Tenant's Handbook - Community Housing Services

Southern Youth and Family Services

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A Handbook for Community Housing Tenants of Southern Youth and Family Services.
2026-2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) acknowledges the Wodi Wodi, Dharawal, Yuin, Gundungurra, Ngunnawal, and Ngarigo people as Traditional Custodians of Country on the lands in which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, to all Indigenous people living in the region, and extend that respect to Indigenous people that we engage with through our work. We acknowledge and respect the ongoing connection to Country, and the many sacred sites that exist within our service region. We commit to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their ongoing struggles for justice and self-determination.

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Please visit www.syfs.org.au for online version

1. Welcome to Southern Youth and Family Services

1.1 Overview

Welcome to Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS). We are pleased that you have become a tenant and part of our community. SYFS is committed to providing you not only with secure and affordable housing, but also a high standard of service. This handbook has been developed to provide you with general information about your tenancy with SYFS.

1.2 Who we are

SYFS is a community based organisation which provides social housing, supported housing, supported residential accommodation and supported placements for young people and families. The Organisation also provides support services such as:

- Youth and family counselling and mediation
- Health services such as ante-natal support, drug and alcohol counselling, mental health intervention, dietary and exercise programs
- Educational programs, practical training courses and pre-employment supports such as assistance with resumes, mentoring and work experience
- Financial and material assistance and brokerage
- Referral, information and skills education through centre-based and outreach support.

SYFS is a Registered Community Housing Provider. We are governed by a Board which brings a diverse set of skills and community knowledge to the Service. Our day to day operations are managed by the Chief Executive Officer, a Senior Management Team and Client Support Staff.

1.3 What we do

SYFS is a community based organisation. As a nationally registered community housing provider we are linked into and responsive to local needs, and have the interests of our tenants as a key focus.

The main aims of the Organisation are:

- To provide support and assistance to young people who are disadvantaged, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, and their families
- To act as an advocate for, and facilitator of structural change that achieves improved living situations for young people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness

In general, the Organisation aims to act in a way that will increase accessibility for young people and families to:

a) Secure, affordable and individual housing
b) Employment, education and training
c) Secure and adequate income
d) Health supports and services
e) Appropriate support services
f) Clothing, food and other practical assistance

1.4 Guarantee of Service

SYFS strives to provide quality, timely and flexible services. Together we will develop a plan with you, and other agencies to meet your needs.

We will do everything we can to:

- Uphold your rights and dignity
- Ensure your confidentiality
- Provide services in a friendly, welcoming, flexible, sensitive, professional and timely way
- Provide services that are sensitive to your cultural background, your age and development and do not discriminate on any basis
- Consider the safety of you, and others in the service
- Foster and enhance opportunities for you to act on your own behalf and develop skills toward achieving self-reliance

1.5 Our Office Locations

Main Registered Office: 467 Crown Street Wollongong PO Box 23 Wollongong 2500 Ph: (02) 4221 7700 (24hrs)	**Housing Services:** 1a Denison Street Wollongong PO Box 23 Wollongong 2500 Ph: (02) 4240 4800 (9am - 4.30pm Mon-Fri)
Nowra Office: 107 Berry St Nowra 2541 Ph: (02) 4448 2473 (9am - 4.30pm Mon-Fri)	**Goulburn Office** 1 Cowper Street Goulburn Ph: (02) 4821 8882 (9am - 4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Shellharbour Office 25 Lake Entrance Road Warilla PO Box 23 Wollongong 2500 Ph: 4295 8700 (9am - 4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Visiting our Offices

Our Support Staff are often out of the office so if you want to see a worker, it is a good idea to make an appointment before you come to the office. All of our offices have disability access.

1.6 Probity, Registration and Compliance

SYFS is registered under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH). This Registration was obtained by going through an audit and application process and is reviewed annually.

1.7 Residential Tenancies Act (2010)

The Residential Tenancies Act (2010) covers rental housing in New South Wales. SYFS tenancies are managed in compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act (2010).

1.8 Tenancy Agreements

Tenants in SYFS properties sign a tenancy agreement before moving into the property and receive a copy of this agreement. It is an important document. Please keep it in a safe place. It is advisable that you keep a digital copy on your email/phone/computer, as a backup if possible.

2. Before You Move In

2.1 What are the different types of properties that we manage?

Leasehold Properties
If you are a tenant of a leasehold property, it means that we have rented your property from a real estate agent or a private owner. As with any private rental, it is possible that the owner may end the agreement at some time in the future and that you would have to move. If this happens, SYFS will try to rehouse you as long as you are still eligible for housing and your rent is up to date.

