

## If you are going away

Everyone needs to go away from time to time. This fact sheet explains what you need to do if you are going to be away from your home for an extended period.

### Are you going away?

If you are going away, it helps if you tell us. Sometimes tenants move out of their home without telling us. We need to know that you have not moved out of your home.

It's also a good idea to ask a friend or family member that you trust to keep an eye on your home while you're away. This person is called an agent and we explain more about their role below. You also need to keep paying the rent while you're away.

If you are going to be away for more than eight weeks, you must let us know the reason. Some of the reasons that you might go away include:

- a long holiday – you can only do this once every 12 months
- you or someone in your family is sick, in hospital, in respite or in rehab
- you have to look after someone in your family
- you have to go to prison
- you have to travel because someone died
- you have to travel because of a family crisis
- you are studying somewhere away from your home
- you need to escape from family violence or other problems where you are at risk.

Sometimes, these reasons can take more than eight weeks to sort out. In this case, you need to contact us and ask for an extension.

There may be problems if you are going to prison for a reason that is against the rules of your lease. For example, if you have committed a drug offence, this is against the rules of your lease.

## Will you be away for eight weeks or more?

If you are going away for eight weeks or more, you need to apply. We need to understand why you're going to be away for so long and when you're coming back.

We want to work with you to make sure that you can keep your home. But there are a lot of people waiting for a place to live. If a home is vacant, we would like to give it to someone who needs it.

## Can someone else live in the home while you're away?

It might be that you're going away, but the other people in your household will continue to live in the home. In this case, you need to tell us who is living in the home and how much they are earning.

Responsible adults can live in the home while you're away. However, children under 16 years cannot stay there without adult supervision.

## Keeping an eye on the home

If you're going away for more than a few days, we'd like you to appoint an agent. This means asking someone – a friend, family member or other person you trust – to keep an eye on the home while you're away.

The agent can stay in the home while you're away if they want to.

They can be one of the adults who usually lives in the home or another person. The agent needs to:

- make sure the home is well cared for
- tell us about any problems, such as a break-in or any maintenance that is needed, for example if a window is broken or a wall is damaged – noting that it will be your responsibility to fix most things.

## Can you sub-let the home?

Sub-letting is when you rent the house to another person. You cannot sub-let your home. Having an agent live in your home while you are away, is not the same as sub-letting. The agent can live in the home while you're not there, as long as you let Homes Tasmania know about it.

## Getting more support

Housing Connect is the way to get housing and support in Tasmania. Housing Connect can work out what kind of housing you need and can help you if your circumstances change. This service is for both new and existing tenants.

If you are going to be away for a while, you may find that Housing Connect can help you access a better housing option. Housing Connect can also help you with support to stay in your current home.

## Andrea's story

One day last year, Andrea received a distressing phone call. Her Mum, who lives in Melbourne, had had a stroke.

Andrea rushed to Melbourne to look after her Mum. She forgot to tell Homes Tasmania that she was going to be away. Andrea's Mum needed a lot of care. In the end, it took nearly five months to find a good nursing home for her to live in.

During this time, Homes Tasmania tried to contact Andrea many times. We phoned her and we sent letters. However, we never got a response.

When Andrea returned to Tasmania, she was shocked to find out that she couldn't live in her home anymore. We thought she'd abandoned the home, and we gave it to someone else who was on the waiting list. We also removed Andrea's belongings, which we must do by law in these situations.

If Andrea had phoned or emailed us while she was away, she wouldn't have lost her home. Andrea could also have asked Housing Connect for support at any time while she was away.

## Tell us you are going away

Please give us a call on 1300 665 663 to tell us how we can contact you while you're away and who you have asked to keep an eye on the home.

## Contact Housing Connect

Phone: 1800 800 588

Email: [housingconnect@homes.tas.gov.au](mailto:housingconnect@homes.tas.gov.au)