



**Welcome
home.**

**Tenant
Handbook.**



Welcome

Welcome to your new home with Churches of Christ Housing Services. We hope you settle in quickly and find yourself feeling connected with your new community.

We are committed to providing you with quality services throughout your tenancy and will make every effort to meet your expectations and ongoing housing needs.

This handbook aims to provide you with some information about our organisation and how we will manage your tenancy. We hope you find this useful but if you do have any further questions, please contact our office or get in touch with your Housing Officer.

Kind regards,



Gus Taddeo

General Manager – Housing Services

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Acknowledgement of Country

We at Churches of Christ acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we stand and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures, hopes and aspirations of First Nations People.

We acknowledge and recognise the resilience of generations of First Nations People and stand with you now and always.

We are committed to walking alongside First Nations People to establish a foundation of trust and to taking meaningful action to preserve, affirm and promote the world's oldest living culture.

About us

Churches of Christ Housing Services is a leading provider of housing solutions for individuals and families facing housing stress and homelessness.

We are one of the most diverse providers in Queensland with expertise in:

- tenancy and property management
- housing support services
- community development
- asset management
- property development.

We are a registered tier one provider under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing and have been delivering responsive housing outcomes for people and communities for over 40 years.

Managing a portfolio in excess of 1200 properties, we are responsible for housing more than 3000 people and providing homelessness advice and assistance to many more.

For more information on Churches of Christ Housing Services go to cofc.com.au/housing



Contact us

Office contacts

Brisbane

PO Box 508
41 Brookfield Road
Kenmore Qld 4069

P: 07 3327 1674

Ipswich

PO Box 252
200 Brisbane Road
Booval Qld 4304

P: 07 3436 8900

Gold Coast

PO Box 412
Ashmore City Qld 4214
Cnr Olsen Ave & Griffith Way
Southport Qld 4215

P: 07 5539 7655

Sunshine Coast

8 Cooma Terrace
Caloundra Qld 4551

P: 07 5492 8439

Bribie Island

52 Cotterill Avenue
Bongaree Qld 4507

P: 07 3410 3751

North Ipswich

26 The Terrace
North Ipswich Qld 4305

P: 07 3436 8930

Our **office hours** are 9.00am – 4.00pm weekdays

For **after-hours emergencies**, call 1800 446 604

If you require an interpreter, Call TIS National on 131450 and ask them to call Churches of Christ Housing Services on 1800 406 566.

Customer Service

Churches of Christ Housing Services is committed to providing the highest standard of service to all customers. We achieve this by being open, fair and honest in all our practices. We aim to treat our customers as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

We have formalised our commitment to providing quality customer service in our **Client Service Charter**. A copy of the charter is available at your housing office or can be obtained from your Housing Officer.

Moving in

Your lease agreement

The lease agreement that you signed today is a legal contract that sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and those of Churches of Christ Housing Services as the landlord.

If you live in a multi-unit complex there are **Communal Rules** which will apply and these also form part of your agreement.

For more information on your rights and responsibilities, refer to the **Renting a Home in Qld** booklet provided in your tenancy pack or visit the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) website.

Entry condition report

The entry condition report records the condition of the property before you move in. It is then compared to the condition of the property when you move out. It is important for you to complete this report when you first move in and return it to us within seven (7) days of receiving the keys. If you need assistance completing it, speak with your Housing Officer and they will gladly assist you.

When completing the report, please ensure that you:

- check that you agree with what is shown on the report
- add anything about the property that is not shown on the report
- add photos or videos to support your report, if you wish to do so
- Sign and initial each page where indicated.

Settling in

Your **Welcome to your new home** card, provided in your tenant pack, suggests some helpful actions to take as you familiarise yourself with your new home and its features.

We also acknowledge that it can be difficult to absorb everything at your lease agreement sign-up, so your Housing Officer will schedule a settling-in visit within a month of you moving in. This visit aims to provide you with information specific to you and your property, including:

- location of water and electricity meters, and safety switch
- isolation switch locations – e.g. oven, stove or fridge
- fire and evacuation plans
- maintenance troubleshooting.

We will also answer any questions you may have about your tenancy or Churches of Christ Housing Services. We will take this opportunity to gather some customer satisfaction information from you to help us improve our services, if you are happy to do so.



Your tenancy

Rent

From the lease start date, and following your initial two week's rent in advance payment, you will be required to pay your rent either weekly or fortnightly so that your rent is always two weeks in advance.

