

YWCA  
CANBERRA

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING HANDBOOK

2024

# YWCA CANBERRA: AFFORDABLE HOUSING HANDBOOK

## YWCA CANBERRA HOUSING SUPPORT UNIT

Address: Level 2, 71 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City, 2601

Phone: 6185 2000 or 0438 645 621 (office hours)

Email: [housing@ywca-canberra.org.au](mailto:housing@ywca-canberra.org.au)

Web: [www.ywca-canberra.org.au](http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au)

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# INTRODUCTION

YWCA Canberra is a feminist not-for-profit organisation that has provided community services and represented women's issues in Canberra since 1929. This year we celebrate our 95th anniversary – a key milestone for our organisation and community.

We provide innovative, quality services for women, girls and families in the ACT and surrounding regions. We work in the areas of children's services, community development, homelessness and affordable housing, youth services, personal and professional training, women's leadership and advocacy.

**Our Mission:** Gender equity by strengthening communities and empowering girls and women through our services and advocacy.

**Our Vision:** Girls and Women Thriving.

**Our Goal:** Progress towards gender equality in the Canberra region and beyond

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**1. Children's & Community Services** - Our services educate and empower children and young people in order to embed gender equity norms, strengthen communities and empower women to have economic agency.

**2. Housing Services** - Our housing services are safe, appropriate, and affordable, with priority access for women experiencing violence and older women. We're contributing towards ending homelessness for women.

**3. Training and Networking** - Our training and networking programs promote agency for women's participation in the Canberra region and across Australia.

**4. Advocacy** - Our advocacy transforms power structures, enabling women and children to thrive.

**5. Sustainable Organisation** - Our transparent and inclusive practices through strong governance, management, service delivery and partnerships enable us to have a sustainable organisation.

## VALUES

**1. Courage** - We are dauntless, agile, and resilient as we transform power structures. As a proudly feminist organisation, we challenge the status quo to benefit everyone. We have the passion needed to make a difference.

**2. Equality** - We value equality of opportunity, outcomes and rights for women, girls, and non-binary people. We work with communities to achieve social, cultural, economic, and political participation and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

**3. Respect** - We engage with fairness and professionalism in our organisation, with our supporters and communities. We believe that respectful relationships are fundamental to achieving positive social change.

**4. Inclusion** - We embrace the diversity of our communities and adopt an intersectional approach that respects differences including in gender and gender expression, culture, race, spirituality, age, sexuality, abilities, political beliefs and socioeconomic status.

**5. Reconciliation** - We support the self-determination and agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women and proactively work with communities to achieve reconciliation.

**6. Responsibility** - We are innovative, accountable and manage resources and risks to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. We are forward thinking and curious. We value collaboration and systems leadership so that our work results in positive outcomes for the change we want to see in our communities.

### **Local, National, International**

YWCA's operate in Canberra, the Hunter Region and across Australia, delivering services across the country.

Internationally, the YWCA is one of the world's largest women's organisations with representation in 125 countries, and a global outreach of 25 million women and girls. As part of the international movement, YWCA Canberra seeks to play its part in working for a world where reconciliation, justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom, and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership.

# **YWCA CANBERRA HOUSING SUPPORT UNIT (HSU)**

YWCA Canberra has a long history in providing accommodation options to women and female identifying people and their families. We currently provide specialist homelessness and supported accommodation services on behalf of the ACT Government and are a registered community housing provider. As a service within the homelessness sector, we have become increasingly aware about the decrease in affordable housing within the Territory, and the impact of this on homelessness. As a result of this, YWCA Canberra has developed its own affordable housing program.

Lady Heyden House and Betty Searle House are managed under the Affordable Housing Program. Affordable housing is available to low to moderate income households and is priced so that the renters are also able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, energy, medical care and education.

As a rule of thumb, housing is usually considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of gross household income. In recent years with the increase in the cost-of-living YWCA consider affordability between 30-35%, to ensure that we are able to offer accommodation to eligible people in need.

Affordable Housing is open to a broader range of household incomes than social housing. Renters do not have to be eligible for social housing to apply for affordable housing, though people who are eligible for social housing may also be eligible for affordable housing properties. Please contact the HSU to confirm if you are eligible for YWCA Affordable Housing Program.

