



Fact Sheet 4: Communicating with Housing

1. Methods:

1. 1. By Telephone

Many people find that the telephone is the easiest way to communicate with Housing ACT. Whether you want to report the need for a repair, or make a complaint, or notify Housing ACT of a change of circumstances (like increased income or an additional resident), or ask a question (like when your next rebate form is due), calling will usually be a quick and easy way to do it.

Housing ACT's number is 133 427.

Your communications with Housing ACT are important, so you should keep a written record of every phone call you make to them.

The Housing ACT officer you speak to should also record your communication, either on paper, or in the computer system, or both. However, mistakes can be made and important information can be overlooked or only partly recorded; sometimes Housing ACT may have no record that you called.

For your records, you should note:

- The date and time you rang;
- The name of the officer you spoke to;
- The main points of your communication; and
- The officer's response.

Alternatively, you can confirm your telephone communication by sending a letter to Housing ACT and restating what was said.

1. 2. By Letter

The advantage of communicating by letter is that what you said is there in black and white. Letters should be signed and dated, and you should always keep a copy in a safe place (in fact, it's a good idea to keep a folder in which you put all your Housing ACT correspondence). Housing ACT's postal address is:

Housing ACT
Locked Bag 3000
Belconnen ACT 2616

The surest form of communication is to take your letter (or form) into the Housing ACT office in person, and ask for a photocopy of it for your records once it has been stamped 'received.' Housing ACT's office address is:

Gateway Services

Ground Floor Nature Conservation House
Corner of Benjamin Way & Emu Bank
Belconnen ACT 2617

1. 3. By Email:

There is a general email address for Housing ACT: housing.customerservice@act.gov.au. This email address is monitored regularly and any emails that are received are forwarded to the appropriate department or person.

Additionally, most Housing ACT departments and workers have their own dedicated email addresses. Some workers are happy to provide you with this contact information. This can be a very useful way of communicating with Housing ACT as it enables you to keep a record of your correspondence. However, if you do not hear back from an email, it is best to follow it up as it may mean that email account is not being monitored regularly.

1. 4. In Person:

You may prefer to visit the Housing ACT office and speak with an officer in person. This may involve a wait once you get there, or the person you want to speak with may not be available. For these reasons it may be best to call beforehand and make an appointment to see a particular officer (for example, the housing manager for your area).

If it is difficult for you to make the journey to the Housing ACT office in Belconnen, you can arrange for an officer to visit you at home at an agreed time.

As with telephone contact, you should always make a record of the date, time, place and content of the discussion. If you have negotiated an arrangement about something with the Housing ACT officer it is worthwhile sending the officer a letter after the meeting that confirms what was agreed. If you provide documents or letters in person, you should also get a date-stamped photocopy of the document.

2. Can't Get Through?

At times you may need to try a number of ways of communicating before you feel confident you have got your message across. The problem may be that a phone line is engaged for long periods, or you keep getting an answer machine and no one gets back to you, or there is a long queue at the Housing ACT office.

It may also be that you are speaking with an officer but you feel they do not understand you. This can be very frustrating, but try to avoid getting angry or raising your voice. Instead, try another method of communication, or enlist the help of a friend or a community agency to communicate with Housing ACT on your behalf.

It is usually in your interests to make sure that communication happens (there are some things you must tell Housing ACT or you will be breaking the law and putting your rights at risk). So persist, and if in doubt, put it in writing.

Access to Interpreters

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that all Canberra residents, regardless of their background have equal access to its programs and services. It is ACT Government policy to use these professional interpreters when speaking with people who have difficulty communicating in English.

You are entitled to an interpreter free of charge when dealing with an ACT Government directorate or agency (such as Housing ACT and shopfronts).

Simply ask the staff member you are dealing with to arrange an interpreter.

Disclaimer

This fact sheet contains general information available at the time of printing. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a specific legal problem, please contact Canberra Community Law's advice line on 02 6218 7900.

Canberra Community Law is entirely independent of Housing ACT. All assistance is free.

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