How to pay your rent

You can pay your rent in a number of ways:

- **Centrepay** - Payments may be automatically deducted from your Centrelink payments using Centrepay Deductions at no cost to you. Forms can be provided by your Housing Officer.
- **Bank account** – You can set up a direct deposit from your bank account. Talk to your Housing Officer who can provide bank details and an individual reference number for transactions.

If, at any time, you are having problems paying your rent, please contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible to discuss how we can help. While every effort is made to assist residents in sustaining their tenancy, please be aware that if you are frequently behind in your rent, you may be putting your tenancy at risk.

For more information on your rent, please visit our website or refer to the **Rent Information Sheet**.

Rental Bonds

When you commence a tenancy, you will be required to pay a bond equivalent to four weeks rent for your property. Rental bonds act as a security deposit and are held by the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) for the duration of your tenancy.

If the rent is increased during your tenancy you will be required to pay the balance of the bond to maintain the amount at four weeks rent.

At the end of your tenancy, your rental bond will be refunded to you unless you owe us any rent or other costs for repairs, maintenance or cleaning of the property.

For more information on rental bonds, please visit our website or refer to the **Rental Bonds Information Sheet**.

Rent and eligibility reviews

Every year, Churches of Christ Housing Services is required to review your household circumstances to better understand your rent and housing needs.

To do this, we will send you a form and helpful information to assist you with completing it. It is important to return the form to us quickly, along with any requested documentation. If you do not return the requested documentation in the required timeframe, your rent may be assessed at the full market rate and you may be deemed ineligible for your property.

If you are in one our Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), these reviews are not required.

For more information on reviews, please visit our website or refer to the **Rent and Eligibility Information Sheet**.

Pets

Churches of Christ Housing Services understands the important role of pets in providing companionship and contributing to health and happiness. However, there are conditions regarding pets in our properties and, as such, approval must be given before you can get a pet.

For more information on pets, please visit our website or refer to the **Pets Information Sheet**.

Parking

Churches of Christ Housing Services encourages environmentally sustainable practices by our residents. One of the ways of doing this is by having properties close to public transport. This helps us to ensure that residents have an affordable transport option to access other services and employment. As such, many of our multi-unit complexes have limited on-site parking.

Parking is reserved for residents, and for resident's visitors *only where appropriately signed*. Parking is not allocated unless written approval has been provided.

For more information on parking, please visit our website, or refer to the **Parking Information Sheet**.



Water usage

Under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, tenants are responsible for paying for the water they use in their property. To check whether this applies to you and your property, please talk to your Housing Officer.

For more information on water usage, please visit our website, or refer to the **Water Charging Information Sheet**.

Being a good neighbour

Everyone is entitled to the quiet enjoyment of their home and to live in peace and harmony with their neighbours. Churches of Christ Housing Services is committed to working with residents to build sustainable and safe communities.

If you are experiencing problems with a neighbour which is affecting your right to the quiet enjoyment of your home, we suggest talking to them and try to resolve it prior to lodging a dispute complaint.

For more information on being a good neighbour, please visit our website, or refer to the **Neighbour Information Sheet**.

Visitors and guests

Sometimes friends or family members come and visit, or even stay for a while. As a tenant under a General Tenancy Agreement, you have the right to have visitors and guests come to see you and stay, however, you are responsible for the behaviour of your visitors and guests.

If you are having visitors stay, make sure you advise Churches of Christ Housing Services. If a guest is staying for more than four weeks, you need to get approval first.

For more information on visitors, please visit our website, or refer to the **Visitors and Guests Information Sheet**.

If you are a resident housed under a Rooming Accommodation Agreement, different conditions apply. Specifically, **House Rules** which form part of your Accommodation Agreement.

A copy of the **House Rules** is included with the Agreement and is also on display in the common area of your property.

Changes to your household

Your household details may change from time to time. For example, the birth of a child, a new job, a household member moving out, or a new person moving in, can all impact the household makeup, and in turn, impact your rent and eligibility. When changes happen, please let us know as soon as possible.

For more information on household changes, please visit our website, or refer to the **Household Changes Information Sheet**.

Temporary absences

You are able to take time away from your home, just like anyone renting in the private market, however conditions do apply. It is important to notify your Housing Officer before you go away. Let us know how long you will be away and how you can be contacted during that time, regardless of your time away.

You will still be responsible for the property while you are away, which means ensuring rent is still paid and the property is kept clean and tidy.

For more information on absences, please visit our website, or refer to the **Temporary Absences Information Sheet**.