Affordable housing is managed more like a private rental property, but there are eligibility criteria, and the managers are mostly not for profit community housing providers. When there is a vacancy for an affordable housing room, it is usually advertised through AllHomes ([www.allhomes.com.au](http://www.allhomes.com.au)) and people apply.

YWCA Canberra currently has Affordable Housing occupancies available in two locations listed below. The target group for this program are: single people who identify as female, 45 years or older, on low-moderate incomes, without pets, who can live independently.

### **BELCONNEN – LADY HEYDON HOUSE**

Built and established in 2013, by YWCA Canberra, this purpose-built property known as Lady Heydon House provides five occupancies to women within a shared accommodation arrangement.

Each apartment has their own private bedroom, ensuite, kitchenette and living room with external access. All residents share a large kitchen, dining room and two living spaces. Vacancies are advertised through Allhomes and the occupancy fee charge is inclusive of utilities charges. There is onsite parking however, residents do not have allocated parking.

Lady Heydon House was named after Naomi Heydon, past President and significant contributor to YWCA Canberra in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **WESTON CREEK – BETTY SEARLE HOUSE**

Betty Searle House, owned by the ACT Government, managed by YWCA Canberra since 2014, provides eight occupancies to women within a shared accommodation arrangement.

Each resident has their own private bedroom, and ensuite. All residents share two adjoining kitchens, three living spaces, a courtyard, garden, and laundry. There is also a guest bedroom with a bathroom. There is onsite parking however, residents do not have allocated parking.



## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook contains important information about your occupancy and useful contacts. This handbook should be kept in a convenient place so that you can refer to it when you need to.

YWCA Canberra Housing Support Unit (HSU) staff will inform you of any changes to the information or contact details.



## VISITING OUR OFFICE

The HSU staff are dedicated to providing you with a quality service. Please phone the HSU to make an appointment to see a staff member.



### OUR CONTACT DETAILS ARE:

YWCA Canberra Housing Support Unit  
Level 2, 71 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City

Phone: **6185 2000** or **0438 645 621**

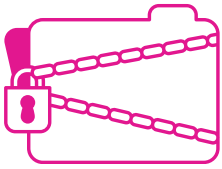
Email: [housing@ywca-canberra.org.au](mailto:housing@ywca-canberra.org.au)

Web: [www.ywca-canberra.org.au](http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au)

**Opening hours:** Weekdays: 9:00am – 5:00pm

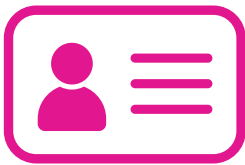
Emergency contacts are provided within this information handbook for occupants to use outside of these hours.





## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

YWCA Canberra respects and protects privacy of all individuals. In certain circumstances, the HSU may need to disclose your personal information to statutory organisations. In these instances, the HSU will inform you of what information was disclosed.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

It is important to remember to update your address details with people and businesses you engage with. Some examples are:

- Bank
- Insurance Companies (contents/car etc.)
- Centrelink
- Dentist
- Doctor
- Department of Transport (licence and registration)
- Electoral Commission
- Medicare
- Health Fund
- Post Office
- The Australian Taxation Office



# CONDITIONS OF OCCUPANCY

The condition of the property and inspections: Your property will have been thoroughly cleaned before you moved in. The property will have had an inspection to establish its condition. You will be provided with a Condition Report on your property upon sign up. Please make sure you look over this document and keep the property in the same condition.

The Tenancy Worker will inspect the property every six months to see if there are any damages or maintenance work that is needed. You will be notified verbally and in writing seven days before inspections. Please make sure you clean the room regularly. You need to clean any spills and stains on the carpets, floors, curtains etc. All carpets must be professional cleaned on vacating your room. Please contact the HSU of any maintenance requests.

**Changes to the property:** The HSU encourages you to feel a sense of belonging in the property and understand that you will want to individualise your bedroom in the property. There are, however, instances where you cannot make changes to the property. Please contact the HSU for advice on what changes are allowed. We do ask that you are mindful of the shared area to ensure all occupants have enjoyment of these areas.

**Window coverings:** YWCA will provide basic window coverings for all bedrooms and shared spaces. You can choose to add different window coverings at your own expense, and you can take them with you and rehang the YWCA curtains/blinds.

**Pets:** Pets, except fish, are not allowed without permission from the HSU. Please contact the HSU before introducing a pet into the property.

**Absence:** If you will be away from the property for more than three weeks, you must let the HSU know. Please use the Unoccupied Premises Form.

