

**YOUR DIRECTION HOME**



**Compass Housing Services**

**Telephone — 1300 333 733**

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**FOR ALL COMPASS ENQUIRIES CALL**

**1300 333 733**

## Welcome to Compass Housing Services Co Ltd

Compass Housing Services believes that all people have a right to appropriate and affordable housing in a place where sustainable communities grow through social inclusion, community participation and neighbourhood renewal that optimises the performance of our housing assets. These beliefs are clearly articulated in our Vision, Mission and Values which are published on our website and in our Annual Reports.

Through our housing services we assist households on very low to moderate incomes to access sustainable housing options that meet their needs through a diverse range of housing solutions including affordable, social, indigenous, disability and supported housing.

We support disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our communities who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and/or have highly complex needs and require additional assistance to achieve sustainable housing outcomes.

Compass assists our tenants to develop a greater level of community involvement including participation in the operation of the company, as well as an annual social activities program. Our GROW program incorporates our community development and environmental aspirations, aiming to enrich the lives of tenants through enhancing their personal, social environmental and economic sustainability.

We are very proud of the level of customer service we provide to our tenants and clients and our client service charter is our guarantee that you will be treated with empathy, respect, cooperativeness and diligence.

We continually work to increase the supply of housing for our potential tenants, properly maintain the housing assets and assist tenants in sustaining their tenancies.

Compass is a partner agency of the Community & Private Market Housing Directorate of Housing NSW (CAPHM) and our service delivery is enhanced through our network of partnerships with support, employment and other human services and our staff work closely with these services to achieve better outcomes for our tenants, strengthen our communities, build local relationships and promote social inclusion.

We have developed this tenancy handbook to provide you with information about our housing services, your responsibilities and rights as a tenant and our obligations as your landlord. We trust that you will find this booklet useful and informative. Please keep this book safe as you may need to rely on it from time to time during your tenancy.

Another resource is the Compass website which provides easy access to policies, publications, leasing and other information of interest to Compass tenants, [www.compasshousing.org](http://www.compasshousing.org) and we publish regular tenant newsletters to keep you informed about what is happening, upcoming events and activities and changes to our services or legislation that may affect you.

If you require any other information, or have any questions about your tenancy, please feel free to contact your local Branch. Our staff will do their best to assist you with your enquiries and matters relating to your tenancy and housing needs.

## Our values



Compass recognises that its vision and mission is a cause greater than Compass as an organisation



Compass strives to be an innovative, entrepreneurial, reformative and environmentally responsible social enterprise and to lead by example



Compass aims to continue to be an employer of choice showing loyalty and respect and a commitment to the personal development of its staff










Compass will treat our service users, partners and stakeholders with empathy, respect, cooperativeness and diligence

Greg Budworth  
Group Managing Director

## Tenancy management code of practice

Compass has a tenancy management code of practice, which is relevant to all areas of its operation

Under this code, staff will engage in:

-  Ethical practice
-  Professional and credible practice
-  Accountable and reliable practice
-  Participatory and responsive practice
-  Socially responsible practice
-  Good communication practices
-  Compassionate practice

## Contacting Compass

### Office Accessibility

Offices used by Compass will be close to public transport, be well identified by signage and accessible. If at any time service users are unable to access the premises, alternative arrangements may be made to ensure access.

### Operating Hours

The general operating hours of our Compass offices will be Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm. Branches are closed each Tuesday between 3.00pm – 5.00pm for staff training and meetings. You can contact Compass on 1300 333 733.

### Communications

Compass will ensure all information including letters, newsletters etc is clear and is written in plain English. Compass will make arrangements for information in an alternate language and may use professional interpreter services where appropriate.

Staff must be satisfied that, should the tenant use their own interpreter, this person is appropriately qualified and that using this interpreter is in the best interests of the tenant. Persons used as an interpreter must be over the age of 16 years.

The written policies and procedures of Compass will be accessible to any member of the public upon request.

Specific information sheets will be available on the applicant selection criteria.

Tenants are welcome to bring friends, family or advocates of their choice to any interview or meeting.

## Properties and programs

Compass manage a large portfolio of properties including houses, townhouses, villas and units under a number of community housing programs which are allocated in accordance with eligibility criteria specific to the particular program. Allocations to these properties will depend on family size, specific housing needs and property availability.

### Affordable Housing

Compass manages affordable housing acquired or managed through funding assistance from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS) and in some cases in conjunction with some local government authorities. These properties have been purchased specifically for affordable housing and are generally let at 80% or less of current private market rents.

To qualify, household income must be within the limits set by the Affordable Guidelines published by the Department of Family and Community Services. For affordable properties acquired under the Better Building Cities Program the income limits are set by Compass and they are available to key workers in the Newcastle area on low to moderate incomes and a percentage of household income is required to be employment related.

The transition aspect of affordable housing encourages tenants to pursue real property ownership while paying reasonable rent in their present circumstances.

Contact a Compass Branch for further information and application forms.

### National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)

Compass owns affordable Housing which has been acquired under the NRAS and we manage NRAS affordable properties on behalf of private investors and developers. There is a waiting list for these properties.

To be eligible, household income must be within the limits by NRAS (refer to <http://www.Housing.nsw.gov.au/Centre+For+Affordable+Housing/For+Renters+of+Affordable+Housing/Am+I+eligible+for+affordable+rental+Housing.htm>)

### Market Affordable Housing Program

Compass manages housing (tenancy and assets) for Aboriginal agencies, other agencies, private landlords, owners and developers through a fee for service agreement.

Service agreements vary from leasing arrangements and lease signings to inspection and asset management, eligibility and access is detailed in the service level agreement.

## Community Housing

Community Housing is subsidised rental housing for very low to moderate income households managed by Community Housing Providers (CHP). Community Housing can include crisis accommodation for people who are homeless long-term, social housing for eligible households and affordable housing for very low to moderate income households.