Transfers

If you are in a long-term social housing program, you can apply for a transfer to another property if a change in circumstances makes your existing property or location no longer suitable. This is called a tenant-initiated transfer.

Transfer procedures and eligibility criteria are specified by the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy. To be considered for a transfer, you must meet the transfer criteria and demonstrate that your current housing no longer meets your housing need.

For more information on transfers, please visit our website, or refer to the **Transfers Information Sheet**.

Under-occupancy

You may be considered to be under-occupying a property when there are more bedrooms than the household needs. This may be a result of household members moving out of the property.

In order to maximise housing resources and ensure the viability of social housing programs, we may initiate a transfer, called a provider-initiated transfer, to a suitable property that meets the needs of your household.

For more information on under-occupancy, please visit our website, or refer to the **Under-Occupancy Information Sheet**.

Ending your tenancy

When you are ready to move out, you must provide us with at least 14 days written notice – different notice periods apply in some circumstances, such as domestic and family violence. Talk to your Housing Officer for more information.

Your Housing Officer will discuss the exit process and any obligations to be met prior to handing back your keys. We will also send you a **Moving out Checklist** to assist with the process of moving out.

When you do move, please ensure that the property is completely clean and tidy and no rubbish or personal belongings remain.

An exit inspection, where you and your Housing Officer will walk through the property together, will be completed to compare the property condition to what was written on the entry condition report when you moved in.

Providing feedback

We value all feedback and use it to improve our services and the way they are delivered.

There are different ways you can provide feedback to us or contribute to improving our service.

- Attend our Resident Engagement Meetings
- Participate in our Tenant Satisfaction Survey which is conducted every two years
- Or simply contact us.

	Complete a <i>Feedback and Appeals Form</i> available in your Tenant Start-up Pack or from any of our offices and return it to us (address details on back).
	Go to our website at www.cofc.com.au/housing and complete a form online.
	Email us at housingservices@cofcqld.com.au
	Call us at any of our offices or on 1800 406 566.
	Request an interview with us in person.

Appealing a decision

If you do not agree with a decision we have made, you have the right to appeal it. Some examples include:

- being declined for a property or transfer
- refused permission to make property alterations
- a declined application to keep a pet
- the result of your rent and eligibility review
- the outcome of a complaint you made
- a notice you receive (breach or notice to leave).

For more information, refer to the **Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Brochure** provided with your tenant pack, or visit our website.

Your property

Responsive repairs and maintenance

Churches of Christ Housing Services will ensure the property you move into is safe and secure. However, throughout your tenancy, different repairs and maintenance may be required to make sure it remains in good condition.

We will respond to repairs and maintenance requests depending on how urgent the need is. The following are examples of typical repair priorities and target response times.

Repair Category	Examples
<p>Emergency 1 Hour Response <i>A fault or damage that could lead to death or injury of persons, or serious damage to the property.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire. • Gas leaks. • Exposed live electrical wires. • Burst pipes within the building.
<p>Urgent 4 Hour Response <i>A fault or damage that endangers health and safety or could result in extensive damage to the property.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building is unsecure. • Complete lighting or power outage (not a network fault). • Serious water penetration. • Serious storm damage. • Burst water pipes outside the building.
<p>Priority Repairs 24 Hour Response <i>A fault or damage that causes serious inconvenience to the tenant.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially blocked drains (minor, no health hazard). • Toilet cistern not working or overflowing. • Unsecured windows. • Unsecured yard (fence damage greater than 125 mm wide).
<p>Routine Repairs 14 Day Response <i>Maintenance that does not prevent regular use of the property.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow dripping taps. • Stove partially faulty. • Water hammer. • Doors jamming. • Leaking gutters or downpipes.
<p>Defects (new properties) <i>Repairs and maintenance covered by a builder or manufacturer warranty period generally outside of the services direct control.</i></p>	<p>Maintenance in the first 12 months after a new property has been built will be the responsibility of the original contractor and are known as defects repairs. The response targets outlined above may not apply for minor defects.</p>

How to report a repair

- Contact your Housing Officer to report an issue or to obtain a **Maintenance Request Form**; or
- Complete a **Maintenance Request Form** available from your housing office or on our website.

For more information on repairs and maintenance, please visit our website, or refer to the **Repairs and Maintenance Information Sheet**.

Planned maintenance

Planned maintenance are major repairs and upgrades we do to the property as it ages. You will be notified beforehand if your property is scheduled for planned maintenance and we ask for your support and cooperation if this is to be done during your tenancy.

