



Connect Community Housing Tenant Handbook



Ngalak kaadatj Noongar Wadjak moort wer birdiya nidja boodja-k ngalak nyin wer waangkan.
Nidja Noongar boodja koora-koora, yeui wer kalyakoorl.

We acknowledge Noongar Wadjak people and Elders on whose land we sit and speak.
This is Noongar country in the past, now and always.

Connect Housing & Hub is operated by Connect Victoria Park In, a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity operating since 1957.

Community Housing is government-subsidised rentals for people on low incomes and assets. Our 70 Community Housing units on Mackie and Cargill Streets are rented out exclusively to people over 60 with low income and assets.

Connect is registered under the Western Australia Community Housing Regulatory Framework as a Tier 3 provider, which means our operations run in line with the Department of Communities' Housing Authority Rental Policy Manual, state community housing policies and our own policies.

Connect also runs the first Village Hub in Western Australia. Created in 2018, the Village Hub is a community of people 55+ who share experiences, have fun, socialise, exercise and keep learning together. All tenants at Connect's units are automatically members of the Village Hub.

Our housing covers the basics of security and safety so people can pursue other needs, and we offer ways of doing so through the Village Hub. Each of our tenants and Village Hub members contributes in unique ways to enrich our community.

With our Housing & Hub nestled in vibrant Victoria Park, we help to restore a village environment to the area, proving that older people are a vital and important part of our communities. We also demonstrate that it's possible to age well, independently and interdependently, in the place we love.

In everything we do, we abide to these values:

Respect - We value the leadership, lived experience and wisdom of older people.

Inclusivity - We actively work to ensure older people of all backgrounds and abilities feel a sense of belonging.

Resilience - We believe all older people should have the opportunity to develop their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and enjoy the associated benefits.

Compassion - We care for each other regardless of age or background and provide support in time of need.

Integrity - We take full responsibility for our actions and are honest in all our interactions.

We are committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQI+ people.

If you have any queries about your unit, our Housing or the Village Hub, please contact our friendly staff. Our office, at 5 Mackie St, is open **Monday to Friday**, from **8.30am to 4.30pm**.

You can reach us by phone (9361 2904) or email housing@connectvictoriapark.org.

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Community Housing

Community Housing is a vital part of Australia's housing landscape. The sector manages approximately 20% of the Social Housing stock in Western Australia. The rest is Public Housing, managed by the State.

A higher proportion of Community Housing tenants in WA are satisfied with the overall services from their provider (85%) compared to Public Housing tenants (76%). At Connect, 90.2% say they are satisfied with overall housing services.

Community Housing providers engage tenants on issues that impact on them and adopt a supportive landlord approach to managing tenancies.

At Connect, we are invested in ensuring our tenants not only benefit from safe and secure housing, but also have every opportunity to age well in their homes, access the support they need and live independently for as long as possible.

As a tenant at Connect, if you get along with your neighbours, pay rent on time and maintain your unit well, you may live in your unit for as long as you wish. If you have difficulties with the above, or need a hand staying independent at home, we'll help you access support.

In WA, providers like Connect are subject to externally monitored standards set by the Community Housing Regulatory.

Connect's Community Housing Policies are available for tenants to peruse in the Village Hub's Library as well as on our website (www.connectvictoriapark.org)

Tenants in Community Housing can access additional support through the Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) program. That means your rent to Connect is subsidised by the Federal Government, leaving more of your pension in your pocket after paying rent.

Because Community Housing is scarce, Connect allocates units according to need. We require tenants to regularly advise on their financial situation and on time absent from their units in order to ensure we offer housing to the people most in need. We do review rents annually.

Connect Housing Team

Connect Community Housing has a small but mighty team.

Our **Maintenance Officer**, Peter, works full time (Monday to Friday) and spends most of his time around the units. He is responsible for cyclical and long-term maintenance (more on pages 7 & 8), as well as responsive maintenance, which means attending to requests by tenants for repairs in their units.