To ensure that social housing assists tenants who are most in need, the eligibility criteria for social housing concentrates on assisting:



- Tenants on low income who need support to help them live independently
- Tenants on low income who have problems finding affordable housing in the private rental market that is suitable to their needs.

Community Housing Providers assess eligibility and priority for tenants seeking social housing. All participating providers will accept the outcomes of this assessment.

Applications for social housing can be made under the Housing Pathways Program. Housing Pathways is a single state-wide waiting list called the NSW Housing Register. This register includes all potential tenants on the Housing NSW waiting list and participating Community Housing Provider waiting lists.

Compass has four classifications in this portfolio:

**Capital properties** - These are properties that are owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation and leased to Compass for social housing. Compass provides tenancy and property care services for these properties through a community housing lease agreement with CAPHM.

**Leasehold properties** – These are properties that are privately owned by landlords who lease the properties to Compass. Compass sub-let the properties to tenants at subsidised rents and receives funding for the gap between the subsidised rent and the market rent paid to the landlords.

**Supported Housing properties** – These properties are capital properties that are specifically for tenants requiring support to sustain their tenancies. Compass and a support agency will enter into a partnership agreement to provide a range of services to assist tenants to sustain their tenancy. Our support partners come from a large cross section of the human services sector.



**Crisis and transitional properties** – These are capital properties that are specifically set aside to provide short to medium term housing for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and need intensive support to transition into long term housing options. All tenants in these programs are assisted by a support partner agency.

**Disability Housing** – Compass, together with our support partners, work to provide people living with a disability equitable access to housing that enable them to pursue lifestyles of their choice and participate fully in all aspects of community life. Where possible, Compass modifies our assets to make them suitable for tenants with disabilities, or assists tenant to obtain priority transfer to more suitable social housing. In addition, we have purpose built housing for people with severe disabilities that is supported by a specialist disability service that nominate and support eligible tenants.

Further information about our programs, eligibility and allocation of housing assistance is available in our **About Us** brochure, from our website and on request from local Branches.

## **Residential Tenancy Agreement (RTA)**

When you accept an offer of housing you must sign a Residential Tenancy Agreement (also known as a lease) before you can move in to the property. The RTA is a standard agreement that is also used in the private rental market. However, as a Social Housing Provider, Compass may have additional terms in the RTA, these will be fully explained during the lease sign up.

During the sign up your rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (the Act) will be explained in detail. Additional information will be provided to assist you with your tenancy. This handbook covers many terms in the lease in easy to understand language, it may also be available in other languages.

There may be special conditions attached to some properties. All Compass tenants have full rights and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. If tenants require tenancy advice from an independent source, or information about their rights and responsibilities as a tenant, this can be obtained from the Department of Fair Trading by telephoning 13 32 20.

## **Property Condition Report**

The Property Condition Report (PCR) forms part of the Residential Tenancy Agreement. When the Residential Tenancy Agreement is signed the tenant will receive 2 copies of the PCR. The Tenancy Relation Officer has already inspected the property and completed the report. The PCR is an important part of the RTA as it is a record of the condition of the property at the commencement of the tenancy.

## **Tenants are then responsible for:**



Carefully checking through the PCR. If you do not agree with what is recorded or would like to add any further comments to the PCR please do so Signing and dating the PCR in the spaces provided



Returning 1 copy to your local Compass Branch within seven (7) days of the commencement date of the lease and retain 1 copy for your own records.



## Compass rental policy

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a non-taxable income supplement paid through Centrelink™ to individuals and families who rent in the private rental market (e.g. Social Housing). It aims to address basic living costs by reducing the proportion of household income that is spent on housing.

The subsidised rent is based on a percentage of assessable household income plus 100% of the household's entitlement to CRA. This is subject to the qualification that the subsidised rent must not exceed market rent.

More information on CRA eligibility rules, including minimum rent amounts and maximum amounts of CRA payable for various income types, can be obtained from the Centrelink™ website. [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

## Market rent and rebated rent

Market rent is the actual rent amount for the property, whereas rebated (or subsidised) rent is the rent that is applicable to a tenant based on their income calculation and eligibility.

A rebated or subsidised rent amount will never exceed the market rent amount.

## Rent Reviews

Compass will undertake a general income assessment and rent review approximately every six (6) months for all tenants.

If a tenant does not provide information required to calculate their subsidised rent, Compass will charge full market rent until the requested information is received.

Compass must also review its market rents annually to make sure that the rate at which market rent is assessed is in line with current valuations of properties. If we have to adjust the market rent tenants will be given at least sixty (60) days' notice in writing.

## Paying your rent

Before you sign the Residential Tenancy Agreement you will be asked to supply income details for each member of the household to enable Compass to calculate your entitlements to subsidised rent.

Subsidised rent is calculated based on a percentage of household income, however, you will not pay more than the market rent of the property which is shown on your Residential Tenancy Agreement.

**It is important rent is kept in advance at all times.** At the commencement of the tenancy, tenants are required to pay two (2) weeks rent. Tenants are then required to pay rent, on the same day each week or fortnight, that Residential Tenancy Agreement commenced. Tenants can elect to pay their rent weekly or fortnightly.

### Payment options:

Our preferred options for rent payments are:



**Centrepay™** – this is a free service for anyone receiving a Centrelink™ benefit and this process is a Compass preferred method of payment.



**Post Bill Pay** – a post bill card will be issued to you and is uniquely coded to your tenancy. This option can be used for any payment on Compass invoices for water or maintenance or your weekly rent payments.



**Bank cheque or money order** – a bank cheque or Australia Post money order payment can be made by post or in person at a Branch. Please note if you post the payment it must be received by Compass on the due day of your payment and must clearly identify the tenant's name and property address.

### Rent arrears

If rent falls into arrears at any time, the Tenancy Relation Officer will work with the tenant to set a repayment plan to catch up the money owing. Hopefully this should only be a one-off situation.