Property alterations

If you wish to add, remove or change any of the fixtures or fittings in your home, you may do this only when written approval has been provided by Churches of Christ Housing Services.

For more information on property alterations, please visit our website, or refer to the **Tenant Property Alterations Information Sheet**.

Disability modifications

We recognise that your needs can change over time and this may mean that your house needs to be modified to ensure it continues to meet your needs into the future.

If you have a recognised need, you may request to have a disability modification made to your property.

For more information on disability modifications, please visit our website, or refer to the **Modifications Information Sheet**.

Repairs and maintenance that are your responsibility

As the tenant, you have a responsibility to keep the property and its inclusions in good condition. You can achieve this by:

- regular cleaning and upkeep
- maintaining your yard
- reporting repairs and maintenance as soon as you become aware of them.

Property damage

You are responsible for paying to repair any damage to the property that is caused by you, a household member, or a visitor.

Lock outs

If you lock yourself out of your property, you will be responsible for the cost of arranging a locksmith.

Pests

Churches of Christ Housing Services will carry out pest control treatments on its properties on a biennial basis for units in multi-unit complexes, and annually for the common areas.

Outside of these times you have a duty to keep your home free of pests and rodents and, should you need a treatment, you can arrange for a qualified pest control company to treat your home, at your cost, without our approval.

For more information on pests, please visit our website, or refer to the **Pest Information Sheet**.

Mould

Preventing mould not only keeps your home in good condition, it also reduces the health risks associated with breathing in mould spores. For tips on preventing mould in your home, please visit our website, or refer to the **Mould Information Sheet**.

Your community

We want you to take an active role in your tenancy and in your community by helping you feel welcome, included and supported.

Resident engagement meetings

Resident Engagement Meetings provide an outlet for residents dedicated to ensuring an improved quality of life for themselves and their community.

These meetings provide residents with greater access to information, advice and opportunities to be actively involved in their tenancy, and encouraging connection with their local community.

Resident Engagement Meetings are held quarterly across our South East Qld regions and are open for any resident to attend. If you would like to attend, or simply want more information, please get in touch with our Community Engagement Team.

Community Chaplains

We recognise that as well as providing for people's physical needs, it is equally important to provide for their social, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. Our Chaplains work with residents to nurture healthy communities which are safe, respectful, inclusive and empowered. Talk to your Housing Officer to get in touch with your Community Chaplain.

Neighbourhood days

Neighbourhood days are held at many of our multi-unit complexes each year. We partner with various local services who offer information, advice and their services for our residents who may not otherwise be able to access them.

Contact the Community Engagement Team or visit our website for more information.

Social clubs

Social clubs are initiatives run by our residents for the benefit of their neighbours and communities. Through inclusive functions, activities and initiatives, social clubs work to bring people together, develop a strong sense of community and spread compassion. Talk to your Housing Officer or Community Chaplain for more information.

Community gardens

With prior approval, residents can utilise an area of land within their complex for growing vegetables, fruit or flowers. Community gardening is a fulfilling and satisfying experience, which provides a space where people can come together to socialise, learn new skills, solve problems and strengthen community connections.

Onsite barbeques

Our Community Chaplains host regular barbeque events across many of our multi-unit complexes for all to attend. Contact your Housing Officer or community chaplain to find out when the next barbeque is being held.

Events & activities

Our Community Engagement Team organises events and activities throughout the year for the many different groups of people that make up the Churches of Christ Housing Services community. Some of these include:

- Seniors month
- NAIDOC week
- Harmony Day
- Christmas in July.

For more information on what's happening near you, refer to the **Community Engagement Event Calendar** provided with your tenant pack or contact our Community Engagement Team.

Support programs

Digital literacy training

Churches of Christ Housing Services recognise the value of being confident enough to engage with an increasingly digital world, so we offer both individual and group-based opportunities for residents to increase their level of digital literacy.

Our DigiAsk program is considerate of the extent to which people have access to technology, and their levels of experience with it.

We can help you:

- learn how to use mobile phones and tablets
- navigate important online services like banking, Centrelink, MyGov and RTA
- contact the Community Engagement Team for more information about upcoming opportunities.

Tenancy skills courses

We partner with the Tenancy Skills Institute to provide support and mentoring to our residents undertaking the Skillsets for Successful Tenancies short course. This course aims to provide residents with skills in order to:

- learn how to sustain a tenancy
- be aware of their rights and responsibilities
- clean and maintain a property
- manage their finances.