To request a repair, please fill out the Maintenance Form available in the office and communal laundries, and bring it to reception at 5 Mackie St.

Our **Housing Officer**, Maria, works part time (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays) and is responsible for all your tenancy issues: your lease agreement, Property Condition Report, bond, inspection, rent reviews, as well as leasing vacant units.

To contact Maria, please call the office or email housing@connectvictoriapark.org.

Our **Accounts Officer**, Sue, works part time (Tuesdays, Thurs, Friday mornings) and can help with questions around rent payment, electricity bill and other charges.

To contact Sue, please call the office or email accounts@connectvictoriapark.org.

Our **Project Officer**, Flavia, works part time (Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays) and is responsible for communication with tenants, support to refurb projects, and ensuring we comply with Registrar's requirements. With Anne, our gardener, Flavia also helps tenants with waste and recycling issues.

To contact Flavia, please call the office or email project@connectvictoriapark.org

Our **CEO**, Luke, sets the direction and pursues opportunities for growth of our Housing & Hub. He liaises with Connect's Board, supervises our team and makes sure we are always focused on our vision of collaborating with older people to increase wellbeing and support ageing in community.

To contact Luke, please call the office or email ceo@connectvictoriapark.org

Life at Connect Housing & Hub

In this section, we explore important things to ensure day-to-day at Connect's Housing & Hub is successful and stress-free. For more detail, please consult our Policies and Procedures, available in the Village Hub's Library and on our website (www.connectvictoriapark.org), or chat with our Housing or Project Officers.

Communication

We are always keen to hear your views and comments, as they allow us to improve our service to you and future tenants.

Whenever there are important matters to communicate about your housing, we will circulate a Tenant Newsletter. It will be posted to your mailbox. You will also receive a quarterly Village Hub newsletter (*The Ageless*).

For urgent or time-sensitive notices, we use SMS messages to your mobile phone. Please ensure to let us know any changes to your contact details.

An important way to keep informed and provide feedback is to attend our regular Tenant Meetings. They occur twice a year, and details are informed to tenants with advanced notice.

We will circulate Tenant Surveys regularly. Answering a survey is the best way for tenants to give us feedback.

There is a Feedback Box in the hall at the Village Hub, next to the water cooler, and we encourage you to leave us a note whenever you have any feedback about your unit, common areas or your Village Hub membership.

Finally, the Housing Team are always happy to have a chat, please just stop by the office or drop us an email.

Repairs and maintenance to your home

Connect is committed to providing you with a home that is safe, secure and free of damage. With your assistance, we can ensure your home is maintained in the same condition, subject to normal wear and tear, as when you first moved in.

If you notice any issue with your home, **please fill out a Maintenance Request Form and take it to the office** so we can address it effectively.

You will find paper copies of the form at our office (5 Mackie St) and in the communal laundry in your block. Once filled in, please return the form to the office.

You can also place a request by calling the office and providing:

- Your name and unit address
- Type of service (plumbing, gas, electrical, gardening, handyman)
- Details of the request
- Whether you would like to be home or if contractors can access your unit to perform maintenance work

We will prioritise requests according to urgency. We will endeavour to respond to non-urgent maintenance requests within 10 business days. We appreciate your patience.

Category	Description	Timeframe for response (from notification)
Urgent	<p>Threat to immediate safety or health of people or serious damage to property. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply to the premises • Flooding or serious flood damage • Leaking roof (flowing water) • Blocked toilet/s causing overflowing • Any fault or damage that causes property to be unsafe or not secure 	24 to 48 hours
Non-urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air conditioning not working • Dripping tap • Poor water pressure • General maintenance to the property • Aerial reception and cables for NBN or TV 	10 business days

Urgent matters after-hours and on weekends

If there is an **urgent** issue on weekends or after business hours, please call our main number (08 9361 2904) and choose option 2. Your call will be directed to a Connect staff member.