**If tenants do not contact Compass regarding their rent arrears, their tenancy may be at risk.** If the arrears period is more than fourteen (14) days and contact has not been made with the Tenancy Relation Officer, a Notice of Termination will be issued.

This can occur in the following ways:



The termination notice can be posted, hand delivered or put in the letter box at the property



An application to the New South Wales Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) can be made at the same time as the notice is given to the tenant

The termination notice will contain options, which include:



Pay the amount of arrears in full



Set up and follow a repayment plan that is acceptable to both parties



Move out by the date specified on the Notice of Termination

If a tenant agrees to pay the amount of arrears in full Compass will not refuse to accept payment.

However, if a tenant is repeatedly late with rent payments, Compass can apply to the NCAT for an order terminating the tenancy. The NCAT may make an order if Compass can show that a tenant is frequently late with rent payments. This order can still be enforced even if the tenant pays the amount in arrears.

## Rental Bonds

Compass requires tenants to pay a rental bond at the commencement of a tenancy. The maximum bond payable is equal to (4) weeks market rent. In circumstances where a tenant is unable to pay the rental bond in full at the commencement of the tenancy, approval may be granted for the tenant to pay the rental bond by fortnightly instalments. In these circumstances, the tenant will enter into a signed agreement to pay the rental bond in full within (12) months of the commencement of the tenancy. This agreement will be kept on the tenant's file until the rental bond is paid in full or the tenancy has ended.

At the end of the tenancy, if the property is in similar condition as it was at the commencement of the tenancy, taking into consideration fair wear and tear, and there are no outstanding monies owed to Compass, the rental bond will be refunded to the tenant.

If a tenant is transferring to another Compass property, any debts owing to Compass will be deducted from the bond for the current property and the balance of the bond will be returned to the tenant. The tenant will be charged a new bond for the new property.




All rental bond payments will be remitted to the Rental Bond Board (RBB) within the timeframes specified by the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and/or the Residential Tenancies Regulations 2010.

## Water usage

Tenants **not** living in social housing properties will be charged water in accordance with Section 39 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 which states that – 'tenants will be charged for water usage only when the property is separately metered, the property contain water efficiency measures prescribed by the Regulations and the water usage charged do not exceed the amount payable by the landlord.

Tenants living in social and affordable housing under a social housing agreement are charged for water in accordance with the Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water charging approved by the appropriate Minister in January 2012.

The guidelines provide for the determination of the charges by reference to any of the following:

-  Actual usage or estimated usage
-  The income of the tenant
-  The rent payable by the tenant

The guidelines include other matters including a requirement that charges in respect of water usage be paid by the tenant in advance. These guidelines are publicly available from:

<http://www.Housing.nsw.gov.au/Community+Housing+Division/Policies+and+Fact+Sheets/Policies/Community+Housing+Water+Charges.htm>.

A copy of these guidelines can be obtained free of charge to a tenant under a Social Housing RTA upon request to Compass Branches.

Water usage charges are identified separately on tenant statements and will need to be paid separately to rent. If a tenant is required to pay for water charges, Compass will ensure that they receive the invoice no later than three (3) months after receipt of the account from the water supply company. Tenants will have twenty one (21) days to pay the account. The invoice will state the amount due and payable, a copy of the account from the water authority will be provided to tenants for their records.





## Sub-letting

If you would like a new or replacement co-tenant to move in and sign the lease, you must first obtain written approval from Compass.

Compass will not unreasonably refuse a request for a new co-tenant or sub-let of part of the premises. Compass will refuse a request from a tenant to sub-let the whole property.

Compass will ask for information on the person who requests to sub-let part of the premises. Compass may even request to meet the person.

Compass can refuse permission to a sub-letting or co-tenancy request under a number of circumstances and these include, but are not limited to:

-  If it would result in overcrowding
-  If the person was listed on a tenant database
-  If the number of occupants permitted under the lease would be exceeded
-  Any other good reason

Please note that having someone sub-let part of the premises will affect the rental payments.

If you believe the decision to refuse a sub-let is unreasonable you may take matter to the Tribunal and have it resolved.

## Rights of Co-tenants

When more than one person signs the lease, all those who sign are called co-tenants. Co-tenants each have a legal contract with the owner of the property and share full responsibility for the tenancy.

If there is a dispute, a co-tenant can apply to the Tribunal for an order to terminate their tenancy, the tenancy of another co-tenant or the tenancy as a whole.

Once the fixed term period of the lease is over, the co-tenant can give twenty one (21) days' notice if they want to move out and end their contract. This will bring an end to joint legal liability with the other co-tenants for things such as future rent and damage to the property.

## Sale of rented premises

If rented residential properties are to be sold, Compass will inform the tenant at least 14 days before the first inspection is to take place.

Compass will work with tenants to come to an agreement about what days and times the property will be available for inspection. Two inspection periods each week are allowed, such as one evening during the week and on Saturday. Compass will negotiate with the tenant if more access is required.

## Termination notices

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, Compass is required to give tenants at least thirty (30) days' written notice if tenants are required to vacate the property on or after the fixed term period has expired or (90) days written notice after the end of the fixed term.

The Residential Tenancies Act 2010 allows tenants to leave at any time after receiving written notice from Compass without them having to give notice. In addition, tenants are only liable to pay rent until the property is returned vacant to Compass, this means tenants have moved out, handed the keys back and the property is left in a clean and tidy condition.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, termination notices, and any other notice(s) issued by the landlord, agent or tenant, can be hand delivered to the mail box of the other party, posted to the other party's postal address or personally hand delivered to the other party.

If a tenant wants to terminate the RTA they are required to give (14) days written notice if the fixed term agreement is due to end or (21) days written notice to end a periodic agreement.

## Breaking an agreement

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, there are four situations when tenants can break a fixed term lease without penalty.



To accept an offer of Public Housing



To move into an Aged Care Facility



If the landlord puts the property up for sale without telling the tenant before the lease was entered into



Where a co-tenant is the subject of a final AVO barring them from the premises




In these situations, tenants can give fourteen (14) days' written notice to end the tenancy. In these circumstances tenants are only liable for rent up to the date of vacating.