It is unlikely that you will have any contact with the owner or real estate agent apart from property inspections and repairs and we will support you with these. SYFS Support Workers will contact the owner about any property issues on your behalf.

Community Leased Properties
These properties are owned by the Government. SYFS decide who lives in them and we provide support and assistance to tenants. Housing NSW is responsible for completing any maintenance and repairs on these properties and SYFS staff will report to them anything that needs attention.

Other Government Supported Properties
These can be a little confusing, so please speak to us if you are unsure, but in summary:

- If you are a tenant of a capital property, it means that the property you are in is managed by SYFS but usually owned by the Government.
- You will be supported and assisted during your time as a tenant including a plan to support you through to exiting to an improved housing option.
- The timeframe you can live in these properties is varied dependent on our funded contracts. Many properties are offered for up to 18 months, but you may potentially be able to stay in a SYFS property until you are 24 years of age as long as there are no issues with your tenancy. We will discuss this with you when you enter our Services
- If you are housed in a capital property in the Nowra IHP Families Service, you can stay in the property for up to 12 months and your age does not affect this.

SYFS is responsible for most of the repairs and maintenance on these properties. For repairs and maintenance please contact your support worker.

Owned Properties
These properties are ones which are owned by SYFS and are used to provide supported accommodation to tenants. SYFS is solely responsible for the maintenance of these properties and whilst mostly in these properties you can stay until you are 24, there are cases where you may be able to stay longer if you need to.

Supported Housing
All housing provided by SYFS has support attached. You will be allocated a support worker and this person will work with you to develop a support plan to achieve your goals. Some people will need more support than others, and this will be assessed and arranged with you prior to moving in. Support staff will visit you in your home, meet you elsewhere or see you in the office.

2.2 Privacy and Confidentiality
All information about your tenancy is kept in our office, either in your tenant file or as a computer record. Information collected includes your lease, condition reports, rent reviews and all correspondence between you and Staff. This information is mainly used by your support worker but may be accessed by other Staff if necessary.

Your privacy is very important to us and we will not, without your consent, give your personal information to anyone outside the office except when we need to:

- Confirm your name, address and lease start date with essential services (electricity, gas, phone)
- Provide your phone number to contractors in order for repairs to be undertaken
- Discuss tenancy issues with a support worker if appropriate, so long as prior consent has been given
- Release information where this is required by law such as written requests from Centrelink or the Australian Taxation Office

All tenants have the right to look at their own information. If you need to do this please contact your support worker.

2.3 Connecting Utilities
Before you move in, don't forget to have the electricity and gas (if applicable), connected in your name. You are responsible for paying all connection and usage costs. If you are on a pension, check with the service company to see if you are eligible for a rebate. SYFS will arrange for your water to be connected.

Once you have the keys to your home, make sure that you check that the switches are all on in your fuse box. In houses, the fuse box is likely to be on the front or side of your house. In units, you will most likely find your fuse box inside the Unit.

Your support worker will help you with these tasks, and you can get external assistance from services who are able to provide support. There are some numbers in the back of this book which could assist, or please see your support worker.

2.4 Pets
Southern Youth and Family Services tenants may be allowed pets in certain programs, as outlined in the Residential Tenancy Act.

If you are living in a residential accommodation program and not on a lease, you are not permitted to have pets. There are a number of reasons for this, and Staff are happy to discuss them with you.

For tenants in independent housing programs who are on a lease, you may be permitted to have a pet under the conditions set out in the Residential Tenancy Act. You must follow the below procedure to be eligible.

1. You must discuss your intentions with your support worker and obtain the correct application forms
2. You must complete the application forms
3. You must comply with all local council stipulations including desexing and microchipping where this is appropriate
4. You must provide quarterly evidence that your animal has been treated for fleas and ticks where this is appropriate
5. You must apply for any and each pet you would like to have.

6. You are strongly advised to speak to our financial counsellor before making this decision
7. You must not have an animal of any description without following the application procedure and having approval in writing from Southern Youth and Family Services.

Where there is an approved animal on site, you must be home for all tenancy inspections and appointments and all maintenance call outs. You are responsible for containing your pet during these visits for the safety of the animal and of staff.

2.5 Calculating Your Rent
SYFS charges rent in accordance with Homes NSW Community Rent Policy. Your rent will be calculated based on all of your income before tax and the incomes of others in your household. Your income before tax is income from all sources including wages, government payments and benefits, interest and child maintenance.

SYFS undertakes six monthly rent reviews to ensure that you are paying the correct rent. We will inform you of any changes and give you plenty of notice about any rent increases.