It is your responsibility to arrange for a trusted friend or family member to hold a **spare key** to your unit in case you lose yours or are locked out.

If necessary, **you may contact resident Frank Hall outside office hours, as he has a master key.**

Mr Frank Hall
Unit 10/39 Mackie Street
0409 706 251 | 9470 6251

We urge you to contact these numbers after hours for emergencies only.

Please refer to the Useful Contacts session at the end of this handbook for essential services in our area.

Regular Maintenance

As well as responding when things are broken or damaged, we also undertake regular work to our properties to maintain them in good condition. This work falls into 2 categories: cyclical work and long-term work.

We plan cyclical work in advance to take place at regular intervals during the year. A good example is inspection of smoke alarms in all units.

Long-term maintenance is the repair or replacement of key components of our housing units when they reach the end of their useful lives, such as kitchens or hot water systems.

We strive to ensure that both cyclical and long term work is carried out with minimum disruption, and we will keep you informed of upcoming maintenance work.

Making your own modifications

If you wish to make improvements or alterations to your unit, please contact our Housing Officer to discuss the matter.

Improvements and alterations will be considered on a case-to-case basis, but in all cases we will consider: local council approvals, qualifications of tradespersons employed, impact on our ability to return unit to previous state, if needed, and restrictions included in your tenancy agreement.

Inspections

Inspection is an arranged visit to your unit by our Housing Officer, carried out so that:

- You have opportunity to raise any issues you may have with your home
- We can check that all is in working order and identify any maintenance needed
- We ensure that property is kept clean and tidy
- We can have a chat and make sure you are keeping well

In line with your Residential Tenancy Agreement, we will perform at least one and no more than four inspections per year. You will be provided with a minimum of 7 (seven)

days' notice of an inspection. You may also request an inspection to ensure the property is up to standard. Please contact our Housing Officer to schedule one.

For more detail on inspections, please refer to our Property Inspections Policy.

Breaches of tenancy

Connect's aim is for you to stay in your home for as long as it meets your needs.

However, if rules and conditions set out in your Residential Tenancy Agreement are breached, we will send you a Breach Notice requiring action to rectify concerns.

Connect usually issues Breach Notices due to property damage, non-payment of rent, nuisance to neighbours and exceeding Department of Housing's Income and Asset limits.

Connect will handle breaches of tenancy in accordance to the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Absence from Property

Connect understands and respects the need for tenants to be away from their homes from time to time. We are also aware that Community Housing is a scarce resource and a valuable asset for those in need.

To balance those needs, we ask that tenants limit time away from their units. If you're going away for any period of time, as a courtesy, please let the office know.

You will need to ask permission to stay away from your unit for more than 30 continuous days or 90 days in a 12 month interval.

Please make sure to lodge a request, informing the reason for your absence, at least 2 weeks before your intended departure date. We suggest you do not make significant financial commitments, such as air fares, before your request is assessed. We will inform our decision regarding your absence within 2 business days.

Being neighbourly

Connect encourages and supports community living, and we ask that you are considerate of your neighbours just as they should be considerate of you.

If issues arise, please try and talk to your neighbours to solve the situation. If the problem persists, please see our Housing Officer.

Tenants are responsible for caring for their own health and wellbeing. But remember that living in a block of units means you are very close to others and there is always a helping hand around.

Several of our tenants have good friends in their neighbours and have made arrangements to ensure everyone is safe and healthy every day. We encourage you to

find someone living nearby to check on your welfare every day, and that you do the same for others.

If you are concerned with the welfare of a neighbour, you may contact our office.

Living in close proximity to others also means everyone needs to contribute to the upkeep and amenity of communal areas.

Noise

One of the most important social obligations of unit-style living is to not make noise that intrudes into the lives of other residents. Here are a few reminders:

- Music or TV that is audible outside your unit is too loud
- Sometimes closing a balcony door/window will reduce noise travel
- Acceptable noise levels are lower at night

Smoking

Tenants who smoke must be mindful of the right of other tenants to enjoy their homes and surrounds without having to breathe in or smell smoke.