Upon the death of a tenant, the tenancy can be terminated at any time by the Executor of the estate, any other legal personal representative, or the landlord.

In these situations the estate of the deceased tenant will only be liable to pay a daily occupation fee until vacant possession of the property is given to the landlord. The daily occupation fee is calculated by dividing (1) weeks rent by (7).

## Immediate grounds for termination of the RTA

Compass is able to make application to the NCAT for orders terminating the RTA and taking possession of the property without having to issue a Notice of Termination in the following circumstances

-  Use of the premises for illegal purposes
-  Threats, abuse, intimidation or harassment by the tenant or any person occupying or jointly occupying the residential premises
-  Serious damage or injury by tenant or other occupant

## Goods left behind

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (the Act), rubbish and perishable items left after the tenant has vacated the property can be disposed of immediately. For all other goods, including personal documents, Compass will make all reasonable attempts to notify the tenant the goods will be disposed of unless collected within the timeframes specified in the Act. This notification can be given in writing, in person, over the telephone or by attaching a "Notice of Disposal" to the property. Tenants can make arrangements with Compass to collect the goods during the notice period.

General goods such as furniture and clothing will be held for at least fourteen (14) days. Personal documents such as photos and bank statements will be held for at least ninety (90) days.

Compass is able to charge the ex-tenant if sufficient goods have been left behind that hinder re-letting the property. Compass can charge a daily occupation fee for a period of up to two (2) weeks from the date the notice is given.

If the ex-tenant cannot be contacted to collect the goods, or the goods left behind are not wanted, Compass can dispose of the items after the end of the notice period in accordance with the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. Official documents such as passports and Medicare cards will be returned to the issuing authority.

## Protection for domestic violence victims

If a tenant is the victim of domestic violence they have the right to change the locks and seek to take over the tenancy if their name is not already on the lease.

If a Compass tenant has a final Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) they do not need to get permission from Compass to change the locks, as long as the AVO prohibits the offender, the subject of the AVO, from accessing the rental premises. Tenants are required to provide Compass with a copy of the new keys within (7) days. Tenants are responsible for the costs associated with changing the locks.

## Routine Inspections

Compass Housing will conduct regular inspections of properties. The purpose of these inspections is to ensure the property is in good order and to assess any maintenance issues. It is also an opportunity for the tenant and Compass staff to discuss any issues about the tenancy.






If the tenant is renting a leasehold property, the managing agent or owner, can conduct up to four (4) routine inspections per year under the Residential Tenancies Agreement. Where possible, inspections will be arranged at times convenient to all parties.

## General Maintenance

Compass is responsible for carrying out maintenance and repairs to Housing NSW (leased by Compass) and Compass owned properties and facilitating maintenance and repairs to privately leased properties through the owner or agent. Tenants are expected to keep their properties and grounds in a clean and tidy condition and are required to report damage or any items that need repair within three (3) days of the occurrence.

Compass provides maintenance services through its Branches. It is the tenant's responsibility to report any matters that they believe require attention to the Tenancy Relation Officer.

To ensure a timely response, when tenants report the incident/issue they are requested to provide staff with the following information:

-  Tenant name
-  Property address and current telephone numbers
-  A description of the problem
-  Whether the problem has been previously reported
-  Times that tradespeople can gain access

Tenants are to allow reasonable access to the property for Compass staff or contracted tradespeople during normal business hours, 8.30 am – 5.00 pm, in order to assess the condition of the property. This same access also needs to be provided



to contractors to enable them to carry out identified maintenance. Under normal circumstances, Compass staff and contractors will not enter the property unless accompanied by the tenant. Where this is not possible, tenants are asked to make alternative arrangements for access to the property.

For maintenance issues on all leased properties, tenants are required to contact the Branch. Compass will either arrange to have the work carried out, or pass the request through to the owner or agent of the property for action. Tenants do not contact the agent or owner direct for maintenance issues.

Tenants are asked to advise the Tenancy Relation Officer if they experience any serious problems or excessive delays in having maintenance undertaken. Poor workmanship or poor customer service by contractors should also be reported.

If tenants are in a property that has been transferred to Compass by Housing NSW they are to report maintenance issues to their local Compass Branch.

### Urgent maintenance services

Problems such as gas leaks, sewer line blockages, major storm or fire damage should be reported for immediate attention.

If the problem occurs during normal business hours, tenants are requested to report this directly to the local Compass Branch. Emergency maintenance will be carried out if the problem poses a danger to the tenant or other occupants.

Examples of emergency maintenance:



Electrical – complete power outage due to internal fault, not attributable to the power supplier



Gas leaks



Plumbing – burst water pipes or other serious leakages resulting in flooding of the property



Toilet pan – complete functional breakdown



Septic tank/soak well – full/overflowing and causing health hazard



Security – a major breach of security or vandalism rendering the property unsafe



An appliance, fitting or fixture that uses water, or is used to supply water, that is broken or not operating properly, so that a substantial amount of water is being wasted

**After hours emergency maintenance should be reported to the after hours emergency telephone number – 1300 333 733**










## Maintenance in isolated locations

Compass is committed to responding quickly to requests for maintenance from tenants living in isolated locations. Tenants will be advised of the estimated response time when the problem is reported and the work will be carried out as soon as practical.

Please note that in some locations, especially isolated communities, there may be a delay in obtaining the services of a contractor and sourcing materials.

## Some maintenance items are tenant responsibility

### Tenants can be held responsible for:







-  Damage to walls and doors by furniture, wall posters or careless picture hanging
-  Damage to floor coverings, window treatments or furnishings by burns, stains, etc.
-  Cost of clearing blocked drains, should they become blocked through misuse
-  Electrical fuses or circuits damaged by tenant/s using faulty electrical appliances
-  Eradication of household pests and vermin such as mice, cockroaches, ants and fleas that can be directly attributed to the tenant
-  Upkeep of laws and garden areas, including reticulation systems
-  Replacement of lost keys
-  Replacement of light globes
-  Replacement of batteries in battery operated smoke alarms

The cost of repairing any damage, blockage, breakage or defect in and around the property, that is not the result of fair wear and tear, is generally the tenant's responsibility.