For full details of how your rent is calculated please ask your Support Worker.

2.6 Commonwealth Rent Assistance
If you receive a Centrelink Benefit, you may be eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). We will print a Centrelink Rent Assistance statement showing your rebated rent at the time you sign up as a tenant. You will need to provide this letter to Centrelink as verification of the rent you pay so you may receive the correct Rent Assistance. We assume that all Centrelink beneficiaries have applied for rent assistance and your rent is calculated on this assumption.

Your support staff will help you to apply for CRA if you need assistance.

2.7 Bond
All SYFS tenants must pay a bond. All bonds are lodged with the Rental Bond Board with the form that has been signed by both the Tenant and Tenancy Manager. The bond will be refunded to you when you leave the property as long as you do not owe any rent and you leave the property in the same condition as when you started the lease. See Below:

- A bond equivalent to the cost of four (4) weeks rent is required at the commencement of the residency, plus two weeks rent in advance
- Attempt is made to recover monies owed on departure, and can be recovered from bond
- Cost of wilful damage is requested with time to repay, and can be recovered from bond

2.8 Property Condition Report
When you sign your lease you will receive a Condition Report prepared by SYFS. This report will give details of the condition of the house before you moved in. You should check to make sure that the report is correct and then return it to us within 7 days from the start of your tenancy. Make sure that you write details of any items that may have been missed in the report. The condition report will be referred to at the end of your tenancy to determine whether or not your full bond will be refunded. Photos may be taken to support the condition report – these should be kept in a safe place so you can refer to them if needed when you move out.

2.9 Property Inspections

As part of our commitment to the owner of your home and for us to make sure that your home is being properly maintained, we will make regular inspections of all the properties we manage. This generally occurs every 3 months. Once we have scheduled the inspection, we will give you 7 days notice. You can contact your tenancy worker to reschedule these, and your support worker is always available to help you to prepare for scheduled inspections.

If your property is rented to us from a private real estate agent, and we sub-let to you, property inspections will be carried out by a representative from the real estate agency, and your support worker will always help you prepare and attend these inspections with you.

Avoiding Problems

- Make sure you have read and understood the tenancy agreement before you sign it
- Keep copies of all documents, including the condition report in a safe place
- Where possible, also keep digital copies in your phone/emails/computer of all tenancy documentation including condition reports, photos, lease or tenancy agreement, and anything else.
- Please ask your Support Worker to explain anything you don't understand

3. While you are a Tenant with SYFS

3.1 Your Rights and Responsibilities

The NSW Tenants Union has resources you can look at which outline all of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant under the Residential Tenancies Act. In brief below are some of your rights and responsibilities as a SYFS tenant and client of our services.

Your rights as a tenant:

- To be given rent receipts
- To have quiet enjoyment of the premises
- To Privacy and confidentiality
- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To have reasonable security e.g. a copy of keys that open any access doors and windows, locks in working order etc
- To have necessary repairs carried out in a reasonable time
- To have proper notice when the landlord wants to visit

Your responsibilities as a tenant:

- To pay rent in advance and on time
- To care for the premises
- To report the need for any repairs or maintenance
- To not alter or make additions without SYFS's written permission
- To not change any locks without SYFS's written permission
- To not interfere with the peace, comfort or privacy of neighbours
- To not use the premises for illegal purposes
- To get SYFS's written permission before you let someone else move in as a tenant

Are you currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

- We will work with you to make sure you receive the best possible assistance to avoid becoming homeless or, if you are homeless, to access safe, affordable and secure housing
- We are committed to working with you in a respectful way that protects your dignity, is fair, and does not discriminate
- You will be treated in a professional, courteous and caring manner, and receive the same quality and level of service based on your need, regardless of your gender, religious, cultural or linguistic background, sexual orientation, age, disability or family status
- Your personal privacy will be respected and confidentiality protected, except where we have a legal obligation and we will explain to you what this means when you use our service
- You have the right to use our service if it matches your need and what we are contracted to provide
- We will work in partnership with you to identify your needs and develop a plan with you and other agencies to meet your needs
- You have the right to put forward a complaint and we will respond in a confidential, respectful and timely way
- We will inform you of your rights and responsibilities when you receive a service from us
- You will be provided with opportunities to take an active role in the decision making processes of our service
- We will provide you with a range of suitable referral and support options so you can make a decision on who you prefer to work with
- We aim for you to feel safe and will have systems in place to ensure protection from harm
- You can expect our service to meet health and safety requirements
- We will regularly ask for your opinions and will seek suggestions on the services we offer
- If you have a child under 16 years, you have the right to have their needs considered and linked to suitable responses