Smoking should only occur where it does not impact negatively on other people, and smokers must act on requests from Connect staff or other tenants to cease smoking in a particular area if their smoking is causing concern.

Smoking inside units is strongly discouraged.

Mail

You are responsible for emptying, securing and maintaining your mailbox, as well as organising mail collection if you are away for more than a couple of days.

If you do not want to receive junk mail, please place a suitable sign on your individual letterbox – you may purchase signs from hardware stores.

Laundry

There is a communal laundry in each block of units and all residents have access to the laundry in their block. You will receive keys to the laundry in your block after you sign your Tenancy Agreement. **We ask that you do not use laundries in blocks other than your own.**

Remember to keep doors to the laundry area closed when not using the site.

If the washing machine and drier in your laundry require tokens, you can buy them from reception in our office. Please source your own laundry detergent and other laundry products, and be mindful to not over-use those products.

Sun and wind are free, we encourage you to use the drier as last resort. If you use the drier, please ensure to run a full load. Please do not hang clothes or any other items outside of clotheslines or designated areas.

Cleaning and upkeep of laundry areas is responsibility of all residents – please leave the area clean and tidy after using it. Please be courteous and respectful of others when using the laundries.

Waste

Bin day in our area is Tuesday, with general waste bins (red-lid) collected weekly. Recycling bins (yellow-lid) and organic waste bins (light-green-lid) are collected fortnightly.

Tenants who are physically able are responsible for taking bins out to the verge on Monday evenings and bringing bins back after collection. Residents in your block of units may already have an arrangement to ensure the task is divided fairly. Please chat to them and help out as you can.

For general waste, please securely wrap any food waste before placing it in the red-lid bin, and close the lid. If you would like to compost your raw food waste, there are **composting** stations available in our properties. Please speak to Anne, the gardener, if you need information on how to use them.

For recycling, please place items loose (not wrapped or bagged) in the yellow-lid bin. Items that can be put in the recycling bin are: paper and cardboard (flattened), containers and bottles (plastic and glass) without lids, aluminium and steel cans.

You can deposit plastic and metal lids in dedicated boxes available in the Village Hub Hall. We also collect household batteries.

Please note that we have **dedicated bin for containers that carry the 10c refund**. If you wish to donate to Connect, please rinse the containers, remove lids, and place them loose (no bags or boxes) in the white-lid bin at the Village Hub (5 Mackie St).

Please do not leave rubbish on the ground in the bin areas. For large items that do not fit in bins, it is your responsibility to arrange private disposal or store them until there is a bulk pick up in our area. Peter can help with moving some bigger items to the verge ahead of bulk pick up, please contact the office.

We also organize a Hazardous Waste (fluoro globes, batteries, aerosol cans) collection annually. Details are informed to tenants in advance.

Gardener Anne is available every first Tuesday of the month, from 10 to 10.30am, at the 19-21 Gazebo, to answer tenants' questions about recycling and composting.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome to stay with you for a short time. However, any visit over a few days requires prior permission, in writing, from Connect. We do reserve the right of reassessing rental charges in case of extended stay by visitors.

Please note that you are responsible for the behavior of your guests.

Subletting or accommodating lodgers is not permitted.

Parking

Parking availability at our properties is limited.

If you are assigned a parking space at the beginning of your tenancy, please ensure to park your vehicle in the allocated bay. Visitors may only park in the few bays marked accordingly.

Keeping unlicensed vehicles or vehicles in state of disrepair on the premises is not permitted. There is no capacity to store a boat, caravan or trailer on the premises.

Pets

Pets are generally not allowed in our properties.

We understand, however, the companionship a pet can offer and will consider requests for small pets (excluding dogs) based on exceptional circumstances or compassionate grounds.

If permission is granted for you to keep a pet, you will need to pay a \$260 Pet Bond to cover any fumigation or repairs required when you vacate the property. If there are no such costs, you will be entitled to a full bond refund.