## Maintenance response times

Maintenance requests are categorised. The expected response times for maintenance repairs to be completed are as follows:

**4 Hours emergency** – These are raised if there is an immediate threat of danger due to safety, health or security risks of the occupants of the premise.

-  Electrical danger/ or power outages not related to energy supplier issues
-  Gas leakages
-  Major water entry leaks and pipe failure
-  Sewer overflow
-  Broken windows where there is a threat to security of tenants or property
-  Entry door locks not functioning and there is a threat to security of tenants or property



Burst hot water systems

**24 Hours urgent** – These are raised if there is a threat to the safety or security of the tenants and prompt action is needed



Smoke alarm repairs- only if not working at all- if it is beeping it is still functioning



No hot water



Blocked toilet where sewage is not overflowing



Minor block drains where the threat of full blockage is inevitable



Minor water leaks



Tap leaks



Entry security door issues where the threat to security may occur in a matter of time



Minor window cracks where integrity of glass may fail



Toilet leaking cistern issues

**7 Days** – General maintenance repairs that do not fall into the categories above but require attention before they escalate to urgent status

**21 days** – General maintenance repairs that may be very minor but cannot wait for programmed work to rectify.

## Property Care

A few hints to make sure the property is well looked after:



Regularly clean the inside of the property



Keep the property free of rubbish including the front and back yards



Mow & maintain lawns regularly



Keep gardens neat and if water restrictions permit regularly water plants



Sweep concrete paths around the property on a regular bases



Regularly remove any mould from walls and tiled areas

## Common areas

Tenants are requested to assist in keeping common areas clean and tidy. This includes ensuring that newspapers and “junk” mail are removed from the common areas.

## Smoke alarms

Legislation introduced in 2006 gives specific responsibilities for smoke alarms and the batteries in them.

Compass properties are fitted with hard wired smoke alarms.

It is the responsibility of the landlord (Compass) to replace the batteries in hard wired smoke alarms.

Many leasehold properties have battery operated smoke alarms. For properties with battery operated smoke alarms, it is the responsibility of the landlord to install a

battery at the beginning of each tenancy. It is then the responsibility of the tenant to replace the battery for the continuation of their tenancy. However, in circumstances where the tenant is physically unable to do so, then it is the responsibility of the landlord.

**Smoke alarms are installed for tenant safety, do not remove the battery or interfere with the smoke alarm for any reason.**

## Garden Care

It is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the garden areas of the property. Tenants are required to keep plants and lawns watered and to comply with water restrictions, mow the lawn regularly and remove weeds and debris as required.

During periods of absence from the property, tenants are asked to make arrangements to have the garden watered and maintained.

Trees must not be removed from properties without the written approval of Compass. Excessively tall trees can become dangerous and Compass may arrange to have them lopped. The trimming and pruning of trees is generally the tenant's responsibility.

Compass is responsible for the upkeep of common grounds/areas attached to units. If tenants live in a unit complex that has an enclosed or fenced off garden, it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the enclosed area.

## Pets

Clause 43 of the Residential Housing Agreement says:

*"The tenant agrees not to keep animals on the residential premises without obtaining the landlord's consent"*

Applications for keeping pets must be made in writing to the local Compass Branch. Tenants will be advised, in writing, of the outcome of their application.

If tenants are granted approval to keep pet(s) there are a few common sense rules to follow:



Properties are required to have separate enclosed yards in accordance with local authority by-laws;



Animals must be kept in accordance with all local government by-laws, including Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the Companion Animals Act 1998;



Tenants need to ensure pet(s) do not damage the property or disturb the neighbours;



Compass will not be responsible for the supply of gates and fencing to allow pets to be kept;



Tenants are responsible for undertaking and the costs of eradication and control of fleas;



Gardens and yards are to be kept clean and all animal excreta disposed of appropriately;



Damage to the property that is caused by pet(s) will be assessed as tenant liability and the tenant will be responsible for the costs associated with rectifying the damage;



The tenant is responsible for the costs of professional carpet cleaning if this is required because animals have been kept on the residential premises during the tenancy.

## Water Tanks

Some properties will have water tanks installed. These can either be in-ground common tanks, in-ground individual tanks, above-ground common tanks or above-ground individual tanks. These tanks will be serviced on a regular basis. These tanks collect rain water for use in gardens, toilets and laundries only. Water from these tanks is not intended for human or animal consumption.

## Builders' warranty

Some properties, that are newly built, will have a builders' warranty insurance period and defect notification period. During this time if any non-urgent repairs or maintenance items are identified these will be referred to the builder and will be repaired in due course. These items are not considered urgent and may take some time to repair. Any repairs or maintenance items that are identified as not being under the builders' warranty will be dealt with according to Compass policy.

## Rubbish

Rubbish must be placed in the correct rubbish and recycling bins as approved by the local council. Generally the council will not collect rubbish placed in boxes or other containers. If the bin goes missing during the tenancy please contact the local Compass Branch to arrange to have it replaced.

Please ensure that rubbish and recycling bins are not placed across driveways.

## Car Parking

Please ensure that cars are parked in designated parking areas only and not on common property areas (grass strips or lawn areas etc.). In unit blocks, it is important that visitor car parking is not used by tenants.

Car parking spaces are allocated by Compass. Applications for parking can be made by completing the appropriate application form (available from the branch) and forwarding this to Compass.

Please ensure vehicles are never parked in areas allocated for emergency vehicles.

## Change of Circumstance

Compass needs to know of any changes that may occur in a tenant's household. These include changes in income or the number of people living at the property.

