



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Tenant Handbook

Government Regional Officers' Housing





Welcome to your new home

Welcome to your new Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) home.

This tenant handbook briefly explains the GROH Program. It also outlines your duties as a GROH tenant and what you can expect of GROH and your employer while living in your GROH home.

Two other good sources of information are staff at your local Department of Communities (Communities) office and our Communities (Housing) website (www.housing.wa.gov.au).

Best wishes during your time living in your GROH home.

What is the Government Regional Officers' Housing program?

The GROH Program was established in 1964 (as Government Employees' Housing Authority) to provide housing for government employees living and working in regional Western Australia.

Communities administers the GROH Program, servicing over 30 State Government agencies and managing more than 5,000 units of accommodation in over 200 country locations.

To meet the demand of government agencies, the GROH Program purchases and constructs properties, and leases them from the private sector to lease to government agencies.

The government agencies sub-lease these homes to their employees.

Communities has offices across Western Australia and the contact details of these can be found at the back of this booklet. You can also search for our offices under **Contact Us** on our Communities (Housing) website.



Your guide to GROH

| | |
|---|-----------|
| What is the Government Regional Officers' Housing program? | 3 |
| Your guide to GROH | 4 |
| The GROH Program, your employer and you | 6 |
| Are you eligible for a GROH home? | 6 |
| What type of home will you be allocated? | 7 |
| Tenancy Agreements | 7 |
| Legal responsibilities | 7 |
| Private sector leases | 8 |
| How is your rent determined? | 8 |
| Your GROH home | 9 |
| • Moving in: Property Condition Report | 9 |
| • Annual inspections | 9 |
| • Alterations and additions | 9 |
| • Furniture | 10 |
| • Contents insurance | 10 |
| Pets | 10 |
| • Guidelines for keeping pets | 10 |
| • Dogs | 11 |
| Pests and vermin | 11 |

Maintenance **12**

- Your responsibilities 12
 - Inside 12
 - Outside 12
 - Smoke alarms and circuit breakers 12
 - Refrigerated air conditioners 13
- Maintenance provided by GROH 14
 - How do I report maintenance? 14
 - 1. Emergency and urgent maintenance 14
 - 2. Routine and priority maintenance 14

Shared facilities **16**

- Other occupants and activities in your GROH home 16
 - Payment from another person for living in your GROH home 16
 - House-sitters 16

Family (Domestic) Violence **17**

Moving out **17**

- Giving notice 17
- Leaving your home in an acceptable condition 18
- Returning the keys 18

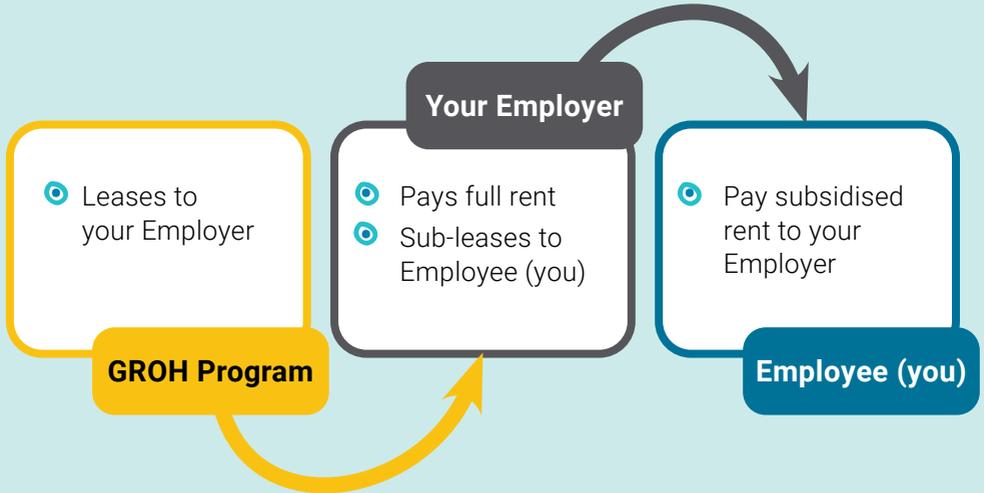
Client surveys **18**

Appealing a GROH decision **18**

Department of Communities offices **20**

The GROH Program, your employer and you

In general terms, the relationship between GROH, you and your employer is depicted below.