Gardens

Connect keeps extensive gardens around our units as we believe green areas benefit health and wellbeing. We are particularly proud of our bush garden area, established on 35 Mackie St (corner of Hordern St), and encourage you to enjoy it.

Each ground-level unit has an adjacent garden area. It is your responsibility to maintain it. If you live in an upstairs unit and would like an area to garden, please talk to our Housing Officer. You may also join residents who volunteer to upkeep common garden areas.

Connect also employs gardeners to perform specific tasks and ensure common areas are well kept. If you require specific assistance with a gardening task, please fill in a Maintenance Request Form.

Local issues

Our local government area is the Town of Victoria Park, and as a resident of Connect you must abide by the Town's local laws (www.victoriapark.wa.gov.au/About-Council/Council-documents/Local-laws) and any other applicable by-laws.

Complaints

Complaints are an important way to improve our housing and services. Connect will receive all complaints and deal with them fairly and promptly.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with our housing service, staff or the handling of a complaint which requires resolution or response.

Requests for maintenance or action by staff, reports of hazards (e.g. fallen tree) and requests for information are **NOT** complaints. If you are dissatisfied with how Connect handled any of these, however, you may lodge a complaint.

If you do have a complaint about our housing or services, please put it in writing or fill out an Action Form (available at the office), and hand it to staff or post to 5 Mackie Street, Victoria Park WA 6100.

We will address your complaint according to our Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy, available on our website and at the Village Hub Library.

Village Hub

Connect Victoria Park Village Hub is a community of people 55+ that operates from our community centre situated at 5 Mackie St.

As a Connect tenant, you automatically receive a Village Hub membership (value \$50 per annum).

The Village Hub is inspired by a growing movement that started in the United States in the late 90's. It is the first of its kind in Western Australia and the second in Australia, after the Waverton Hub in New South Wales.

Village Hub members share experiences, have fun, socialise, exercise and learn together, and help each other age well.

The Village Hub offers a range of classes, courses and events, and provides a venue for groups to meet and run activities of interest. Examples of member-led activities are the social cycling, mahjong and creative writing groups, book club, community choir and Saturday bingo.

The Village Hub's Be Connected series offers information on technology, while the Independence & Wellbeing sessions help you live independently for longer.

All members can access support from the Village Hub Help Centre, and request or offer help through the Ask a Member volunteering program. As a member, you can take classes and attend events at discounted rates.

You will receive regular updates on Village Hub activities by email or post.

For more information on the Village Hub and your membership, please talk to Village Hub staff at 5 Mackie St or visit www.connectvictoriapark.org.

Transferring units

Connect's goal is to offer support for you to successfully live in our units for the long term.

There may be a time when you would like to stay with us, but require a different unit for health or other significant reason. For instance, it may be that stairs are a bit of a challenge, and you need to be on the ground floor.

If you have a reason to request a transfer, please talk to our Housing Officer.

As vacancies arise, we will determine whether to make a vacant unit available to an existing tenant or whether there is a greater need from an applicant on the waiting list for our Community Housing.

For more details on transfers, please see our Eligibility and Allocations Policy.

Moving out

Most tenancies at Connect are terminated by tenants as they move to a different location or need to receive full time care.

Connect will end a tenancy as a last resort, particularly for unresolved matters such as rent arrears, poor property maintenance, continued anti-social behaviour or other significant breaches of the Tenancy Agreement.

An agreement in writing between the two parties can end a periodic lease. Alternatively, either the tenant or Connect can give written notice of termination to the other party, which may happen at any time.

If you decide to move out, you must provide our Housing Officer with a letter stating your intention. You must give 21 days' notice if yours is a periodic lease and 30 days if it is a fixed lease. If Connect decides to terminate your lease, we will provide you with written notice of at least 60 days.

