

#2 ALLOW REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS

Renters should be allowed to make their house a home.

THE PROBLEM

Many people want to make small changes to their rental property so that it feels more like a home, or better suits their needs, but are unable to do so.

Small changes like picture hooks, garden improvements, or window treatments can make a big difference in making a house feel like a home.

Minor modifications can also improve safety, liveability and the running cost of a home.

The ability to make reasonable modifications is of particular importance to people who live a disability and rent their home.

Being able to install a hand rail in the bathroom, a ramp to the door or tactile material to help find your way around are the sort of minor changes that should be allowed so that people with a disability can make their rental property a suitable home.

“It would be great to have the freedom to make minor modifications, especially for the children’s rooms so that they can make it their own space.”

THE FACTS

The Make Renting Fair WA survey found that 31% of respondents were unable to make minor modifications to their home.



People with a disability often live in poverty due to the disadvantages they face, and are more likely to be renters, and renters for life.^[1]

The ability to make minor modifications is of great importance.

THE SOLUTION

Renters should be allowed to make reasonable modifications so their house feels like a home, not just someone else’s investment property.

A schedule of permitted modifications is proposed, that could include:

- Painting a room in a new colour
- Putting up picture hooks
- Adding a wheelchair ramp where required
- Installing rails to access the shower and toilet
- Installing floating shelves
- Adding a cat / dog door
- Planting a vegetable garden

The reform sets out standard options for the tenant and landlord to agree, for example:

- could be returned to the original condition at the end of the tenancy
- to be retained by the landlord after the tenancy
- tenant to pay the full cost
- landlord to pay a component of the cost (eg: if the house is due for a repaint soon, the lessor may cover the costs and the parties might agree the colour scheme)

These agreements will be different depending on the cost of the modification, the value added to the property, and the length of the tenancy.

Some minor modifications may be permissible with only notification to inform the landlord (e.g. picture hooks and furniture anchors), while other more significant modifications will

require permission and agreement (e.g. TV aerial, disability access or safety fixtures), which a landlord will not be able to unreasonably refuse. The landlord may also require the tenant to use a suitably qualified person to make certain modifications.

These changes will enable tenants to make a rental their home and may also add value by improving the property. However, there will need to be sufficient clarity and protection for landlords provided through the schedule of modifications and appropriate terms.

[1] https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/2974/AHURI_RAP_Issue_107_The-housing-careers-of-people-with-a-disability-and-carers-of-people-with-a-disability.pdf

Quote: Make Renting Fair WA survey responses (2019)