Are you eligible for a GROH home?

You are eligible for a GROH home if you are an employee of a GROH client agency. If you or your partner own residential accommodation within 50 kilometres of your place of employment (in which you might reasonably reside), you are not eligible for GROH accommodation. Please contact your employer's housing liaison officer if you are in doubt.

Note: GROH tenants found to be in breach of this requirement may be liable for disciplinary action from their employer and/or criminal proceedings.

If you cease to be employed by the employer that provided the home to you, you will no longer be eligible for a subsidised GROH accommodation and will be required to vacate the property.

Other GROH eligibility conditions can be viewed at [GROH Eligibility](#) on our Communities (Housing) website. Go to 'Current Tenants' then 'Government Regional Officer Housing'.

Your employer may also have other eligibility conditions; for example, it may limit GROH housing to people working in positions over a certain level of employment classification.

What type of home will you be allocated?

Whether or not you are allocated a GROH home and what type of home you are given is at your employer's discretion. It also depends on the availability of GROH homes at that time.

Your employer determines the size of the home that will be provided to singles, couples and families and it decides how these properties are to be occupied; i.e. whether or not they are to be shared, tenanted by a family or by an individual employee.

All requests relating to the allocation of your GROH home must be made directly to your employer. You are not permitted to change your allocated accommodation without the prior approval of your employer and Communities.

Legal responsibilities

Your rights and obligations and those of your employer and Communities are set out in the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (RTA). Broadly, these are:

| Your employer (plus GROH) | You |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) ensures the premises comply with health, safety and housing standards(b) provides the premises in a reasonable state of cleanliness and repair, having regard to its age and character(c) maintains the premises to an acceptable standard. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) keep the premises in a reasonable state of cleanliness(b) notify the lessor as soon as practicable after any damage has occurred to the premises(c) do not intentionally or negligently cause or permit damage to the premises(d) do not cause a nuisance / disruptive behaviour. |

Tenancy Agreements

A written agreement known as a Residential Tenancy Agreement sets out the terms and conditions under which you occupy your GROH home. This agreement is between you (the tenant), your employer (the lessor) and Communities (who act on your employer's behalf).

On most occasions, your GROH officer will go through this agreement with you and ask you to sign and initial the agreement in the appropriate places. If you receive your tenancy agreement by post, please ensure that you sign and return it to your local Communities' office as soon as possible.

More information about the RTA tenancy agreements and your obligations as a tenant can be found in the Consumer Protection section of the **Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety website**.

As well as having legal obligations, all GROH Program tenants and their employers must comply with GROH's policies. For more information, visit the **Investors and Partners** page on our website.

Private sector leases

Many government employees in communities across WA occupy housing leased from the private sector. Communities seeks and negotiates leases with the owners or agents to make sure that the properties meet current State Government accommodation standards.

In the tenancy agreement, a property privately leased to Communities for the GROH Program may include clauses known as "additional terms". These terms can relate to anything from maintenance of gardens to conditions regarding pets. A Communities staff member will go through this agreement with you and ask you to sign and initial the document in the appropriate places to confirm your agreement to the terms.

How is your rent determined?

In general, the rent of government employees occupying GROH homes is significantly subsidised.

The State Government introduced a Tenant Rent Setting Framework in September 2000 to calculate the subsidised rents that employers will charge their employees for GROH homes. The framework uses the Perth median rent as the basis for the calculations. Further discounts applied consider the property's age, design and number of bedrooms; the property's distance from Perth, the coast, a regional centre; and the location's amenities.

The rent for properties leased from the private sector is calculated using the same formula as that used for a GROH-owned home, ensuring tenants in private sector properties are not disadvantaged by local market conditions.

If you have questions about your rent, the **GROH Tenant Rent Setting Framework Policy** found on the Communities (Housing) website contains more information. Your employer should also be able to explain how your rent is determined.



Your GROH home

Moving in: Property Condition Report

Within seven days of moving into your GROH home, you will be provided with a Property Condition Report (PCR). Once you have received the PCR, you have seven days to return it to your local Communities office. Before returning the PCR, please note any changes you think should be made to the report, sign a copy and return it to your local Communities office.