**Supportive Tenancy Principles:** YWCA Canberra Housing Support Unit offers supportive tenancy management across all the programs offered. For the shared affordable housing program, the YWCA Tenancy Worker is the main point of contact.

The Tenancy Worker will visit the properties often to conduct inspections and house meetings. They will assist residents in understanding their occupancy requirements and help them set up their rent payments. The Tenancy Worker will manage any rental arrears that may occur. They will also provide information and referral support if a resident is in need of extra support.

It is the Tenancy Workers role to educate and implement the House Rules. If there are interpersonal issues the Tenancy Worker will act within the House Rules, occupancy agreement and the Residential Tenancy Act to manage the issue.

In some circumstances residents move into our shared accommodation for a short period to allow them to apply and secure housing through Housing ACT or other community housing options. The Tenancy Worker can assist residents to explore these options and assist with the application process. They may also connect the residents with the YWCA Next Door program for older women, if the resident identify they need more case management and assistance.



# KEYS TO THE PROPERTY

You are not allowed to make copies of the keys to your property under any circumstances.

## **If you have misplaced, lost, or believe your keys have been stolen within office hours:**

- Contact the HSU

## **If you have misplaced, lost, or believe your keys have been stolen out of office hours:**

- **Betty Searle:** Contact a Programmed Locksmith on **6207 1500** - It is very important that you ask the locksmith for a job number.
- **Lady Heydon:** Contact any Locksmith at your own cost.

You will need to pay for replacing the lock and the keys. The approximate cost of getting a new lock and keys is between \$80.00 and \$400.00. You are required to provide a copy of the new key to the HSU.



## RENT

Betty Searle House and Lady Heyden House are managed under Occupancy Agreements. This is because they are shared houses that have communal areas such as the kitchen, laundry, living room and outside space.

Your rent or occupancy fee and your income will be reviewed every 12 months. Your income is assessed annually to ensure that you meet the income eligibility for affordable housing. If your income falls outside of the eligibility amount, then YWCA will support you in looking at alternative social housing (Housing ACT) or community or private rental options depending on your circumstances.

In the shared accommodation properties, affordable rent is calculated at 74.9% of full market rent plus utility costs and charges. YWCA Canberra completes a market evaluation every two years to determine the full market rent. This evaluation is completed by an independent property assessor to ensure that the process is fair and transparent.

Once the full market rent is determined for the room, the affordable rental amount can be set, which is 74.9% of the full market rent. The change in rent/occupancy fee is completed at the same time as the renewal of the fixed term occupancy agreement. The utilities are also assessed at the same time to determine if this needs to be increased as well. Residents are given a minimum of eight weeks' notice of any proposed increase.

To remain eligible for affordable housing your affordable rent cannot be more than 35% of your gross income (including Commonwealth Rent Assistance). If this occurs YWCA Canberra will assist you in applying for and securing a Housing ACT property to ensure you do not fall into housing stress. You will be well supported through this process. You will have the support of the YWCA Tenancy Worker and you will also be offered a referral to YWCA Next Door Program, which is a case management service for older women in need of housing support.

If your affordable rent is lower than 25% of your gross income for two consecutive years you will no longer be eligible for YWCA shared affordable housing program. You will be notified of this in the first year of your income exceeding the limit. You will then be supported to explore other affordable housing programs such as Rentwell or HomeGround or private rental now that your income is more competitive. It is important that YWCA support residents that have secured a solid income base, transition out of shared housing, to help ensure that the limited share house rooms are used for those most at need in the community.

A bond equal to four weeks rent must be paid as per your Occupancy Agreement Terms. The full payment of this bond will be returned if the property is clean and there are no serious damages to the property that need repair, and if you vacate the property without arrears.

**Payment of rent is to be made by one of the following methods:**

- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
- Direct debit
- Centre pay deduction

**For EFT payments, YWCA Canberra bank account details are:**

Account Name **YWCA Canberra**

Bank **Westpac**

BSB **032719**

Account **451116**

*As the reference, please put the first three letters of your last name, followed by the first three letters of your first name.*

**If you don't put this as the reference the HSU will not be able to identify that you made the payment. This will make the HSU think you are in rental arrears.**

If you have rental arrears, it will be pursued as per the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, and the HSU Occupancy Agreement.