Tenants must advise the Branch in writing, within fourteen (14) days, of any change of circumstance. Failure to provide this information may result in a breach of the Residential Tenancy Agreement and loss of the rental rebate, if this occurs, full market rent will be charged.

## Contact details

Supplying up to date contact telephone numbers to Compass is important as tenants may need to be contacted urgently.

For example, it may be a repair that has been reported and we need to advise when maintenance personnel are coming to fix the problem.

Please notify Compass of any changes in contact details.

Tenants are required to provide Compass with the name and contact details of a person(s) who can be contacted in case of an emergency.








## Transfers

Compass attempts to place tenants into long term suitable properties to avoid the need to move. However, Compass understands that a person's circumstances may change.

Tenants can apply for rehousing or request a transfer by completing an application. Compass staff can assist a tenant by providing the appropriate Housing Pathways transfer application forms.

In all requests for transfer, the tenant is required to establish how and why they require a transfer and that a transfer is the most appropriate way their changed needs can be met in terms of their housing.

Tenants will only be considered for priority rehousing if their request meets one or more of the following criteria;

-  At risk harassment
-  Compassionate grounds
-  Family breakdown or separation
-  Medical condition and/or disability
-  Employment
-  Severe overcrowding
-  Tenancy reinstatement

If tenants believe their circumstances meet these criteria, they will be required to provide documentation to support their application, for example, medical reports, police event numbers, other reports and statements.

## Complaints and appeals

Compass has a Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure. This is available by contacting Compass or viewing it online at our website [www.compasshousing.org](http://www.compasshousing.org)

Tenants have the right to complain or appeal decisions made by Compass or a staff member of Compass.

### General complaints:



Obtain a copy of the complaint form from the local branch or from our website. Lodge the complaint form with the Tenancy Relation Officer. If the complaint is about the Tenancy Relation Officer please lodge the complaint form with the Local Area Manager or alternatively, it can be posted to Compass head office at PO Box 967 Hamilton NSW 2302 and marked 'for attention' of the Complaints Resolution Officer. A letter confirming receipt of the complaint will be sent to the tenant (complainant) as soon as practicable and the complainant will be advised of what will happen next.



The complainant can request an interview and can bring a friend or advocate to the interview for help or support.



An interpreter can be provided if required.



The CEO will ensure that an investigation is undertaken, collecting all relevant documents and reports and the investigating officer will report to the CEO the outcome of the investigation, normally within twenty one (21) days of receipt of the complaint.



The complainant will be advised, in writing, of the outcome of the investigation.

### Appeals:



Obtain a copy of the appeals form from the local Branch or from our website.



Lodge the appeal form with the Tenancy Relation Officer, Local Area Manager or Compass head office. Include any new information that has been obtained since the original decision.

A letter confirming receipt of the appeal will be sent to the complainant as soon as practicable and include information on what will happen next.



The complainant can request an interview and can bring a friend or advocate for help or support. Please advise Compass if an interpreter is required.



The relevant Executive Manager will review the original decision.













Notwithstanding, this decision can be appealed to the complaints and appeals committee. The complaints and appeals committee, which includes the CEO, will make a determination and respond to the complainant.








If you are still unhappy with the decision you can go to the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) on **1800 629 794**.

## Appealable issues include decisions about:

-  Eligibility for transfer/rehousing
-  Transfer classification/ priority (eg medical, at risk)
-  Removal from Transfer Register
-  Offers of property and the suitability of each offer
-  Rental subsidy assessments
-  Cancellation of rental subsidy or allegations of subsidy fraud/non disclosure
-  Disability related modification to a property
-  Mutual exchange of tenancies
-  The term of tenure/lease
-  Entitlement to a new tenancy at end of tenure period

## Non appealable issues include:

-  Matters which are the responsibility of other tribunals such as the NCAT
-  The content of a housing provider's policy
-  The request for a specific dwelling
-  Decisions that are not directly related to the tenant
-  Matters not related to the provision of housing services (such as support services)

## Time limits for appeals

It is in the tenant's best interest to apply for a review of a decision as soon as possible after the original decision or first level appeal decision was made.

## Neighbourhood noise and nuisance

Most neighbourhood disputes arise from loud music, continual barking by dogs, noisy cars and loud arguments.

Be tolerant of children playing outside in the yard or in the common areas if it is a unit block. It is easier for everyone if complaints about children can be avoided, unless they are being very noisy or entering your property at an unreasonable time and/or without your permission.

## What to do if the problem persists

Compass encourages tenants to sort out problems in an informal manner, for example, talking with the neighbour first, as this may resolve the problem.

If this approach fails to get results, the use of a mediator, who is trained in settling neighbour disputes quickly and fairly, may be considered. Branch staff can provide more information about these services, for example, Community Justice Centres (CJC).



Where the problem involves harassment, verbal abuse or intimidation tenants are encouraged to contact the police and the Tenancy Relation Officer. This type of behaviour may be a breach of the RTA.

If Compass has written proof and statements relating to persistent problems then Compass may be able to take further action at the NCAT which may result in the alleged offender's tenancy being at risk.







If a problem involving violence or drugs occurs you should contact the police immediately then advise the Tenancy Relation Officer and supply details including a police event number for our records.

## Renovations and alterations

If a tenant wishes to make any renovations or alterations to the property they must obtain written permission from Compass.



Compass will not unreasonably refuse requests from tenants to add a fixture or make a minor change to the property. For example, connection to pay television to the property or adding picture hooks in rooms which do not have any, contact the Branch for the appropriate application form.

However, Compass will refuse to allow tenants to undertake the following:

-  Paint the property
-  Make structural changes
-  Make any alterations that are prohibited under law
-  Do any work that is not easily rectified, repaired or removed
-  Do any alterations that are not consistent with the nature of the property
-  Or any other request where it would be reasonable for the landlord to say no

## Vacating

When tenants are vacating the following must be observed:

-  Provide fourteen (14) days written notice to Compass ending on or after the last day of the RTA, if the RTA is still within the fixed term, or as otherwise agreed with the Tenancy Relation Officer
-  Provide twenty one (21) days written notice to Compass if the RTA has expired

Always ensure all belongings and rubbish are removed from the property and the property is left in a clean and tidy condition.