If you do not return the signed PCR within seven days, it will be taken that you accept it as a true and accurate description of the condition of the premises.

Keep a second copy of the PCR for your records.

Annual inspections

For GROH-owned properties, Communities will carry out a minimum of one inspection of your home per year and will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time.

If your home is leased from the private sector, either the owner or their agent will undertake property inspections during the year.

Usually these will be quarterly. The owner or the owner's agent will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time.

If they don't receive a response rescheduling the proposed inspection time, the owner/agent is permitted right of entry under the RTA, subject to suitable written notification, and will access the property with their set of keys.

Alterations and additions

You must obtain permission from Communities before you attach fixtures to, renovate or alter your GROH home. Any permission Communities gives for these does not oblige them to purchase the additions or modifications when you vacate the home. In some circumstances you may be required to restore the home to its pre-modified condition, at your expense.

Note: Tenants are not permitted to fix basketball rings onto walls or other structures of GROH properties.

Furniture

Furniture and white goods are normally supplied for houses in the North West, remote locations and shared accommodation in the South West.

To request furniture or white goods for your home, please contact your employer. Be aware that your employer may include the cost of furniture in their calculation of your rent.

Note: furniture will be provided out of existing supplies in the first instance and will be in clean and in working order. If repairs or replacements are necessary, please contact your local Communities office for arrangements to inspect, repair or replace items.

Note: when furniture or white goods must be repaired or replaced due to misuse, neglect or wilful damage, the costs of the repairs or replacement will be charged to you. For more information, refer to the **GROH Furniture Policy** on our website.

Contents insurance

The GROH Program does not insure or provide cover against theft, loss or damage to contents or personal belongings of the tenants or visitors to the property.

Taking out contents insurance is your responsibility.

Pets

To keep a pet on your premises, you must obtain Communities approval. In addition, if you live in a strata title property, strata rules may prohibit pets.

Guidelines for keeping pets

- To keep dogs and cats the property should have a separate yard that is properly enclosed in accordance with local authority by-laws.
- If you live in a flat or unit without an enclosed separate yard, dogs and cats are not allowed.
- The GROH Program will not supply gates and fencing to allow pets to be kept; these are your responsibility.
- You will need to ensure your pet does not damage the property or yard or disturb the neighbours. Please also dispose of animal excreta. Any damage will be assessed as a tenant liability and you will be responsible for the cost to repair.
- When you vacate your GROH home, you are required to thoroughly clean it to remove traces of your pets' presence.
- If you live in a leased property there may be special requirements regarding pets being kept on the premises.

Dogs

Tenants are not permitted to keep dangerous dogs in their GROH properties (i.e. restricted breeds).

These breeds are:

- a. dogo Argentino
- b. fila Brasileiro
- c. Japanese tosa
- d. American pit bull terrier
- e. Pit bull terrier
- f. Perro de Presa Canario (Presa Canario), or
- g. any other breeds of dog the importation of which is prohibited absolutely by the Commonwealth's Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956.

These regulations also apply to dogs that are a cross of the above breeds.

Please check with your local Communities (Housing) office for further information, or the **Dog Regulations 2013** (State Law Publisher).

Pests and vermin

Please guard against pests by storing food properly and using sprays and baits. Communities is not responsible for infestations caused by your activities or those of your pets, or by a lack of cleanliness in and around your GROH home.

Pest eradication will only be carried out at the GROH Program's expense if the infestation occurs within three months of you moving in or where your actions are not responsible for the infestation. Communities is responsible for the eradication of bees, Singapore ants, termites and wasps.



Maintenance

Your responsibilities

Inside

You are to carry out basic household maintenance, such as replacing light globes and clearing drains blocked through misuse. You may also be responsible for some damage to walls or wall coverings, doors and windows, and furniture supplied by Communities.

Outside

It is your responsibility to maintain the garden areas of your GROH home. This includes keeping plants and lawns watered, complying with sprinkler restrictions, mowing lawn areas regularly and removing weeds and debris as required.

If you will be absent from the property, please arrange to have the garden watered and maintained while you will be away.

The trimming and pruning of trees is generally your responsibility, but trees must not be removed from your property without Communities' approval. Communities or the property's owner is responsible for lopping or removing trees.