### **This is the process for rental arrears:**

1. You have not paid the full amount of rent by the due date.
2. You will be contacted by the Tenancy Worker to discuss the missing payment.
3. You will be given a Notice to Remedy if the payment cannot be caught up.
4. You will be asked to start a Repayment Schedule.

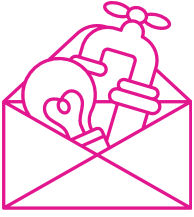
### **If you break the Repayment Schedule:**

1. You will be given a second Notice to Remedy.
2. You will need to repay your debt within seven days.

### **If you don't repay your debt:**

1. You will be given a Notice to Vacate
2. You will have 14 days to move out of the property.
3. Your debt will be followed up by the Residential Tenancy Tribunal.

The HSU aims to avoid rental arrears. **Please call the HSU if you think you won't be able to make a rent payment.** By doing this the Tenancy Worker can work with you to prevent rental arrears.



## UTILITY BILLS – ELECTRICITY, GAS, AND WATER

### LADY HEYDON HOUSE

At full occupancy, utilities charge of **\$30.00 every week** will be added to your rent. This is for gas, electricity, gardening, and water usage. Your gas, electricity and water bills will be sent to YWCA Canberra every three months.

The costs will be divided equally between you and the other residents. YWCA Canberra will provide you a copy of each bill and a confirmation of payment annually.

The utilities component will be reviewed at the same time as the occupancy fee/rent review is conducted.

### BETTY SEARLE HOUSE

At full occupancy, utilities charge of **\$31.00 every week** will be added to your rent. This is for gas, electricity, window washing/cobweb removal, gardening, bin cleaning, shared white goods replacement(s). Your gas and electricity bills will be sent to YWCA Canberra every three months.

The costs will be divided equally between you and the other residents. YWCA Canberra will provide you with a copy of each bill and confirmation of payment annually.

The utilities component will be reviewed at the same time as the occupancy fee/rent review is conducted.





# TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

## LADY HEYDON HOUSE

YWCA Canberra has provided a phone that can only receive calls. This is in the common area of the house. The only number that can be called from this phone is 000.

If you want to have your own phone, you will need to buy one and set up an account in your name.

Internet is also the responsibility of individual residents.

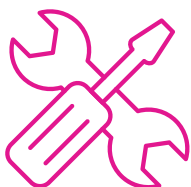
However, if you have questions on how to set up a phone or internet please contact your Tenancy Worker..

## BETTY SEARLE HOUSE

If you want to have your own phone, you will need to buy one and set up an account in your name.

Internet is also the responsibility of individual residents.

However, if you have questions on how to set up a phone or internet please contact your Tenancy Worker.



## REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

If something is broken or damaged and it needs to be fixed, **please contact the HSU.**

### LADY HEYDON HOUSE

YWCA Canberra is responsible for all maintenance and repairs and general upkeep of Lady Hayden House. Please contact the Tenancy Worker to report the issue and they will contact our trusted trades people and manage the completion of the work required. However, you will need to pay for replacing minor things, such as light globes and lost drain plugs.

### BETTY SEARLE HOUSE

Betty Searle House is owned by Housing ACT and the maintenance is managed by their maintenance contract managers Programmed. Please contact the Tenancy Worker to report the issue and they will contact Programmed to log a job. Housing ACT has clear timeframes set out for work to be completed. The Tenancy Worker will notify you of this timeframe after the job is logged. They will monitor the progress of the work to ensure it is completed

For repairs and maintenance:

- **Within office hours:**

Call the HSU and we will arrange the repair for you.

- **By an external service without calling the HSU:**

You will have to pay for the service.

## EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Use the following contacts:

<b>ActewAGL</b>	Faults, emergencies and outages	131 093
<b>ActewAGL</b>	Gas	131 493
<b>Plumber</b>	Electrical	0433 820 693
<b>Electrical</b>	AD Domain Electrical	0418 488 220

### Examples of an emergency are:

- A burst water pipe
- A burst hot water system
- An overflowing toilet
- Serious roof leaks
- A gas leak
- Dangerous electrical faults
- Flooding
- Fire damage
- Anything else that causes or risks immediate danger or harm to either the Occupants, or the building/property itself.

If you, or your guest, damage a YWCA Canberra property, you are required to notify the HSU as soon as possible. You and/or your guests are responsible for paying for these damages.