As a client of a Specialist Homelessness Service you have a responsibility to:

- Be respectful of others, including staff, volunteers and other clients
- Be respectful of the organisation's property
- Be an active participant in your service, including taking part in case planning and management sessions and fulfilling your commitments under your case plan
- Actively and positively contribute to resolving your own homelessness or risk of homelessness
- Participate in the service in a fit state (not under the influence of drugs or alcohol)
- Maintain confidentiality regarding information about other clients or participants in groups or programs
- Provide accurate information about yourself in order to receive the best service

3.2 Repairs and Maintenance

Emergency Contact Details

For Urgent Repairs	(02) 4221 7700
For Non-urgent Repairs	(02) 4295 8723 (02) 4240 4840

When requesting repairs over the phone or in writing, make sure you have all the information. The better the information the more likely the repairs will be done quickly and properly. For example the following information will help your Support Worker who can help you get the problem fixed;

Stove	Make, model, gas or electric
Water Heater	Make, model, gas or electric
Energy Supply	Is the supply still on? If it is electric check the fuse box to see if the switches are still on
Broken glass	Is it a door or window, where in the house it is, what happened, is it a timber or aluminium frame and whether it is fixed or sliding
Other	Give us as much information as possible about the problem including a police event number if necessary

In addition, you will need to tell the Support Worker your telephone number, the days and time you will be at home and whether you are happy for us to pass on your details to the repairman. Please tell your Support Worker if the repairs have not been completed within a reasonable timeframe so that we can follow-up with our contractors.

Some common maintenance issues which cause disagreements

SYFS is responsible for ensuring a property is free of vermin and pests at the time of new tenancies. The Tenant is then responsible for the eradication of cockroaches, fleas, ants and mice/rats. In exceptional circumstances, SYFS will consider payment for all or part of the cost of eradication treatment of mice and rats if it can be proven that the tenant is not responsible. These circumstances will be approved by the CEO.

*Note: Tenants are advised to check their furniture and household appliances for pests prior to moving them in. One common place for cockroaches and spiders to congregate unnoticed is at the back of the refrigerator and microwave, particularly in the motor compartment. A pre-treatment prior to moving may save you the cost of eradication later.

SYFS is responsible for making sure there is no mould in your property at the time when you move in. Generally, landlords maintain that mould is a tenant issue and any mould is the responsibility of the tenant to remove. SYFS staff will always assist you to remove any mould, and will help to investigate if there are property related reasons for mould growing. If there are property related reasons for mould to grow, your support worker will report this to the responsible landlord for investigation and will keep you informed of progress. This might be a Private Landlord, The NSW Government, or SYFS.

Type of Issue	Examples	Responsibility
Property	• The property does not have enough ventilation points • The property does not have windows which open • The property has broken drainage points, guttering, pipes etc • The property has roof issues – ie broken tiles or water access points	Landlord
Environment	• Extreme weather causing flooding, pooling of water, inability to open windows due to incoming rain • Location of property – Ie property is near a creek or at the base of a hill	Landlord for any structural damage caused ie new flooring needed. Tenant for replacement and cleaning of any belongings
Lifestyle	• The property does not have enough air circulating as windows are not opened daily • There is too much furniture for the space • Mould is not cleaned regularly so spreads quickly • Dryers and other appliances are used without proper ventilation • Showers are used without proper ventilation	Tenant

Emergency Repairs
For SYFS tenants, an emergency repair is defined as one or more of the following situations:

- burst water service
- blocked or broken toilet system
- serious roof leak
- gas leak
- dangerous electrical fault
- flooding or serious flood damage
- serious storm or fire damage
- failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply to the premises
- any fault or damage that causes the premises to be unsafe or not secure

3.3 Making Changes to your Property
It is important that your home is kept in much the same condition it was when you moved in, unless the landlord makes changes or you have written permission to make changes. You should not make any changes to the house or garden without first getting written consent, even if you pay for it. This includes changing floor coverings, painting inside or outside, changing fittings, improving security with doors, grills or locks, attaching insect screens, removing plants or lawns or creating gardens.

If there is an improvement you would like to make, please write to your Support Worker and we will reply in writing or contact the owner for you. The costs of these improvements may not be refunded to you.

3.4 Common Areas

Parking and garbage can be a cause of disagreements between neighbours. Please make sure that you don't block or park in other people's parking spots, garbage areas or garages. We will give you information when you sign up about the days when your garbage will be collected.