Communities is responsible for the upkeep of the common grounds attached to serviced units. If you live in a serviced unit or complex that has an enclosed or fenced-off

garden, it is your responsibility to maintain the enclosed area.

Smoke alarms and circuit breakers

GROH-owned homes

A number of safety devices are installed in GROH-owned homes.

The first is a combined Residual Current Device/Miniature Circuit Breaker (RCD/MCB), which protects against electrocution and the overloading of all circuits in your home.

The second is a smoke alarm that alerts you to smoke being present in your home. You can find out more about these safety devices in a fact sheet in the [Tenant toolbox](#) on our Communities (Housing) website.

GROH-leased homes

GROH-leased homes will also have RCDs and smoke alarms installed; however, these devices may differ to those used in GROH-owned properties. Where it is practical, tenants of GROH-leased homes are responsible for keeping these smoke alarms in working order, for example changing the battery if it's reasonably accessible. The overall responsibility for ensuring these smoke alarms are working is, however, the owner's (Building Regulations 2012).



Testing these Devices

Tenants of GROH-owned and GROH-leased homes should periodically check that these safety devices are working properly – each device has a test button that is to be pressed. Instructions on how to test these devices can be found in the **RCD and Smoke Alarm Fact Sheet** on our website.

For RCDs, the **Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety** – Energy Safety recommends that each RCD be tested every three months.

For smoke alarms, the **Department of Fire and Emergency Services** recommends that each alarm be tested not less than once a month to ensure the battery and the alarm sounder are operating. It also recommends that smoke alarms be

cleaned with a vacuum cleaner at least every six months.

If you notice a problem with your RCD or smoke alarm, contact Housing Direct as indicated in the 'Maintenance provided by GROH' section of this Handbook.

Refrigerated air conditioners

It is your responsibility to keep the air conditioner filters clean (we recommend every two weeks during operation). These filters can be removed, rinsed with water, and replaced. If you are unable to locate or clean the air conditioner filters, please contact your local Communities office for advice.

Please report any other maintenance requirements for your refrigerated air conditioner to Housing Direct.

Maintenance provided by GROH

How do I report maintenance?

You should report all requests for maintenance to Housing Direct, whose contact details are below.

Tenants of GROH properties leased from the private rental market must report all maintenance to Housing Direct. Property managers/owners are not to be contacted directly.

Housing Direct

Phone 1300 137 677

Online

Maintenance Request Form

For **emergencies** or **urgent** matters, we recommend that you phone.



The best way to request maintenance depends on the type of maintenance you require.

1. Emergency and urgent maintenance

If you need something to be attended to urgently, or to report damage or a natural disaster, Communities recommends that you call Housing Direct on 1300 137 677 rather than report your problem online.

After hours

For a repair deemed to be an emergency of the utmost urgency – such as a gas leak, power failure or burst water pipe – after hours maintenance will be provided.

Tenants who use this service for situations that are not life or property threatening will be charged the full cost of the call out and any work carried out. This applies to tenants of GROH-owned and privately leased accommodation.

2. Routine and priority maintenance

If you have an issue that is neither an emergency nor urgent, please use the **Online Maintenance Request Form** on our Communities (Housing) website to report it. Housing Direct's staff will call you during business hours to discuss your request.

Online requests may be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your online request will record evidence of the maintenance issue, plus the time and date it was lodged.

How long will it take?

Housing Direct responds to maintenance requests as soon as practicable and prioritises work that poses a health and safety risk to tenants or puts the property at risk of damage.

The four categories of maintenance and the estimated maximum time they will take to complete are listed in the following table. Completion times may vary for rural and remote areas.

| Category | Completion Time (max) | Examples of Maintenance |
|-----------|-----------------------|---|
| Emergency | 8 hours | No power, faulty smoke alarm, gas leak |
| Urgent | 24 hours | No hot water, blocked toilets, burst water pipes |
| Priority | 48 hours | Faulty stove, locks and glazing, leaking taps, security lights not working |
| Routine | 28 days | Rehanging doors, replacing washing lines, rewiring flyscreens to windows or doors |

Maintenance Escalation

If your maintenance has not been carried out within the prescribed timeframes or you are not satisfied with the service provided, you should re-contact Housing Direct. If the matter remains unresolved you can then use the dedicated maintenance escalation mailbox for GROH tenants: GROHescalationmaintenance.housing@housing.wa.gov.au

For more information on this service see [GROH Escalation Maintenance](#) on the Communities (Housing) website.

