



# Tenant Handbook

Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Wellbeing through housing, partnerships and community development.





#### Document control

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Housing and wellbeing are shown by representations of people meeting and being connected to healthy environments. The diverse country of Many Rivers' service footprint, stretching from the mountains to the sea, is captured across the canvas.





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# Rent

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## Methods of Paying Rent

You must pay the rent for your property two weeks in advance. This starts when you pay your first two weeks rent.

Tenants have a variety of options available for rent payments:

- Centrepay deductions. Centrepay allows tenants who receive Centrelink payments to have their rent automatically deducted from their payments.
- Direct deposit into the Many Rivers trust account.
- Direct deduction from payroll.

## Rent Assistance

The Australian Government offers financial help to people who pay rent and receive a Centrelink payment. Rent Assistance payment rates vary depending on your circumstances. The amount paid is based on your weekly rent and the Centrelink payment that you receive.

For more information about rent assistance check out <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance>

## Water Usage

It is your responsibility to pay for the water used in your home and on your property. Many Rivers will pay the council for your usage and send you an invoice. You will need to pay your water invoice within 21 days or set up a payment plan with us to cover the cost of your water usage.

If you notice that your water usage is increasing, you may have a water leak. When this happens, contact us so we can arrange to have it fixed.

### **Paying the rent on time – Why it's important?**

*Paying the rent on time is important to ensure your property can be maintained and general expenses such as insurance and rates can be paid.*

*If you can't make your payment it is important to contact your Housing Support Officer as soon as possible to let them know and set a payment arrangement to catch up on any missed payment.*



# Ending a Tenancy

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## How a tenancy can end

A tenancy can end by:

- Voluntary termination by the tenant.
- Termination by Many Rivers due to a breach of the lease.
- Your tenancy agreement not being renewed.
- Abandonment of the dwelling by the tenant.
- Termination by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) or other court.
- Death of the tenant.

## Moving Out

You need to let your Housing Support Officer know in writing two weeks before you are planning to leave. You can do this by writing a letter or email to them.

If you are moving out of the home or unit you will need to clean it and restore it to the condition when you moved in.

If there is a rent credit balance, it will be returned to you after final inspection. Any cost incurred in cleaning and restoring the property to a reasonable condition, will be deducted from your rent credit balance.

If there are arrears, you will be required to set up a payment arrangement with your Housing Support Officer.

*Important: Before moving out, don't forget to disconnect or transfer all your utilities for your home including phone, internet and power. Take all your belongings with you and dispose of any unwanted items*



## Right to Enter Your Property

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Many Rivers and/ or an affiliate may enter your rental property to:

- Undertake a property inspection up to four times per year. We will provide 7 days written notice prior to each inspection, as required under the Residential Tenancy Act
- Complete repairs and maintenance work by a qualified tradesmen, or assess the need for repairs and maintenance work to be undertaken. We will provide 2 days notice if the repairs are not urgent or relate to an emergency.
- Show the property to a prospective tenant, if you are vacating the property.





# Maintenance and Care of the Property —

If you have a garden, you have responsibility for the general care of the garden. This includes mowing the lawn and garden care.

You should also ensure that the inside of the home remains clean.

You should notify your Housing Support Officer as soon as you become aware of a problem. Do not leave it until you are moving out of the property.

## General Cleaning

Always use separate cleaning cloth in the kitchen, bathroom, floor & walls. This helps stop the spread of germs. You can use a multipurpose cleaning liquid.

It is good to keep the toilet seat clean & dry. Brush the toilet bowl regularly using a disinfectant cleaning product.

## Rubbish Disposal

Rubbish should be placed in the appropriate garbage or, if provided, recycling bin. Bins should be placed on the curb facing the street to be emptied into the garbage truck during your collection service.

It is important to regularly empty out the bin to avoid any growth or maggots forming inside the rubbish bin.

## Pest Control

Please let us know if you have a pest control issue and we will assist to arrange for a pest control service to address the problem.