It is important that you put out your garbage bins on the correct day and bring them in as soon as the garbage has been emptied.

Some local councils will do a pick-up of discarded furniture and other items that you cannot put in your bin. Please contact your local council to know what items you can put out for collection and on what dates they will be making the collection.

3.5 Smoking/Vaping on the Premises

In line with the standards set out in the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000, smoking and vaping inside SYFS premises are not allowed, nor are you able to smoke/vape in common areas including stairways, verandas, shared laundries or shared outdoor covered eating areas.

CHAIN has resources available to assist you if you would like help quitting smoking or vaping. Please see your support worker for a referral.

3.6 Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are required by law to be in every property. They save lives and are there to protect you. Never disconnect or damage smoke alarms. This could put you and other people in your household in danger. Talk to your Support Worker if you have any problems with the smoke alarm.

All SYFS properties (except leasehold – see below) have smoke alarms and it is our responsibility to inspect the smoke alarm at least every 12 months. Some properties owned by the NSW Government will have additional checks.

Leasehold Properties

These are properties that are leased from real estate agents or private owners. Owners of these properties are required by law to have smoke alarms fitted. If you have a smoke alarm that has a replaceable battery, the landlord must ensure that it is in working order when you start your tenancy. After that you are responsible for replacing the batteries when needed. If you are unable to do this please contact your Support Worker so we can arrange for it to be replaced.

3.7 Paying Your Rent

There are a three ways that you can pay your rent to SYFS:

- **Centrepay** enables you to make automatic deductions from your Centrelink payments to SYFS. You will need to sign a Centrepay Deduction Form which is available from the Centrelink Offices or from your support worker
- **Direct Deposit** means that you can pay your rent directly into SYFS's Bank Account. We will give you details of SYFS Account number etc. if you choose this option
- **Cash Payments** will be accepted at the main registered office only and you will be given a receipt

3.8 Income Reviews

Approximately every six months we will review your income with an updated income statement or wage slips. We will contact you to provide documents to us when this happens. Once we receive this information, we will recalculate your rent and let you know in writing what your rent will be for the next six months. It is important that you return this information by the due date, otherwise we will assume that you no longer require subsidised rent and your rent may be increased to the market rate.

At any time you can request to have an income review, for example if your income increases or decreases and this will affect your rent amount owing, you may request a review.

3.9 Changes in Your Household Income

If there are any significant changes for any member of your household, it is important that you tell SYFS and provide confirmation from employers or Centrelink.
Some examples of what these changes might be include:

- You or someone else in your household starts or stops working
- A change in the amount of wages you or someone in your household receives
- A change in the type of benefit or pension you receive
- If you have another child
- You start or stop receiving child support payments

3.10 Rent Arrears

When you signed your Tenancy Agreement, you agreed to pay your rent when it is due and in advance. If you have any problems paying your rent, please ring your Support Worker as early as possible to see if we can work out an arrangement. It is important that you do not get behind in your rent. You can lose your tenancy if you get too far behind and we take the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Our aim is to maintain your tenancy, so if you are having problems please work with your Support Worker to arrange for payment of your arrears.

3.11 Non-Rent Debts

As part of your Tenancy Agreement you are responsible for:

- Any damage to the property
- Any significant rubbish removal to the tip
- The cost of a locksmith to replace locks or to provide new keys

These are **non-rent debts.** It is important that you pay these debts. We can arrange for you to pay an extra amount to SYFS each fortnight to cover these debts once you have paid your first rent 2 weeks in advance. Please talk to your Support Worker about arrangements for non-rent debts.

3.12 Changes to people living in your home

When you signed your Tenancy Agreement with SYFS, we agreed on how many people could live in your home and who these people are. Please see your Support Worker if you would like to have SYFS consider letting someone else move into your home.

New live-in partners
If you wish your partner or other person to move in, please contact your Support Worker. If approved, you will need to list the person as an "additional household occupant", supply new details and pay new rent. You will however, continue to be the leaseholder with responsibility for paying the total rent. It also means that if you and your partner or other person no longer live together, you will keep your home.

Other additional occupants
When we offer you a home, we have taken into account how many people will be living there to make sure it is suitable for that number. Therefore it is unlikely that we will be able to approve additional people moving in.

3.13 Neighbours
Everyone has the right to quiet and peaceful enjoyment of their home. Having good relationships with neighbours makes your home a safer and more pleasant place to live. Please think about your neighbours if you are playing music, having friends over or coming home late at night. If you have problems with a neighbour talk to your Support Worker who may be able to provide you assistance.