Access to your home

When you have reported a maintenance issue to Housing Direct, please allow reasonable access to your home during working hours, either for your property to be assessed by a Communities staff member or for the contractors to carry out the maintenance required.

Communities staff or contractors will not normally enter your home unless accompanied by a tenant. Where it is not possible for you to be at your home, please make alternative arrangements for them to access the property. If you are not present for a time agreed with a contractor the cost of the contractor's travel may be charged to you.

If you experienced serious problems or excessive delays in any maintenance carried out by contractors, please notify Housing Direct. If you would like to provide feedback or follow up on a maintenance inquiry, contact Housing Direct.

Shared facilities

Some GROH accommodation has shared facilities, such as driveways, carports, washing lines and/or gardens. Communities will maintain the common areas and shared facilities.

For serviced units in the north of WA, all gas and electricity charges are the responsibility of the tenant. For serviced units in the south of WA, gas, electricity and water charges are the responsibility of your employer.

Other occupants and activities in your GROH home

Payment from another person for living in your GROH home

If you are receiving payment or plan on receiving payment from another person in exchange for them living in your GROH home, you must have your employer's approval and Communities agreement to this arrangement. Without this approval you may be breaching various laws that govern your employment as a public officer.

Note: another person's 'payment' includes monetary payment and payment in kind, such as buying groceries, providing childcare services or contributing to other household expenses.

To request your employer's approval, complete the form 'Application for Approval of a Paying Occupant in a GROH Property' and submit the completed form to them. For this form and for more information, see our **GROH Paying Occupants and House-sitters Policy**.

House-sitters

If you are planning to be absent from your GROH home for a period of time, but intend to return to it, another person may occupy the home as a house-sitter. You must, however, obtain written approval from your employer and from Communities for this person to reside in the home.

The house-sitter is required to abide by the same tenancy rules that apply to all GROH tenants. We recommend that you give a copy of the GROH Tenant's Handbook to this person.

As the legal tenant of the house, your responsibility for the condition of the premises will continue for the term of the house-sitting arrangement. For more information, contact your local Communities representative or see House-sitting Arrangements in our **GROH Paying Occupants and House-sitters Policy**.



Operating a private business in a GROH program home

You must use your GROH home solely as a residential dwelling. Any private business carried out at your GROH home must have been consented to in writing by your employer, the property's owners and the Local Government Authority.

See our **GROH Private Business in a GROH Home Policy** for more information.

Family (Domestic) Violence

In 2019, provisions relating to family violence were introduced into the Residential Tenancies Act (1987). These provisions give tenants who are experiencing or are likely to experience family violence a range of choices about their living arrangements. To find out more, visit the **Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety website** or contact Consumer Protection on 1300 30 40 54.

If you have been, are or are likely to be subjected to family violence then you can seek assistance through the following services:

- **Emergency Services (including WA Police) – call 000 – especially when in immediate danger**
- Women's Domestic Violence Helpline – 9223 1188 or free call 1800 007 339 (24-hour service)
- Men's Domestic Violence Helpline – 9223 1199 or 1800 000 599.

Moving out

Giving notice

To notify Communities that you intend on moving out of your GROH home, complete the GROH Intention to Vacate form. Your employer will give you this or you can get this from our **Moving Out** page on the website. When you fill out this form, please make sure you indicate the date on which you plan to vacate and a forwarding address.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987, you are to provide no less than 21 days written notice of your intention to vacate the premises. This will allow enough time for a pre-vacation inspection to be arranged if requested. At busy changeover times, such as Christmas, it would be to your advantage to give more than 21 days' notice, so that your local Communities officer has enough time to carry out the inspection.

Note: If you fail to give the required notice, you may continue to be charged rent after you vacate your GROH home.

Leaving your home in an acceptable condition

The pre-vacation inspection will work to your advantage. It will enable you and your Communities officer to identify any areas that require attention, so that you can return the home in a clean, tidy and acceptable condition and minimise the possibility of you being charged tenant liability. Please use the GROH Vacation Checklist under **Moving Out** on our website to ensure you have your home ready for inspection.