The property should be returned to Compass in the same or similar condition it was in at the commencement of the tenancy, taking into account fair wear and tear. Tenants should refer to the Property Condition Report for any repairs/damage they may be responsible for.


















If Compass requires you to vacate the premises on or before the fixed period ends you will be given at least thirty (30) days written notice.

If Compass requires a tenant to vacate the premises when the fixed period has ended at least ninety (90) days written notice will be given.

However, tenants are able to vacate the premises at any time after receiving the notice without having to give their own notice. In this circumstance rent is only required to be paid until the key(s) are returned.

## Compass tenant rights

Compass tenants have the following rights:

-  To be treated with respect;
-  Not to be discriminated against;
-  To have safe housing, like the rest of the community;
-  To be consulted about their housing needs;
-  To be consulted about their housing preferences;
-  To have their information kept confidential;
-  To be given information about decisions that affect them;
-  To have secure housing within the conditions of the Residential Tenancy Act 2010;
-  To make complaints about the services provided by Compass;
-  To appeal decisions made by Compass;
-  To have an advocate assist them;
-  To get regular information about Compass;
-  To become involved with Compass;
-  To contribute to Compass;
-  To not be involved or contribute if they do not want to;
-  To be told about their rights;
-  To have a prompt response when they contact Compass

## What it means to be a part of Compass


If you are a Compass tenant, you are part of the Compass community. We welcome you and would like to share with you some information about what it means to be part of our community.


## We care

Compass cares about their tenants. We aim to be more than a housing provider. We want to build a relationship with tenants and hope that tenants will participate in our initiatives and join with us to create a strong and healthy community.

## Tenant representation

There are 2 ways in which tenants are represented in the Compass Community

 Tenant Groups – Compass encourages tenants to form tenant initiated groups within their own unit complex or street. This encourages participation and information sharing and allows tenants to be actively involved in matters that are important to them. Tenant concerns reach the Board via the Compass Tenant Engagement Panel (CTEP).

 The CTEP advises the Board of tenant driven suggestions and queries in relation to policies and procedures. The CTEP has representation on the Compass Board.

## Community development

Compass plans to have a Tenancy Relation Officer – Support at each branch their role will include attending routine property inspections; providing information on, and referral to, support services; assistance in accessing education, training and work opportunities; organising social, community and fund raising events.

## Tenant Rewards

Compass likes to reward its tenants. Tenants are eligible to be placed in the monthly drawer if rent is paid on time and tenants comply with their obligations under the Residential Tenancy Agreement. Under the Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS) a monthly prize and certificate of thanks is awarded to tenants who achieve the level of Gold. Tenants who achieve the level of Silver and Bronze receive a certificate of thanks. There is also an annual draw for Gold, Silver and Bronze winners.

As a means of thanking tenants for being part of the Compass Community, Compass hosts a free Christmas picnic for its tenants. This is an opportunity to join in a fun-filled day and meet Compass staff and other members of the Compass community.

## Tenant Newsletters

It is important that we keep tenants informed as to what is happening in their local area and the Compass community. We distribute quarterly newsletters that include information on events and activities tenants might like to be involved in. If tenants would like particular information or would like to contribute to the newsletters they are encouraged to call Compass.

## Privacy

## Policy Statement

Compass Housing Services will collect, manage, store, use and disclose personal information about tenants, applicants and clients who require assistance from us for housing and other services to enable us to provide services targeted to individual needs, where it is reasonably necessary for one or more of our functions or activities

and to meet the requirements of Commonwealth and State government contractual agreements.
















When we collect, manage, store, use and disclose personal information Compass complies with the Privacy Act (1988).

Our policy outlines Compass Housing Services approach to the collection, management, storage, disclosure and reporting of personal information, in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles. It explains when personal data will be collected, the type of personal data that will be collected, how personal data will be used, stored and disclosed and how the quality and security of the personal data will be maintained. In addition, it provides information on how individuals can access their personal information, how to opt out of marketing or promotions and how to make a privacy complaint if an individual feels there has been a breach of their privacy relating to Compass Housing Services' use and disclosure of their personal information.

Compass is committed to managing personal information in an open and transparent way. Our Privacy Policy is publically available from the Compass website at [www.compasshousing.org](http://www.compasshousing.org) or alternatively an electronic or paper copy will be provided free of charge on email request to [governance@compasshousing.org](mailto:governance@compasshousing.org) or by contacting us on **1300 333 733**.

## Tenant Code of Conduct

Compass tenants agree to:

-  Treat all Compass staff with respect
-  Treat all Compass contractors with respect
-  Treat all members of the community with respect
-  Ensure the property is kept in a clean and tidy manner, both internally and external and in such a manner as to not attract vermin
-  Ensure that the property is kept in a manner so as to be considered by a reasonable person not to be offensive, dirty and or untidy
-  Obtain written permission from Compass before keeping pets
-  Abide by the terms and conditions of the Residential Tenancy Agreement
-  Report as soon as practicable any repairs or maintenance issues at the property
-  Pay rent on time and in advance
-  Obtain written permission from Compass before carrying on any business or trade from the property
-  Respect the rights of neighbours regarding quiet enjoyment of the property
-  Notify Compass of any changes to household income or size
-  To allow access to their property when required
-  Obtain written permission from Compass before making any renovations or alterations to the property
-  Notify Compass of any changes to their contact and emergency contact details



Inform Compass if they are going to be absent from the property for a period of time



Not undertake any illegal activities on the property

As a Compass tenant I acknowledge that I am a valuable member of the Compass Community. I will always try to participate and act in a way that reflects the values and mission of Compass.