3.14 Visitors
You are responsible for the behaviour of anyone that you allow into your property (other than SYFS staff or contractors organised by SYFS). If your visitor becomes disruptive, or causes a nuisance please kindly ask them to leave the premises to avoid putting your tenancy at risk. If visitors are violent (verbal or physical) to other tenants, neighbours or staff or community members, they will be banned from returning to the property. This is to ensure everyone is kept safe. Police may also be called if required. If your visitor causes damages to your property, you will be liable for the cost of repairing these damages. Where damages are caused due to a domestic violence incident you will not be held liable (please see 3.20 for further information on this). Visitors are not to park on the property at anytime, they may use on street parking only.

3.15 Getting Involved
As a community housing provider, SYFS actively encourages our tenants to be involved in the Organisation's activities. This involvement helps our tenants build friendships, feel part of a community and teaches new skills. It also provides SYFS with a valuable source of knowledge and information about the communities they live in and how we can better service these communities. Regardless of our future growth or how we run our business, our tenants will continue to be part of everything we do.

SYFS Community Housing works with all its tenants to empower them to make informed decisions about their housing needs by encouraging their input into community development, local committees, surveys and local events. Such participation ensures that our clients feel part of their communities and that decisions that need to be made are done so for the benefit of all concerned.

SYFS also encourages tenant participation in a broad range of events including:

- Attending our Annual General Meeting
- Participation in local events and activities
- Input into service planning and delivery
- Awards events

If you are a tenant and have any ideas or suggestions please contact your Support Worker.

3.16 Client Surveys

SYFS regularly conduct client surveys. You are urged to use this opportunity to provide feedback on your home and the service and support you receive. Your input will assist us to assess and improve our services.

However, you do not have to wait until you are surveyed to provide feedback. We welcome your comments at any time either in person, by letter, e-mail, or via the suggestion boxes located in each service and office.

3.17 Lost Keys

The Tenant is responsible for the replacement of any lost keys. If you lose keys, contact the Tenancy Manager who will arrange for new keys to be cut at your expense. In some cases locks may have to be replaced if keys are lost. If this happens the tenant must pay for the lock replacement.

3.18 Posters, Pictures and Painting

It is understood that paintings and posters help to make a house into a home. Only use appropriate approved means of fixing. Any damage to the wall or paint caused by the hanging of posters, objects or paintings must be paid for by the Tenant. Nails, drawing pins and tape must not be used.

3.19 Pools

In our properties, pools are not allowed. This includes inflatable, portable and shell pools, any body of water that is 300mm in depth or more. This is because all pools in residential settings must comply with the Swimming Pools Act 1992, local Council requirements and Fair Trading. As enforced by law; swimming pools must be surrounded by a child-resistant barrier that meets council regulations and that is designed, constructed, installed and maintained in accordance with the standards prescribed by these regulations (gate and fence) and fencing laws. To help keep your little ones safe and other children in the community, we do not allow pools of any description. If this is not adhered to it can lead to serious consequences and council may enforce a fine or penalty. If you have any questions regarding this please do not hesitate to speak to your Support Worker.

3.20 Domestic Violence

A tenant who is the victim of a domestic violence offence is not responsible to the landlord for any act that is a breach of their signed tenancy agreement if the act or omission constitutes or resulted in damage to the premises and occurred during the commission of a domestic violence offence. If this is the case for you, you may be required to provide an AVO or other documented evidence. If you have any concerns or if you need any support, talk to your Support Worker who can provide you with assistance to understand this.

3.21 Emergency Situations

From time to time there may be emergency situations that arise. A good example of this is the Covid 19 pandemic. These situations are usually things that we have never dealt with before, and we have to take advice from official people. In these situations, your Support Worker will contact you and make sure that you have all the information you need and will keep you up to date with any developments. Your Support Worker will make sure you have all the equipment you need to stay safe, and if you don't, they'll help you to get it. Your Support Worker will also make sure you have access to support for your mental, physical and social wellbeing.

We will all work together to make sure that every tenant and Staff Member is safe and feeling ok. If you have any concerns, or need any information in any situation, but particularly regarding emergency situations, you can call your Support Worker, the CHAIN Service, or the 24 hour phone number (if urgent).