If you see termites, please report this to your Housing Support Officer as soon as possible so we can arrange an inspection and treatment.

## Home Security

When you move in, Many Rivers will give you a full set of keys. It is your responsibility to look after them. You can store a spare set with a trusted friend or family member.

When you get your keys, you should check to ensure that all the locks work properly.

### **Lost your keys?**

*If you have lost your home key, do not attempt to enter by yourself. This can cause unnecessary damage. Inform your Housing Support Officer directly, we will assist you to get access to your home. You may be charged a fee for the service and the cost of key(s) replacement.*



## Maintenance and Care of the Property

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### Yard Maintenance

Mowing, whipper-snipping, weeding and rubbish removal is the responsibility of the tenant.

Many Rivers can assist to organise a gardening service if you need but you will have to pay for it.

### Ventilation

Our body needs oxygen to breath! That is why it is essential to ensure that your home receives a regular supply of clean fresh air.

- Open windows frequently to allow fresh air inside your home.
- Avoid smoking inside your home as the cigarette smoke is toxic and contaminates the air.
- Ensure that you regularly clean the fans, fly screens and any mould.

### Repairs

Repairs and maintenance are carried out to keep your home in good condition.

You will not have to pay the costs of repairs and maintenance on your home when they come from normal wear and tear. However, you may be charged if you, your family or visitors cause damage.

You should report all repairs and maintenance immediately. Many Rivers provides a 24/7 repairs and maintenance service by calling 6562 2576. After hours, follow the prompts to be directed to the on-call mobile.

When you call, we will ask you questions so we can determine the urgency of the maintenance need.

#### Urgent

Urgent maintenance is attended to within 24 hours. It includes problems that present an urgent and significant risk to personal health and safety, and/or risk significantly damaging the property such as serious electrical faults, serious water leaks, sewerage problems and security door locks.

#### Priority

Priority maintenance is attended to within 7 days and includes non-emergency maintenance requests which do not pose a risk to personal health and safety and cause minimal impact on the daily running of the home.





## Standard

Standard maintenance is attended to within 20 days and covers repairs which do not directly impact on the functionality of your home.

## Planned

Some maintenance work is managed via our scheduled maintenance program. Completion timeframes for planned maintenance vary. When planned maintenance work is scheduled for your home, you will be notified beforehand.

Many Rivers makes every effort to have repairs completed in the timeframes listed above. However, there are some occasions when repair and maintenance timeframes cannot be met. This can be a result of extraordinary delays sourcing suitably qualified trades. Also, the completion of priority and standard maintenance can be delayed when there are insufficient funds in an owner's trust account for the work required.

## Smoke Alarms

Every property is fitted with a smoke alarm. Your smoke alarm must be plugged in and working. That's the law.

When there's a problem with your smoke alarm, tell your Housing Support Officer right away. We will make sure your smoke alarm is working.

Make sure you keep your smoke alarm dust free, by cleaning it regularly. A build-up of dust may prevent it from working correctly.

Your smoke alarm will be tested on each inspection to ensure it is in good working order.

### **Urgent out of hours assistance**

*For urgent assistance please phone Many Rivers on call service: 02 6562 2576  
then follow the directions to speak to the team member on-call*





# Utilities and Bills

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## Saving Energy and Water

Energy and water can be very expensive. You can save it by:

- Turn off electrical devices when they are not in use (TV, computer, toaster etc)
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room
- Keep windows and doors closed when using the heater and/or air conditioner
- Take short showers
- Report any water leaks as soon as possible

## Bill Budgeting

Your expenses will come at different times.

Utility bills usually come quarterly.

Your phone and internet are usually paid every month.

Your rent is paid fortnightly or weekly.

It is important to keep a budget in order to manage your expenses and pay bills on time.

If you are on Centrelink income support, you can use Centrepay.

