



# TENANT GUIDE TO TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

## INFORMATION FOR TENANTS

This guide explains what a transitional housing tenancy involves. The terms and conditions of your tenancy are set out in a Residential Tenancy Agreement that is covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 2010.

If you accept an offer of transitional housing, you will be required to enter into a tenancy agreement with SAHSSI (Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra) under our transitional housing program.

### WHAT IS TRANSITIONAL HOUSING?

Transitional housing is a form of social housing assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The transitional accommodation offered by SAHSSI is targeted for single women and women with children.

Transitional housing is not long-term housing. The purpose of transitional housing with SAHSSI is to support you to stabilise your circumstances so that you can move on to more appropriate long term housing.

All clients in SAHSSI transitional housing are appointed a case manager, who will support them to secure permanent housing.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING?

A client is eligible for transitional housing if they meet our target group (single women and women with children) and are homeless or at risk of homelessness and in need of immediate housing and support.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING MY TRANSITIONAL HOUSING TENANCY?

At the start of your tenancy a SAHSSI case manager will work with you to develop your case plan. This is a written document that helps you and your worker to identify:

- Any barriers you may be facing to access and sustain long-term housing
- The most suitable long term housing option for you and how you can work towards that, and
- Any tenancy related issues that you have experienced in the past

Your case plan will be reviewed and updated throughout your tenancy.

#### HOW IS MY RENT CALCULATED?

Your rent is calculated according to the Community Housing Rent Policy. This is a subsidised rent equal to approximately 25% of your household income, plus 15% of any family payments, plus 100% of any Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

The exception to this are our bedsitter units, where the rent is capped at \$120.00 per week regardless of income.

We require rent to be paid two weeks in advance at the start of and throughout your tenancy.

It is your responsibility to advise SAHSSI of any changes to your income and/or family circumstances within 21 days of the effect of that change.

For more information on the Community Housing Rent Policy, visit

[www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Community+Housing+Division](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Community+Housing+Division)

#### AM I REQUIRED TO PAY A BOND?

Tenants are required to pay a four week bond based on your assessed rent. Two weeks must be paid at the commencement of your tenancy and the balance may be repaid to us in weekly or fortnightly instalments. Your bond may be returned to you at the end of your tenancy if there is no money owing for rental arrears or property damage etc.

If your tenancy ends prior to the bond being paid in full, the balance owing will no longer be payable.

We also have a limited number of properties where the bond is capped at \$200.00

#### FOR HOW LONG CAN I REMAIN IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING?

Transitional Housing is not long-term housing. Your initial tenancy will be for a fixed term ranging from six weeks to three months, however can be renewed for a further period at the discretion of SAHSSI up to a maximum period of 12 months. You will be supported to move on from transitional housing to a form of long term housing that is appropriate to your needs. This is a goal that you and your case manager will work towards using your Case Plan.

## WHAT SERVICES AND UTILITIES ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY?

As a tenant, you are responsible for the connection and payment of services for electricity and gas (if applicable). You may connect with an energy provider of your choice.

You are not responsible for the payment of Council Rates or Strata Levies.

## WHAT ABOUT WATER CHARGES?

Tenants are charged for water usage in the majority of SAHSSI's properties. You will be advised at the commencement of your tenancy if water charges are applicable to your property, and it will be indicated on your lease.

### WATER CHARGING IN DWELLINGS WITH SEPARATE METERS

Tenants in properties with a separate water meter will be billed for their actual usage on a quarterly basis.

In the case of new tenants, water charges are to be estimated and levied from the commencement of their tenancy.

The amount of water charges will be based on the water bill from the local water authority. The charge will be adjusted as needed to reflect the tenant's actual water use over time.

### WATER CHARGING IN DWELLINGS WITH SHARED METERS

SAHSSI will charge a percentage of the tenant's rent for water usage in properties with shared water meters where SAHSSI pays a water account. This percentage will be publically available on SAHSSI's website and will be reviewed annually.