If you need help to understand an emergency situation, please call;
* Your Support Worker
* CHAIN Youth Health Service (02) 4240 4800
* The Crisis Youth Refuge 24 hour line (in urgent situations) (02) 4221 7700

4. Leaving SYFS Accommodation

4.1 Rehousing when you can no longer live in your home

If you live in a home that is leased from a private owner and the owner ends the lease, or you cannot live in your home for other reasons (eg: serious fire and storm damage), SYFS will do its best to find you a similar home. For us to find you another home you must:

- Be up to date with your rent
- Have no serious complaints against you
- Not be the reason the owner is ending the lease

4.2 Evictions

SYFS administer its tenancies in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act (2010). The Organisation is a supportive landlord that will work with Tenants who cooperate to help them maintain their tenancies. However, in some circumstances the Organisation will have no choice but to evict Tenants.

If you get a Breach Notice you must treat it seriously and contact your Support Worker promptly.

Some reasons for Breach Notices are:

- Not paying rent
- Causing a nuisance to neighbours
- Damaging the property
- Conducting or permitting unlawful activities
- Permitting persons who are not in the Tenancy Agreement to live on the property

When tenants are evicted from our properties, we will offer support to look for alternative accommodation and reasons for the eviction will always be given. You can appeal an eviction and your Support Worker can assist you with this.

4.3 Getting your Bond Back

When you leave your SYFS's property, we would like to be able to return your full bond and offer the home to someone else as soon as possible. You can help us do this by:

- Giving us as much written notice as possible of the date you are moving. You must at least give us 14 days notice in writing. If notice is not given you may be liable to pay a set fee as per the signed tenancy agreement. We will discuss this with you.
- Removing all rubbish, both inside and outside
- Cleaning the property so it is as clean as when you first moved in. This includes cleaning the windows, walls, skirting boards, inside cupboards, the oven and griller and any stains on the flooring
- Organising with us to repair or replace anything you have damaged
- Arranging an inspection of the property with our Tenancy Manager
- Returning the keys without delay, this includes spare keys and any new keys
- Giving us your new address and contact details for the refund of your bond

4.4 Feedback

If you are leaving SYFS, you can help us improve our services for other tenants by giving us feedback. Please ask your Support Worker for a feedback form.

4.5 Abandoned Goods

If you leave personal items behind after you have left the property, they will be dealt with or disposed of in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act (2010). Do not leave any items behind. If you can't take all your items with you when you leave, please talk to the Tenancy Manager who may be able to assist you.

4.6 Forwarding Address

Please provide your Support Worker with a forwarding address, and contact details prior to vacation of the premises.

5. Complaints and Appeals

5.1 Complaints

SYFS acknowledges the right of tenants to complain if they are dissatisfied and commits itself to providing tenants with grievance procedures that are accessible, responsive, prompt and fair. We endeavour to provide quality services that respond in a timely way to the needs of tenants. We endeavour to have skilled and appropriate staff and we endeavour to offer flexible services. However, complaints and disputes may occur from time to time. Complaints will be resolved quickly, and where possible, informally and at the most immediate level.

Guiding principles

The following principles will guide the handling of client complaints:

- SYFS will encourage clients and others to voice complaints, concerns and suggestions for improved service delivery when required, and have a commitment to use complaints to improve service quality
- SYFS will ensure clients are informed of the ways to make complaints, concerns and suggestions and they will be given access to information and resources to assist in this
- Staff will receive concerns, issues or complaints in a positive way and ensure the concern, issue or complaint is considered and dealt with and reported and recorded appropriately.
- All complaint/dispute processes will be governed by objective assessment, support for all people involved and speedy resolution
- Confidentiality will be a prime consideration during complaint processes
- Where a complaint is received about legal and departmental requirements such as court orders, where they cannot be resolved by SYFS, SYFS will inform the client or others of their rights of appeal to other bodies
- Any complaint involving child abuse or other inappropriate actions by staff, volunteers or carers will be notified to the correct Government Department, the Ombudsman, the Office of the Children's Guardian and other relevant external bodies as required

If you are not happy with our service, standards, practices or policies, you have the right to complain. For example you might think we have done something unreasonable, unfair or have treated you badly.

In the first instance we hope for you to tell us what the problem is so we can try and sort it out. We want to offer a really good service to everyone in our community and we will listen carefully to all your suggestions and complaints. You may also want to talk with someone who is not directly involved in the problem. They can help you be clear about what the problem is and what you want done about it. They can also talk to us on your behalf.

If you feel that we have not resolved your complaint by talking with us then you can put your complaint in writing. When we receive a written record of your complaint we will investigate your problem and hopefully find a solution. We will put our response in writing and this may include:

- An apology
- An explanation of why things happen that way or
- A description of what action we have taken to ensure you don’t have that problem in the future

You are also entitled to ask for someone to advocate on your behalf. You could ask for help from a Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service, a Community Worker, family member or a friend. You can also ask for help from an Organisation that helps resolve disputes. Please ask

your Support Worker for information on how to contact these Organisations or refer to the last page of this handbook.