Centrepay arrangements take money from your Centrelink payment to cover upcoming bills. Centrepay credits your utilities account to pay the bill. This means you do not have a large utility bill to pay every three months.

You can also set up a BPAY with your utility provider to regularly pay an amount towards your bills.



# You and Your Surroundings

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## Be a Good Neighbour

It is pleasant to have a good neighbour. It is important to make yourself a good neighbour for others as well.

- Keep your home and surrounding clean.
- Cut overgrown tree branches and clear up trash around your housing area.
- Do not block your neighbour's gate, and/or driveway. Park your vehicle in an appropriate place and place rubbish bin in designated area.
- If you own any home entertainment systems such as TV, radio or speakers, ensure that the sound generated will not disturb your neighbours, especially at night.
- Please ensure that you don't have noisy parties and minimise any noise after 9.30 PM.

## Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

Anti-social behaviour by you or visitors affected by alcohol and other drugs is not tolerated by Many Rivers.

You are not allowed to bring, consume, manufacture or distribute illegal drugs or other mind changing substances in your property. Breaching this will result in immediate eviction from the premises.





# Pets and Visitors

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## Visitors

You are responsible for the conduct of the visitors coming to your home. If your visitors plan to stay more than two weeks you need to notify your Housing Support Officer.

## Pets

Written approval must be obtained to keep pets in Many Rivers' properties. The decision to allow pets rests with Many Rivers and/or the property owner. Circumstances of the tenant, the property and impact on the neighbourhood will be considered with all requests.

- Under no circumstances will Many Rivers allow aggressive dog/animals to be kept at the property
- For the welfare of the animal, tenants are required to choose pets whose size is reasonable for the dwelling or property.
- Pets such as fish, birds, reptiles, rodents, rabbits and guinea pigs must be kept in an appropriate cage or tank.
- Keeping chickens or livestock (including other poultry and goats) is not permitted without prior approval from Many Rivers.
- Keeping native animals for culturally significant reasons or by registered wildlife carers may be permitted at the discretion of Many Rivers and/or the property owner.
- Guide dogs, hearing dogs, and other assistance animals are welcome in all Many Rivers properties.



# Emergencies

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## 000 and Emergency Services

If there is an emergency, you should call 000 (triple zero).

The emergency call services will answer “Emergency – Police, Fire or Ambulance?” and then you should respond with the service you require and the location you need it. Only call 000 in an emergency. This would be an incident that just happened or is currently happening (like a fire, a crime or a severe health problem).





# Inspections

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## Inspection Guide

Your Many Rivers Housing Support Officer will do at least 2 inspections per year to ensure the property is well taken care of.

Here's a checklist that will help you prepare for an inspection:

- Walls and doors: Dust and wipe down internal walls and doors with water to remove marks and dirt. External walls to be washed down and cobwebs removed. Door handles to be replaced or repaired if damaged.
- Cupboards and wardrobes: Kitchen cupboards, wardrobes and linen cupboards should be cleaned inside and out with a damp cloth.
- Oven and stove: Clean the stove and oven including hotplates, drip trays and behind the stove. Make sure all the food and grease are removed.
- Floors: Sweep or vacuum to remove loose dirt then use a mop and bucket of water to clean the floors.
- Light fittings, power points, switches and controls: Dust and wipe down light fittings, power points, switches and controls.
- Bathrooms, toilets and laundry: all tiled areas to be swept or dusted then wiped/mopped. Scrub the toilet with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Cleaned of all scum around the taps and bathtub. Vanity cupboards thoroughly cleared of used items.
- Ceiling fans and exhaust fans: Clean ceiling fan blades regularly with a damp cloth and leave streak free. Exhaust fan covers should be removed for cleaning.
- Windows: Window sills, tracks, fly screens and glass should be thoroughly cleaned, dust and streak free.
- Cobwebs: All cobwebs to be removed from walls, windows and doors, ceilings and surfaces inside and outside your home.
- External areas: Veranda and paths to be clean, rubbish removed, swept and washed down. Grass should be kept short edges trimmed, garden beds and plants kept tidy. Garden sheds, fencing gates and clothes lines to be tidy and clean.



