

## COMMUNICATING WITH HOUSING ACT

### BY TELEPHONE

Many people find that the telephone is the easiest way to communicate with Housing ACT. This is a quick and easy method for you to report the need for a repair, make a complaint, notify Housing ACT of a change of circumstances (eg, increased income or an additional resident), or ask a question (eg, when your next rebate form is due).

Your communications with Housing ACT are important, so you should keep a written record of every phone call you make to them. The Housing ACT officer you speak to should also record your communication, either on paper, or in the computer system, or both. However, mistakes can be made, important information overlooked or only partly recorded and sometimes Housing ACT may have no record that you called. For your records, you should note:

- The date and the time you rang;
- The name of the officer you spoke to;
- The main points of your communication; and
- The officer's response.

Alternatively, you can confirm your telephone communication by sending a letter to Housing ACT and restating what was said.

You can contact Housing ACT by telephone on 133 427. The switchboard operators are usually very helpful and can assist to get you put through to the correct person. If you keep getting an answer machine, ask

the switchboard operator to put you through to another officer in the same section.

To report Housing ACT maintenance issues call Spotless on (02) 6207 1500 (24 hours, 7 days).

### BY LETTER

The advantage of communicating by letter is that there is a written record. Letters should be signed and dated, and you should always keep a copy in a safe place. In fact, it is a good idea to keep a folder in which you keep all your Housing ACT correspondence.

The most reliable approach is to take your letter (or form) into the Housing ACT office in person where it will be date stamped and marked 'received'. Ask for a photocopy of the stamped document for your records.

General correspondence, applications for assistance and rental rebate forms can be posted to:

Housing ACT  
Locked Bag 3000  
Belconnen ACT 2617

There are also courtesy Housing ACT mailboxes located at:

- Tuggeranong Canberra Connect Shopfront
- Dickson Canberra Connect Shopfront

- City Health Centre
- Woden Community Services
- Phillip Health Centre.

Housing ACT clients are able to submit rebate applications and general correspondence for Housing ACT through this service.

### IN PERSON

You may prefer to speak to a Housing ACT officer in person by going to the Applicant Services Centre which is located at:

Nature Conservation House  
(Ground floor)  
Cnr Benjamin Way and  
Emu Bank  
Belconnen Town Centre

This may involve a wait once you get there, or the person you want to speak with may not be available. For these reasons it may be best to call beforehand and make an appointment to see a particular officer (eg, your Housing Manager). If it is difficult for you to make the journey to the Housing ACT Applicant Services Centre, you can arrange for an officer to visit you at home at an agreed time.

As with telephone contact, you should always make a record of the date, time, place and content

Welfare Rights & Legal Centre  
**Advice Line**  
**6247 2177**



of the discussion. If you have negotiated an arrangement about something with the Housing ACT officer (eg, when a repair will be done or when a particular piece of information will be provided), it is worthwhile to send the officer a letter after the meeting that confirms what was agreed. If you provide documents or letters in person, you should also get a date-stamped photocopy of those documents.

### WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

Housing ACT has a large number of staff working at different levels in the organisation.

#### Current Tenants

If you are a current Housing ACT tenant, most of your contact will be with your Housing Manager (also known as an 'area manager'). Sometimes it can be difficult to get through to your Housing Manager. If this happens, ask to speak to the Team Leader for your area. Team Leaders have responsibility for supervising Housing Managers. The Regional Manager is the most senior person in each of the main Housing regions, with overall responsibility for both Team Leaders and Housing Managers.

#### Repairs

Maintenance problems go to Spotless P&F, a separate company contracted by Housing ACT. The number for the Spotless Maintenance Helpdesk is 6207 1500, 7 days, 24 hrs.

### New Applications and Transfers

If you are applying for housing or seeking a transfer, you will be dealing with an Assessing Officer in the Applicant Services Centre, which is part of Gateway Services in Housing ACT. These officers are also supervised by Team Leaders, who in turn answer to the Senior Manager of Gateway Services.

**Note** that Housing Managers do not deal directly with transfer issues, so you must go direct to the Applicant Services Centre on these matters.

### Legal Actions and Appeals

If Housing ACT are taking or considering legal action against you, or if you are appealing a Housing ACT decision, your matter will probably be dealt with by the Operational Services Unit, which is the section of Housing ACT that takes matters to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal or ACT Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

### Executive Management and Minister

The Director of Housing ACT is the most senior person within the organisation. The officer with legal responsibility for the management of all of Housing ACT, from the Director down to your Housing Manager, is the Commissioner for Social Housing. The Commissioner is answerable to the ACT Government Minister for Housing.

### CAN'T GET THROUGH?

At times you may need to try a number of ways of communicating before you feel confident that you have got your message across. The problem may be that a phone line is engaged for long periods, or you keep getting an answering machine and no one gets back to you, or there is a long queue at the Applicant Services Centre.

It may also be that you are speaking with an officer but you feel they do not understand you. This can be very frustrating, but try to avoid getting angry or raising your voice. Instead, try another method of communication, or enlist the help of a friend or a community agency to communicate with Housing ACT on your behalf.

It is usually in your interests to persist and keep trying to contact Housing ACT.

**There are some things you must report to avoid breaking the law or putting your rights at risk, for example, a change in your income.**

So keep trying and if in doubt, put it in writing (and always keep a copy for your records).

#### Disclaimer

This fact sheet contains general information available at the time of printing. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a specific legal problem, please contact the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre's advice line on 6247 2177. The Welfare Rights and Legal Centre is entirely independent of Housing ACT. All assistance is free.

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