SPER Hardship Partner

Churches of Christ Housing Services are a registered State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) Hardship Partner. We can deliver approved activities to our residents who have an eligible SPER debt, for them to be able to reduce this debt by participating in activities such as unpaid work, and educational, vocational or life skills courses.

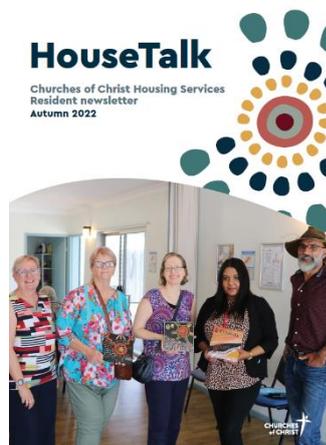
Money Minded workshops

These workshops can assist residents create a budget, learn to reduce debt, and simply become better with managing, and feeling 'in control' of their money.

Stay connected

Our resident newsletter '**HouseTalk**' is published four times a year. HouseTalk aims to keep you updated on what's going on at Churches of Christ Housing Services and what our community has been up to.

It will appear in your mailbox each quarter and is also available on our website cofc.com.au/social-housing



Household tips

Here is some information that you might find useful as you settle into your new home.

Waste and recycling

Check with your local council to find out when the bins for your property are due for collection. If you live in one of our multi-unit complexes, refer to the Resident Overview for more information. You can reduce waste sent to landfill by the appropriate use of your rubbish bins.



Remember to tie off your general waste bags before placing them in the bin, especially if you live at a complex with rubbish chutes on the higher levels.

If you have food scraps to dispose of, double bag the waste to prevent vermin and other pests from accessing it.

Avoid parking in areas that obstruct bins from being collected. For more information on household waste, please visit our website, or refer to the **Rubbish Information Sheet**.

Stay safe and secure

If a crime is happening right now and you feel unsafe or threatened, call **000**. For non-urgent matters contact Policelink on **131444**, or visit our website.

Policelink can provide tips and advice on different ways you can keep yourself, your home, and your community safe and secure.

Be fire aware

Common causes of fires in the home are electrical appliances, cooking, smoking and candles. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services provides many tips on how to prevent fires from starting in your home, how to best prepare just in case, and what to do to protect yourself if there is a fire. Visit our website for more information.

Be water wise

You can contribute to safeguarding our water supply for the future by being waterwise. Help conserve our water supply and save some money by making simple changes to how you use water.

The SEQ Water website provides advice on saving water in and around your home. Visit their website for more information.



Useful contacts

Services	
Emergency	000
Policelink	131 444
Qld Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)	13 74 68
State Emergency Service (SES)	132 500
Qld Ambulance	13 74 68
Energex	13 62 62
Urban Utilities	13 23 64
Unity Water	1300 086 489
Centrelink	132 300
Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)	1800 838 372
Community	
Lifeline	131 114
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
DV Connect	1800 551 800
1800RESPECT	1800 737 732
Elder Abuse Prevention Unit	1300 651 192
Legal Aid	1300 651 188
Mental Health Access	1300 642 255

Housing	
Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA)	1300 366 311
Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy	13 74 68
Translating & Interpreting Service (TIS)	131 450
QSTARS	1300 744 263
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	1800 800 110
Homelessness Hotline	1800 474 753
Local council	
Brisbane City Council	07 3403 8888
Ipswich City Council	07 3810 6666
Gold Coast City Council	1300 465 326 or 07 5582 8211
Logan City Council	1300 156 426
Moreton Bay Regional Council	07 3205 0555 or 1300 477 161
Sunshine Coast Council	07 5475 7272
Redland City Council	07 3829 8999
Lockyer Valley Regional Council	1300 005 872
Somerset Regional Council	07 5424 4000

Local, State and Federal governments

We acknowledge the assistance of local, state and federal governments and agencies through nation building initiatives, crisis and transitional program funding and management of social housing properties.

About Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ has a long and proud history of care. Active across more than 100 local communities in Queensland and Victoria for almost 140 years, we are an organisation dedicated to innovative and holistic support.

By empowering people to live hope-filled, meaningful lives, we are able to truly live our purpose—to bring the light of Christ into communities. Through our local churches, and care and support services, we are able to assist tens of thousands of people each year. Through inclusive, caring, compassionate environments that meet individual needs without discrimination or prejudice, we are helping to build a community where everyone is welcome.



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Churches of Christ Housing Services Limited ABN 25 604 517 026 is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Churches of Christ in Queensland ARBN 147481436 (incorporated in Queensland).