

# *information sheet*

## **Rental Policy Update**

In 2000 the Ministry of Housing adopted the new Refurbishment of Occupied Properties Policy, and made changes to the Priority Assistance Policy and Youth Policy. The following Information Sheet provides a summary of key aspects of these policies.

Copies of the full policy documents are available to view and download on the Ministry of Housing's website at [www.housing.wa.gov.au](http://www.housing.wa.gov.au). Tenants can request copies of the relevant policy at the Ministry of Housing offices.

### **Refurbishment of Occupied Properties Policy**

The Ministry of Housing has an extensive program to refurbish and upgrade properties throughout the State. While many tenants choose to temporarily relocate while their property is being refurbished, tenants can choose to remain in the property during the refurbishment.

The Refurbishment Policy was developed by the Ministry of Housing (Homeswest) in 2000, with input from Shelter WA and the Tenants Advice Service, to cover the latter situation.

The Policy outlines the rights and responsibilities of tenants living in properties undergoing refurbishment, for example, through the New Living, Redevelopment and Refurbishment programs.

The Policy **Preamble** states that

- The Project Manager is to work around the tenant, if possible, and with the tenant, negotiate the amount of work, timeframes and alternatives in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing Project Officer. The preferred option may be to temporarily transfer the tenant and their belongings whilst the work is being carried out.

The **Policy Guidelines and Practices** state that:

- The Ministry will:
  - ⇒ Pay all removal and furniture storage costs
  - ⇒ Clearly articulate the work required and timeframes
  - ⇒ Manage the project to ensure satisfactory workmanship and completion on time
  - ⇒ Offer the tenant the choice of colours/materials etc (within Ministry of Housing specifications standards)
  - ⇒ Keep the tenant informed of progress (negotiated with tenant)
  - ⇒ Ensure the contractor secures the property
  - ⇒ Carry out a Property Condition Report on both properties and arrange a new Tenancy Agreement for the temporary tenancy, with similar action on return to the substantive tenancy. Rent will be charged only on one property

- ⇒ Ensure that building rubble and rubbish is cleared from the site after completion of refurbishment and any related damage to the property is made good.
- The Ministry will not
  - ⇒ Take responsibility for damages/loss to furniture or belongings during removal or for items left (locked up) at the premises. Items removed by designated Removalist and/or stored in off site designated Storage areas already have insurance liability
  - ⇒ Maintain the lawns and gardens during the refurbishment work, as this is the tenant's responsibility (Regional discretion on extra costs), unless the tenant has relocated, in which case the Ministry will maintain the lawns and gardens.
- The Tenant will
  - ⇒ Pay rent and water consumption costs as normal during the period (Regional discretion on extra costs including rent free period)
  - ⇒ Look after lawns and gardens at the property at which they are residing.

- ⇒ *Alternate housing options are to be examined and discussed with the applicant*
- ⇒ *An applicant is to be provided with the information brochure on the priority assistance guidelines, timeframes and what constitutes a valid offer. This will enable the applicant to make an informed decision.*
- Timeframe for Assistance
  - ⇒ *Applicants are to have their application for priority assistance reviewed after three months if no valid offer of accommodation has been made. Applicants may be reassessed after three months to determine their needs are still valid for priority assistance.*

### **Priority Assistance Policy**

A number of changes and additions have recently been made to the Priority Assistance Policy. The Ministry has also developed an Information Brochure providing important information for tenants and advocates regarding Priority Assistance. The Brochure will be available early in 2001.

The Policy changes (in italics) include:

- General Conditions
  - ⇒ Support letters from medical practitioners or *paramedical detailing medical condition and reason why present accommodation is unsuitable*

### **Youth Policy**

The Youth Policy has been amended to enable supporting parents under the age of 18 years to access public housing. However young people under the age of 18 years and without dependents continue to be ineligible for public housing, whilst being eligible for the Housing Access Loan (bond assistance).

### **More information**

Contact Ministry of Housing offices or access policy information via website at [www.housing.wa.gov.au](http://www.housing.wa.gov.au)

For comments and input to policy development please contact Shelter WA on the numbers listed below.