We will keep a copy of your complaint on your file. This will be kept confidential.

Other services that may assist you
A formal complaint to SYFS does not deny you the right to follow any other actions. These may include:

- Making an application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT). NCAT is available for Tenants who feel the conditions of their rental agreement have been breached by SYFS Housing. Tenants who are unable to resolve such tenancy matters through negotiation or mediation can take the matter up with NCAT. NCAT is also the forum in which SYFS may seek resolution of tenancy issues. You can contact NCAT by phone, or online
- Contacting your nearest Tenants Advice Service or Community Legal Centre for advice and assistance
- Contact the NSW Registrar of Community Housing office for further advice

5.2 Appeals
We make decisions based on a set of Policies and Procedures that aim to be fair to everyone. These Policies and Procedures are designed to meet agreed standards of Service for Community Housing and to comply with the Law.

You may not always agree with a decision we make. If you do not agree, it is important that you ask us to explain or at times review our decision. It is also your right as the Tenant to appeal decisions.
Some of the decisions you may want us to reconsider are:

- The level of your rent
- Being refused rehousing or transferring
- Being refused permission to make modifications to your property

Internal Review and Appeal

- A tenant has the right to formally appeal a decision
- The grounds for appeal must be new information
- To commence this process, the client must notify the CEO or the CEO's nominated delegate expressing their wish to appeal the decision (A Support Worker or Advocate can assist)
- An appeal meeting will take place as soon as possible and within ten working days of this notification

External Appeal

- As well as the internal review and appeal process, tenants also have the right to access an independent review process if they are unhappy with the decision of their housing providers. The process for appeals will follow the requirements stipulated in the Residential Tenancy Act. Your Support Worker can assist you to lodge an external appeal. An example of a service which can help you with this is the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). This is an independent agency who assists social housing tenants to appeal decisions made by their housing provider.

6. Contacts

6.1 Emergencies	
Ambulance, Fire & Police (Emergency only)	000
Wollongong Police	4226 7899
Corrimal Police	4283 0200
Port Kembla Police	4276 5199
Dapto Police	4262 9499
Lake Illawarra Police	4232 5599
State Emergency Service	132 500
Wollongong Hospital	4222 5000
Shellharbour Hospital	4295 2500
Medical Advice Line After Hours GP helpline	1800 022 222
Radio Doctor (after Hours)	4228 5522
Poisons Information Line	13 11 26
6.2 Utilities	
Telstra	13 22 00
Gas (connections) Energy Australia NSW	13 34 66
Sydney Water	13 20 92
Origin/Integral Energy	13 24 61
6.3 Advocacy, Advice & Referral	
Illawarra South Coast Tenants Service	1800 807 225 / 02 4274 3475
Law Access NSW(over the phone help)	1300 888 529
Legal Aid Wollongong	4228 8299
Department of Fair Trading	13 32 20
Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy services Southern NSW Murra Mia	1800 672 185 / 02 4472 9363
Housing Appeals Committee	1800 629 794
NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)	1300 006 228
Tenants Union NSW Advice Line	1800 251 101
NSW Registrar of Community Housing	1800 330 940
6.4 Other Helpful Services	
Independent Housing Project (IHP)	4240 4840 AH/WE 4221 7700
Independent Living Situation Program (ILS)	4240 4850
SYFS Main Office (Crisis Refuge)	4221 7700
Community Health for Adolescents in Need (CHAIN)	4240 4800
LifeLine	13 11 14
Kids Help Line	1800 551 800
Domestic Violence Support Line Freecall	1800 656 463
Child Protection (report abuse)	132 111
Tresillian	1300 272 736 or tresillian@sswahs.nsw.gov.au
Parent Line NSW	1300 130 052
Homes NSW	4224 5700
Housing Trust	4254 1166
Illawarra Multicultural Services	4229 6855
Centrelink Employment Services	132 850
Centrelink Youth and Student Services	132 490
Centrelink Family Assistance Office	136 150
Centrelink Disability/Sickness/Carers	132 717

Centrelink Abstudy	1800 132 317
Centrelink Web	www.centrelink.gov.au
6.5 Shoalhaven Services	
Southern Cross Community Housing	1300 757 885
SAHSSI Specialist Homeless Service	02 4488 4880
Safe Shelter Shoalhaven	02 4480 5028
John Purcell House	02 4428 6207
Care South Shoalhaven Youth Support Service	02 4422 7625