# Leaving the Property

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## Going Away

If you are going away from your home for a period longer than six weeks you need to let us know. It is important that we know that you are away from your home so we are able to contact you in the case of emergency.

You are still required to pay your rent when you are away from home.

## Permanently Moving Out

If you are moving out of your home permanently you will need to clean the property well. The inspection guide outlines what needs to be cleaned.

You will also need to follow the steps listed below.

- Remove all personal items: When you move out, do not leave any unwanted personal belongings in the property (such as worn out mattress or broken furniture). If you do, Many Rivers will charge you for removal and disposal of these items.
- All hooks, Blu-tac and stickers must be removed, and paint patched.
- Structures: Put-up structures such as shade homes and lattice must be taken down and all materials removed before you move out the home. Restore the home to the condition shown on your entry condition report.
- Return keys to the property: Return the keys the day you move out. If you do not return all keys, you may be charged the cost of replacing locks.





## Our Service Promise

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Our Service Promise is a promise we share. It represents our commitment to each other, Many Rivers and the people and communities we serve.

### We are a mob you can trust.

- We respect cultural protocols and provide a culturally safe service.
- You won't be judged.
- We make decisions and provide services based on the needs of our partner Aboriginal communities.
- We do what we say. We're reliable. You can count on us.
- We provide advice that is accurate, clear and consistent. We give information to allow you to make informed choices.
- Successful tenancies are our goal. We support tenants with any barriers they may be facing that are impacting their ability to maintain their tenancy.
- Our communication is respectful. We respond to enquiries and requests quickly.
- We protect your personal information. We respect your privacy and maintain confidentiality.

### Relationships matter.

- You will know your dedicated housing support officer and their contact details. They will know you.
- We take the time to get to know you. We seek to understand your needs, your goals and your challenges.
- We will communicate in ways that work for you. This can include meeting face-to-face, speaking over the telephone, exchanging text messages, letters and emails.
- You won't be left in the dark. We will keep you informed. We will explain why things are happening or not happening.
- We work in partnership with our owners. We shape our service to meet their needs and priorities.
- We act with fairness and integrity. We provide you with reasons for our decisions.





## We provide the best possible housing management services.

- Our staff are experienced and knowledgeable.
- We follow our policies and procedures. You can ask to see our policies and procedures.
- The properties we manage are safe and meet government standards.
- All properties are clean and in a good state of repair when allocated.
- We provide good quality workmanship.
- Repairs are done promptly and according to their classification. If a repair cannot be completed, you will be provided information about the reason, next steps and, when possible, likely timeframe.
- We are easily contactable 24/7 to manage urgent repair requests.

## We care about what you think.

- Your opinion about our performance is valued. We welcome feedback to assist us to continually improve.
- We listen openly and respectfully when receiving feedback.
- It is safe to tell us what you think. We do not take negative action towards anyone who makes a complaint.
- We make it easy to contact us and provide feedback. Feedback can be given over the phone, in writing (in any format, including using our dedicated Feedback form), via our website, by visiting our office or speaking to us when we're in your community.
- You can appeal decisions made by us.
- All feedback is acknowledged and, where possible, rectified within two working days. We aim to resolve more complex issues and appeals within 21 days.
- We acknowledge our mistakes and take appropriate action to correct them.

## Helping us to help you

- You should treat our employees and contractors with respect.
- You should contact us if you are dissatisfied or believe we have made an error. This allows us to improve our services.
- You should tell us when you have received excellent service. It helps us recognise our employees.
- You should be open and honest with us. Provide complete, accurate and timely information about yourself and your circumstances, and tell us when your circumstances change.
- You should know your rights and responsibilities. Comply with any agreements that are in place.
- You should maintain your property and keep it in good order. Quickly notify Many Rivers of any damage, repairs or maintenance required.









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