## Community Development and Grow Program

The Compass Community is a connected community. Compass is committed to supporting and strengthening individuals and families in an inclusive way. One of our Community Development initiatives is our GROW Program. This is a holistic approach which assists our tenants to achieve self-reliance, contribute to solutions and participate in outcomes that affect them as individuals and members of the community.

### What is the GROW Program?

The GROW Program incorporates concepts of Community Development and sustainability that deliver beneficial outcomes for the whole of community. We encourage all members of the Compass Community to participate in the GROW Program. For our tenants, the focus is on each individual's personal, social, environmental and economic sustainability. If you would like more information about the activities and initiatives we have on offer and how you can participate please contact the Tenancy Relation Support Officer at the local branch or see our website.

### Green (Environmental Sustainability)

Compass is directing its attention to the environment with its retrofitting of existing features to dwellings; enviro-build projects; recycling and good environmental practices.

By recycling, turning off lights, watering plants early morning, participating in Earth Hour, tenants are participating in environmental sustainability.

### Responsible (Community Sustainability)

The Compass Community is an important member of our wider community. For our community to remain sustainable we each need to contribute and participate – we can all be part of the 'solution'. The Compass Community is sustained through tenant participation and involvement. The wider community also relies on tenant contribution to connect with others and develop strong and resilient communities.

Compass has many initiatives in which tenants can become involved. We offer opportunities for tenants to meaningfully participate and interact with the community. At a local level, this may involve volunteering, training or joining a tenant group.

Tenants can help another community by participating in our Child Sponsorship Program or our online micro-finance lending program.

If tenants are working, starting their own business, involved in social enterprise, updating training certificates or learning a new skill, they are contributing to the sustainability of our community. Every time tenants help someone they contribute. Every time tenants earn a salary tenants are contributing through their economic participation. Using strengths and talents is vital to the sustainability of our community.

One of our most exciting initiatives is the GROW a STAR Program – this program is designed to work with children and young people “at risk” to afford them opportunities they would not normally have access to, to engage in community activities such as sports, arts, craft, music and education and training to increase their self esteem and social inclusion. The program will consist of a scholarship scheme and financial support packages for the young people. For more information please contact the Program Coordinator or the Tenancy Relation Support Officer at the Compass Branch.

### **Opportunities (Corporate Sustainability)**

Sound business practices and good governance are adopted by Compass as an organisation. These attributes together with efficiencies and improvement in delivery of services enables Compass to be sustainable as an organisation. Compass is a leader in the Social Housing sector and continues to use its competitive strength to its tenants’ advantage.

### **Welfare (Personal Sustainability)**

Our tenant’s personal sustainability is very important to Compass. Personal sustainability concerns tenant’s health and well-being and their ability to maintain their tenancy. Personal sustainability is unique to each person.

We encourage all our tenants to keep healthy – physically, mentally and financially. Compass can provide information about nutritious food and food preparation, healthy lifestyle and budgeting. We are able to connect tenants with services that can assist with lifestyle changes and achieving personal sustainability.

Security of tenure is important. Compass wants to ensure our tenants are equipped with the skills and information needed to comply with tenant rights, responsibilities and obligations under the RTA. Compass has created a Living Skills Workshop for new or existing tenancies that require assistance or support. Contact the local Branch for more details.

## Compass Tenant Engagement Panel (CTEP)

*“The voice of many is more powerful than the voice of one”*

The Compass Tenant Engagement Panel is a group of proactive Compass tenants, independent of Compass management, elected to look after the interests of all tenants living in Compass properties throughout the state and to ensure tenants have a voice that can be heard at the highest level of Compass, through an elected Board representative.

Our goal is to assist in the creation of opportunities for Compass tenants to improve their lives by working cooperatively with Tenancy Relation Support Officers and, where possible, to put something back into the communities we live in.



The elected CTEP representatives from around the Branches meet on a bi-monthly basis, via video-conference, to review Compass policies and procedures and to act as a sounding board for tenants and Compass management, on ideas aimed at improving the standard of housing and related services delivered to tenants.

Theoretically there are over 5,600 members of CTEP. That number grows as Compass grows. Everyone has the opportunity to have some involvement in what CTEP does, either by way of involvement in a local tenant group in your complex or general area, or directly to your elected CTEP representative via mail to CTEP Secretary C/- Compass Housing Services P.O Box 967 Hamilton NSW or email to [ctep@compasshousing.org.au](mailto:ctep@compasshousing.org.au).

**For all enquiries please call**

**1300 333 733**

## Glossary

	<b>CAPHM</b>	Community & Private Market Housing Directorate of Housing NSW
	<b>CHP</b>	Community Housing Provider
	<b>CJC</b>	Community Justice Centre
	<b>CRA</b>	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
	<b>CTEP</b>	Compass Tenancy Engagement Panel
	<b>DFAC</b>	NSW Department of Family & Community Services
	<b>HAC</b>	Housing Appeals Committee
	<b>NCAT</b>	NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal
	<b>NRAS</b>	National Rental Affordability Scheme
	<b>PCR</b>	Property Condition Report
	<b>RBB</b>	Rental Bond Board
	<b>RTA</b>	Residential Tenancy Agreement (Lease)
	<b>RTA</b>	Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (the Act)
	<b>TIS</b>	Tenant Incentive Scheme



## BRANCH LOCATIONS IN NSW SOUTH WALES

Newcastle	453 Hunter Street Newcastle 2300
Central Coast	Block H/2 Reliance Drive Tuggerah NSW 2259
KBT The Meeting Place	1 Northumberland Way Tumbi Umbi NSW 2261
East Maitland	Shop 3A/11 Molly Morgan Drive Greenhills NSW 2323
Upper Hunter	1/160 Bridge Street Muswellbrook NSW 2333
Broken Hill	32 Sulphide Street Broken Hill NSW 2880
Dubbo	Level 1 1/14 Erskine Street Dubbo NSW 2830
This Way Home	52-56 Bull Street Mayfield NSW 2304

**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES PLEASE CALL**

**1300 333 733**