Water usage for social housing properties with shared meters will be capped at a maximum charge per household per week. This cap rate is also available on SAHSSI's website and will be reviewed annually.

The current percentage for water usage is 2.5% of tenant's weekly rent with a cap of \$6.50 per week.

As it is impossible to determine an individual usage charge for shared metres, the water charge is considered the tenants' contribution towards water usage costs only and is not intended to reflect their individual water usage.

On a quarterly basis, SAHSSI will ensure that the charges for all of the tenants combined do not exceed the total water bill received from the Water Authority for that period. If the total

amount paid by all tenants exceeds the total bill from the Water Authority for that period, SAHSSI will reimburse tenants the amount that was overpaid.

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## PAYING FOR WATER USAGE CHARGES

Tenants can pay their water usage in a lump sum payment or set up an agreement to pay an amount each week/fortnight. Any payments for water must be specified as water payments.

If a water charge remains unpaid for more than 21 days from the date it is charged to the tenant's account then SAHSSI may take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) to recover the unpaid water usage charges.

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## DISPUTE OF WATER CHARGES

Tenants can lodge an appeal if they believe water charges have not been assessed properly in accordance with the Water Charging Policy. This only applies to properties with shared water meters.

Tenants cannot appeal the decision to charge for water usage in community housing properties.

The actual water usage charges for tenants in properties with separate water meters is not an appealable matter.

If a tenant wishes to appeal a decision made by SAHSSI they should follow SAHSSI's complaints and appeals policy.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A TENANT?

As a tenant in transitional housing you are expected to:

- Abide by your lease under the terms of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Work with your SAHSSI case manager at the start of your tenancy to develop your case plan
- Follow-up on any of the actions identified in your case plan during your tenancy
- Actively apply for private rental properties (unless otherwise identified by your Case Manager).
- Keep records of the private rental properties you have applied for and show evidence of this to your case manager regularly
- Review your case plan with your case manager
- Accept any reasonable offers of social housing or private rental that you may receive

## WHO CAN RESIDE AT MY PROPERTY?

Only occupants approved by SAHSSI at the time of signing your lease are authorised to reside at the property. This is generally yourself and any dependent children. It is important to advise SAHSSI if your household compliment changes in any way.

This transitional accommodation is for women and children only. This means that no males (other than male dependants under 18 years) are permitted to reside at the property.

## CAN I HAVE VISITORS?

You are entitled to have visitors at your property, but must remember that you are responsible for their behaviour. This means that if they cause a disturbance or damage the property it may impact on your tenancy. Also, as our service is for women and children only, **NO adult males are permitted to visit the property.**

## WHAT IF MY TRANSITIONAL PROPERTY NEEDS REPAIRS?

SAHSSI is committed to ensuring that properties are well maintained to ensure the wellbeing of our tenants and their families.

Repairs and maintenance issues may be reported to SAHSSI in the following way:

### **During business hours (9am -5pm, Mon to Fri)**

**Phone – 02 4229 8523 or 0411 304 970**

**Email – [maintenance@sahssi.org.au](mailto:maintenance@sahssi.org.au)**

### **Afterhours (emergency maintenance only)**

**Phone – 0411 304 970 or check the emergency contractors listed on your lease)**

Examples of an emergency maintenance issue may include:

- A burst water pipe, main or service
- A blocked or broken toilet
- A serious roof leak
- Any gas leak
- A dangerous electrical fault
- A failure or breakdown of gas, electricity or water supply
- Any fault or damage that causes the property to be unsafe or not secure
- Flooding or serious flood damage
- Serious storm or fire damage

## CAN I END MY TENANCY BEFORE MY LEASE EXPIRES?

If you secure alternative accommodation SAHSSI will allow you to break your lease without penalty. We would appreciate as much notice as possible of your intention to vacate, but we understand that sometimes this is not possible. You will only be required to pay rent up to the date that you vacate and return the keys to the property.

