.

We respect your privacy

Sometimes we will need to visit your home, but when we do, we will ensure your privacy is respected.

These visits may take place

When work is planned, a tradesperson may call and make an appointment, or visit if they are in the area.

When inspections are planned, your Tenancy Worker will make arrangements with you for a time to inspect in accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 2010*. We prefer you to be home at the time, but if you are not available and we need to reschedule, we can then enter your property legally without your permission.

There are also some other reasons why we can enter your property without your permission. These are if we believe that:

- you are ill or injured and can't give us permission
- damage has occurred – or is likely to occur – to your property
- there is risk to you or another person on your property
- we believe you have abandoned the home.

Living in your home

Getting involved with CatholicCare NT Community Housing

Have a say about decisions that affect your housing by participating in activities and programs for tenants, for example:

- Do the annual **Tenant Satisfaction Survey**; we will advise you when this is available to complete.
- Talk to one of our **Community Housing** Team members by ringing (08) 8944 2000

We welcome feedback

You can give us feedback anytime by emailing us e: or by completing our online feedback form www.catholiccarent.org.au or calling the office. Feedback about our services and staff helps us to:

- monitor our performance
- find out what is working well and what isn't
- improve our services.



Living in your home

How to make a complaint

We welcome complaints and feedback as an opportunity to improve what we do.

You can make a complaint:

- on the phone
- by completing the Complaint Form available at our office
- via the contact form on our website.

We will acknowledge, investigate and provide a response to you within the timeframes set out in our Complaints Policy.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, or the way we have handled your complaint, you can speak to NT Consumer Affairs on 1800 019 316 or the Ombudsman on (08) 8999 1818 or 1800 806 380

How to make an appeal

If you disagree with a decision we make you can discuss this with the CCNT staff member working with you or complete the Appeal Form available on the CCNT web site. The Appeals Management Procedure is available from the website. and outlines the process for appealing a decision.

Some decisions people can appeal are: eligibility for housing, and suitability of housing offers. Senior staff in CCNT will review the information and make a decision regarding your appeal.

If you are not happy about the decision you can also speak with the Ombudsman (08) 8999 1818 or 1800 806 380.

If you think CCNT has not been compliant with Community Housing registration requirements you can contact the NT Registrar on (08) 8999 8304 to discuss your concerns.



PART 4: Moving out

Moving to another property

If you want to transfer to another property managed by us, it can be approved if you have a valid reason. The first step is to talk with your Tenancy Worker about your reasons. They will give you a request form and talk with you about the supporting evidence you will need, such as a report from a health professional.

Valid reasons for a transfer include:

- your current housing is impacting on your health or mobility
- overcrowding
- you have a safety or security issue
- you are under-occupying your home.

When your request is considered, we take into account whether your rent is up to date, whether you are maintaining the condition of your home and whether you are complying fully with your lease.

Ending a tenancy

A tenancy may be ended by you or by us, as outlined in the lease.

If you want to end the tenancy, you must give a minimum of 14 days written notice. If you leave without notice, or before the notice period ends, rent will continue to be charged to you to cover this required notice period.

We can end your tenancy by issuing a Notice to Vacate in accordance with the conditions set out in your lease.

Moving out

At the end of the tenancy

When you give your notice, you will need to arrange a final property inspection with your Tenancy Worker. The property must be returned in the condition it was in when you moved in, apart from reasonable wear and tear. The original Condition Report is used to assess this. Any costs for repairs that are not the result of reasonable wear and tear will be deducted from your security deposit (bond), and/or they may be invoiced to you for payment. When you hand us the keys, the house and garden must be clean and free of rubbish. All belongings and rubbish must have been removed, and any damage repaired or reported to us. Money owing for rent or other charges must be paid in full by the end of the tenancy.

Getting your bond back

Any rent in arrears or other charges, plus any amounts we spend on cleaning, clearing rubbish or doing repairs for damages that were not normal wear and tear, will be deducted from your security deposit (bond). You will be charged for any amounts not covered by your bond. If there are no charges and your bond is approved to be refunded, you can claim it by completing the bond claims form NT Consumer Affairs. If you have had your bond paid for by a bond assistance service, the bond may be refunded to them where applicable.

Debt recovery

If there are vacate charges after your tenancy ends, you will receive an invoice to repay this in full or enter into a repayment arrangement. If we don't receive payment or hear from you to set up a repayment arrangement, we will forward the debt to a collection agency to follow up with you. This may affect your credit rating and your ability to apply for housing in the future. As outlined in the lease, costs related to the recovery of the debt will be added to your account.

Rent credit

If your rental account is in credit when you move out, and there are no outstanding charges, we will return the credit amount to you via bank details that you will need to provide us.



CatholicCare NT

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connected communities
Honouring culture



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