Note: if there is no Housing office in your town this may not be able to be carried out.

Returning the keys

When you are moving out of your GROH home, find out from your Communities officer where to return the keys. You will be held responsible

for your GROH home and any damage that might occur to it until the keys have been returned and a key receipt has been issued.

If your keys and the Tenant Vacating form are not returned, you will be responsible for the costs of new locks (including their installation) and may continue to be charged rent.

Client surveys

From time to time, Communities will conduct client surveys. When it does so, please provide feedback on your GROH home and the service you receive, as your input will assist us to assess and improve our services.

You do not have to wait until you are surveyed to provide feedback. We welcome your comments at any time either in person, by letter, email or via our **Customer Feedback Brochure**.

Appealing a GROH decision

You have the right to appeal some GROH Program decisions. This right is an integral part of the Communities Customer Service Charter, and the appeals process is informal, thorough, fair and inexpensive.

Information about the types of decisions you can appeal and the process that will be followed to review and respond to your appeal can be found under **Appeals Process – GROH** on our website.



Department of Communities offices*

Head office

5 Newman Court
Fremantle 6160
Tel: 1800 176 888

Metropolitan offices

Armadale

151 Jull Street
Armadale 6112
Tel: (08) 6215 1212

Cannington

17 Manning Road
Cannington 6107
Tel: (08) 6414 3111

Fremantle

42 Queen Street
Fremantle 6160
Tel: (08) 6414 3222

Joondalup

Unit 4, 7 Wise Street
Joondalup 6027
Tel: (08) 6215 1414

Kwinana

2 Stidworthy Way
Kwinana 6167
Tel: (08) 6277 3877

Mandurah

Unit 1, 17 Sholl Street
Mandurah 6210
Tel: (08) 6277 3883

Midland

21 Old Great Northern Highway
Midland 6056
Tel: (08) 6277 4343

Mirrabooka

5 Milldale Way
Mirrabooka 6061
Tel: (08) 6414 3000

Perth City

605 Wellington Street
Perth 6000
Tel: (08) 6215 1500

Victoria Park

269 Albany Highway
Victoria Park 6100
Tel: (08) 6414 2115

Great Southern

Albany

131 Aberdeen Street
Albany 6330
Tel: (08) 6277 4177

Katanning

6 Daping Street
Katanning 6317
Tel: (08) 6277 4188

South West

Bunbury

22 Forrest Avenue
Bunbury 6230
Tel: (08) 6414 3204

Busselton

88 Kent Street
Busselton 6280
Tel: (08) 6277 3666

Manjimup

Unit 10,
30-32 Rose Street
Manjimup 6258
Tel: (08) 6277 5008

Goldfields

Esperance

86B Windich Street
Esperance 6450
Tel: (08) 6277 3844

Kalgoorlie

Unit 1-2,
84-96 Brookman Street
Kalgoorlie 6430
Tel: (08) 6277 5233

Mid West

Carnarvon

6 Robinson Street
Carnarvon 6701
Tel: (08) 6414 3312

Geraldton

201 Marine Terrace
Geraldton 6530
Tel: (08) 6414 3320

Meekatharra

31 Main Street
Meekatharra 6642
Tel: (08) 6277 3988

Pilbara

Karratha

The Quarter HQ
Level 2, 20 Sharpe Avenue
Karratha 6714
Tel: (08) 6414 3333

South Hedland

Cnr Brand and Tonkin Streets
South Hedland 6722
Tel: (08) 6277 5044

West Kimberley

Broome

30 Frederick Street
Broome 6725
Tel: (08) 6277 3833

Derby

West Kimberley House
16-22 Loch Street
Derby 6728
Tel: (08) 6277 3880

East Kimberley

Halls Creek

14A Terone Street
Halls Creek 6770
Tel: (08) 6277 3811

Kununurra

16 Coolibah Drive
Kununurra 6743
Tel: (08) 6215 1501

Wheatbelt

Merredin

27 Mitchell Street
Merredin 6415
Tel: (08) 6414 2981

Narrogin

11-13 Park Street
Narrogin 6312
Tel: (08) 6414 2979

Northam

5 Elizabeth Place
Northam 6401
Tel: (08) 6414 3230

* For housing related matters