## CAN I KEEP PETS?

No. Pets are not permitted in our transitional properties.

## WHO WILL INSPECT MY PROPERTY?

SAHSSI may conduct routine inspections of your transitional property from time to time, in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. You will be given at least 7 days' notice of our intention to conduct an inspection and are welcome to have a support person present.

Should the time of the inspection not be convenient, please contact SAHSSI to arrange a more suitable time.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE LAWNS AND GARDENS AT MY PROPERTY?

SAHSSI will arrange for a contractor to look after any grassed areas at your property. Any gardens at your property are your responsibility to maintain.

Our contractor will also maintain all common area lawns and gardens.

## WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

We welcome complaints as they provide an opportunity for us to improve our organisation's services. You can make a complaint about SAHSSI, its staff or any representative of the organisation (including management) and your complaint will be taken seriously.

For information on our complaints process please refer to our **Complaints Fact Sheet**.

All complaints will be responded to in a fair and timely manner.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint then you may pursue other avenues such as:

- Contacting the Illawarra & South Coast Tenants Advice Service or Murra Mia Aboriginal Tenants Advice Service.
- Lodging a complaint with the Registrar of Community Housing in respect of performance against the regulatory code.
- Making an application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Appeals tribunal.

## WHAT ABOUT APPEALS?

A tenant can lodge an appeal if they are dissatisfied with a decision made by SAHSSI. Appeals can be made within the policy framework of SAHSSI and the decision must be relevant to the person that is appealing.

All tenants will be provided with clear information on SAHSSI's appeals process.

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### APPEALABLE MATTERS

- Rental subsidy assessments
- Cancellation of rental subsidy
- Calculation of water charges

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### NON-APPEALABLE MATTERS

- Matters which are the responsibility of other tribunals (ie NCAT)
- The content of SAHSSI Policy
- Decisions that are not directly related to the tenant
- Actual water charges for separately metered properties
- The decision to charge for water usage in community housing properties

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### LOADING AN APPEAL

An appeal needs to be made in writing, stating the decision you would like SAHSSI to review. The appeal will involve a "fresh look" at your case, taking into account all relevant information, and conducting an interview where necessary. To ensure a fair and equitable process, the appeal will be dealt with by a more senior officer than the original decision maker.

The CEO or their delegate will then respond to you, in writing, of the outcome of the appeal.

If the original decision was made by the CEO, the request will be reviewed by the SAHSSI Management Committee.

All appeals will be responded to in a timely manner.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MOVE OUT OF MY PROPERTY?

When you vacate a SAHSSI property, your tenancy is considered as "ended" on the day you move out and return the keys to the property. It is most important that you do actually return the keys as soon as possible as you will be charged rent up until this time.

Once you return the keys, SAHSSI is able to arrange a refund to you any credit that you may have in your rent account. All rent refunds are processed on Wednesday's so please keep this in mind.

Your bond may take a little longer to be finalised. SAHSSI will need to inspect your property once you vacate and, if necessary arrange repairs or cleaning. These amounts will be debited from your bond. If there are no repairs, cleaning or rent arrears then your bond may be refunded in full. This refund is processed by Renting Services Fair Trading.

## CONTACT US

Address: 88 Swan St, Wollongong

Phone: 4229 8523 (Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm)

Fax: 4226 3958

Business Hours: 9am – 5pm Mon- Friday (excluding Public Holidays)

Website: [www.sahssi.org.au](http://www.sahssi.org.au)

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### **Fair Trading**

[www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: 133220

### **Illawarra and South Coast Tenants Service**

Phone: 42743475 or 1800 807 225

### **Murra Mia**

Phone: 02 4472 9363 or 1800 672 185

### **NSW Registrar Community Housing**

Phone: 1800 330 940

Email: [registrar@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:registrar@facs.nsw.gov.au)