Connect will charge rent until you hand your keys back to the office. When you return the keys, our Housing Officer will carry out a final inspection of your unit. We will inform you of date and time and you are welcome to attend.

On moving out, you are required to leave the property in a clean and sound condition, remove all your possessions, arrange disconnection and final readings for utilities, inform Connect of your forwarding address and redirect mail to your new address.

If you leave any property behind after moving out, it will be disposed of in accordance to the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

For information about your rights when ending your tenancy, please call Tenancy WA at (08) 9221 0088 or visit www.commerce.wa.gov.au/consumer-protection/tenant-ending-tenancy.

Bond refund

To ensure you receive a bond refund, it is important to leave the property in the same condition as when you moved in, less normal wear and tear.

If you received a Bond Assistance Loan from the Department of Communities, and the loan is not paid in full by the time you vacate your unit, your bond will be used to repay the Department. Any balance will be refunded to you.

Connect's policies

Connect has developed a set of policies to guide us in delivering Community Housing for people over 60 on low incomes. They detail several of the issues touched on in this Handbook and are available on our website (www.connectvictoriapark.org).

We also maintain a policy folder at the Village Hub Library, available to tenants Monday to Friday, from 8.30am to 4.30pm (except at times the Library is in use). Policies include:

- Absence from Property
- Rent Setting
- Eligibility and Allocation
- Property Inspection
- Feedback, Complaints & Appeals
- Sustainable Tenancies
- Tenant Engagement
- Privacy and Confidentiality

Useful Contacts

Connect Victoria Park office (08) 9361 2904. After-hours emergencies, option 2

Frank Hall (tenant who holds a master key) 0409 706 251 | 9470 6251

Town of Victoria Park (08) 9311 8111

Ambulance (emergency) 000, (non-emergency) 9334 1222

Police (emergency) 000; (non-life threatening) 131 444

Fire and Emergency Services (emergency) 000; (non-emergency) 1300 657 209

Centrelink Self Service 13 62 40; Seniors 13 23 00; Disability, Sickness, Carers 13 27 17

State Emergency Services (SES) assistance 132 500

Royal Perth Hospital (08) 9224 2244

Customer Service Charter

Our commitment

Connect is committed to respectful, responsive, professional and supportive relationships with our tenants. We will always engage with you in a manner consistent with our values, which are:

Respect: We value the leadership, lived experience and wisdom of older people

Inclusivity: We work to ensure older people of all backgrounds feel they belong

Resilience: We believe all older people should have the opportunity to develop – and benefit from – physical and emotional wellbeing

Compassion: We care for each other and provide support in times of need

Integrity: We take responsibility for our actions and are honest in our interactions

We will:

Be easy to contact

- Provide accurate details of who you can talk to and how to contact us
- Ensure communication is in plain English
- Provide interpreter services when required
- Ensure our office is easily accessible

Treat you with respect

- Listen to you
- Always speak to you in a friendly, kind and professional way
- Identify ourselves when we call you

Protect your privacy

- Keep all personal information and correspondence confidential in accordance with relevant laws
- Meet you privately if required

Be responsible

- Tell you about our policies and your rights and responsibilities
- Follow due process and be accountable for our actions and decisions
- Offer appeal opportunities if you are not happy with decisions we made







Focus on outcomes

- Work with you to keep you housed
- If there is a problem, we will listen, learn the facts, be non-judgemental
- Be flexible around decision-making and involve you and others in pursuing fair and equitable outcomes

How you can help us meet these standards:

- Always treat us with respect
- Provide accurate information when requested
 - Read the information we provide you
 - Let us know if your details or situation change
- Let us know how we are doing by providing us feedback

OUR RESPONSE TIMES

 Missed Phone Calls	Next business day	 In person	We will see you as soon as possible or arrange an appointment
 Emails	Next business day*	 Urgent repairs	24 to 48 hours
 Complaints	Acknowledge within 2 business days; respond within 10 business days	 Non-urgent repairs	10 business days

*Please note that some of our staff are in the office part-time