If you suspect damages to your property are caused by criminal activity, please phone the Police on **131 444**. You must ask for a reference number and notify the HSU.



## RUBBISH COLLECTION

Residential household garbage bins (green bin) are collected every week. Residential household recycling bins (yellow bin) are collected every two weeks.

All bins must be out by seven am on your scheduled collection day. You need to remove your bin from the collection point as soon as possible after it is emptied.

- **Spence – Lady Heydon House**

Your rubbish will be collected weekly on a Wednesday

- **Weston Creek – Betty Searle House**

Your rubbish will be collected weekly on a Monday

For enquiries or further information about waste collection services, contact SITA: **6260 1547**



## GUESTS

Please consider your neighbours and/or the other residents sharing the property when having guests come to visit. Guests are not to park in spaces allocated for residents of the property.

Betty Searle has a guest bedroom. If you wish to have a guest stay in this room, you must give the other residents and the HSU two days' notice. This guest can only stay for two nights. Please see the House Rules for more information.



## **SAFETY OF RESIDENTS AND TERMINATION OF OCCUPANCY**

To make certain that other residents can use the facilities safely, **please ensure that all communal areas are left clean and tidy after use.**

YWCA Canberra believes that all people have the right to be safe at all times. YWCA Canberra asks that you be tolerant and accepting of other residents religious and cultural beliefs and customs. Please also be tolerant of residents' race, and sexual orientation.

**Residents' safety is YWCA Canberra's upmost concern. Because of this, your occupancy will be at risk of immediate termination if you:**

- Use violence against another Occupant (verbally, physically, emotionally, financially, or spiritually).
- Cause significant damage to the property
- Engage in illegal activity (firearms, weapons, explosives, drugs)
- Smoke inside the premises
- Invade another Occupant's privacy

Please see your House Rules for more information.

Your occupancy will be routinely reviewed for eligibility every 12 months.



## INSURANCE

YWCA Canberra only has contents insurance for the property that belongs to the organisation. You will need to take out your own contents insurance if you want your personal belongings to be covered



## FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

YWCA Canberra values the feedback of our service users. This helps us to provide a quality service and continually improve the service to members the Canberra Community.

In the event that you wish to give feedback or make a complaint, please refer to the relevant complaints procedure provided upon sign up.

Further information is available on our website:

[www.ywca-canberra.org.au/community-service/housing-support/](http://www.ywca-canberra.org.au/community-service/housing-support/)



## LEAVING HSU ACCOMMODATION

If you choose to leave a YWCA Canberra property permanently, you are required to give the HSU two weeks' notice of your intention to leave.

It is very important that you return your keys to the HSU and finalise any rent payments. You must remove all personal belongings and thoroughly clean the property and steam clean the carpets. If you have changed the curtain you need to replace the original YWCA curtains before vacating.



## FORMS GIVEN TO YOU UPON SIGN UP

**These forms were given to you upon sign up and should be read alongside this handbook for more information.**

- Occupancy Agreement
- House Rules
- Privacy Information Card for Specialist Homelessness Services
- Consent to Provide Information for the SHS Client Management System
- Condition report
- Calculation of rent
- Centrelink deduction and confirmation services consent form (including Income verification, Electronic Verification of Rent (EVoR) and Centrepay deduction (applicable Occupants only)
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance and Centrepay Deduction fact sheet (applicable Occupants only)
- Handbook
- Complaints procedure
- Feedback Form



## SERVICES IN THE AREA YOU LIVE

	<b>Spence – Lady Heydon House</b>	<b>Weston Creek – Betty Searle House</b>
<b>Doctors</b>	National Health Co-op Charnwood 20 Cartwright St, Charnwood ACT 6178 0400	Weston Creek Medical Practice 11/16 Brierly St Weston ACT 2611 6145 2458
<b>Chemists</b>	Spence Local Chemist 14 Glassey Place Spence ACT 6258 8295  Weekdays: 9:00am-6:00pm Saturday 9:00am-2:00pm	Coleman Court Pharmacy Shop 5015 Coleman Court 24 Brierly Street Weston ACT 6288 1867  Weekdays: 8:30am - 6:00pm Saturday: 8:30am – 12:30pm
<b>Dentists</b>	Kaleen Dental Care 149 Maribyrnong Ave Kaleen ACT 2617 6241 6718	Weston Dentistry 15, 41 – 43 Liardet Street Weston ACT 6287 2889