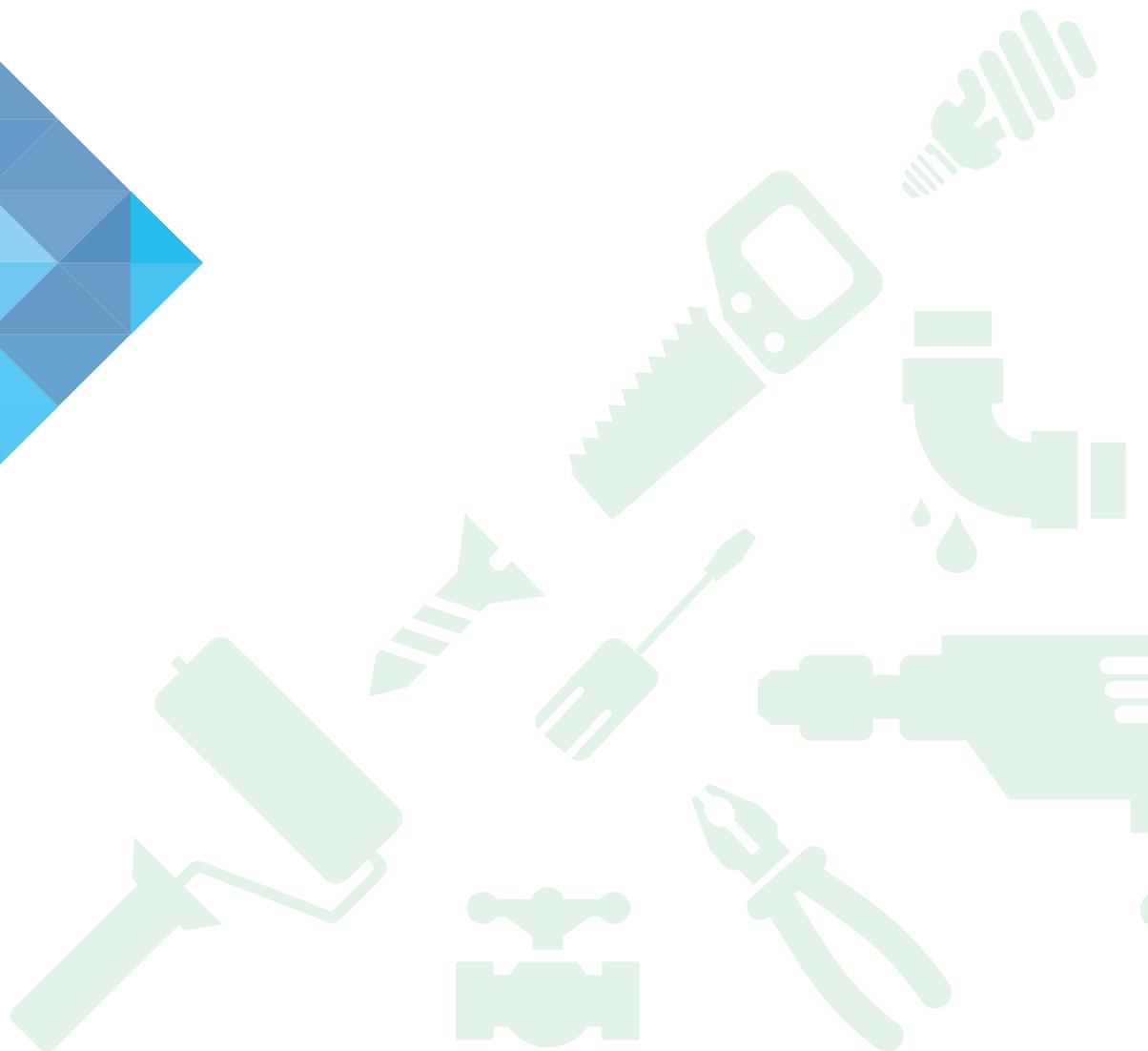




Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Local Government and Communities**

Age Friendly Home Maintenance Kit

How to get the most out of your home



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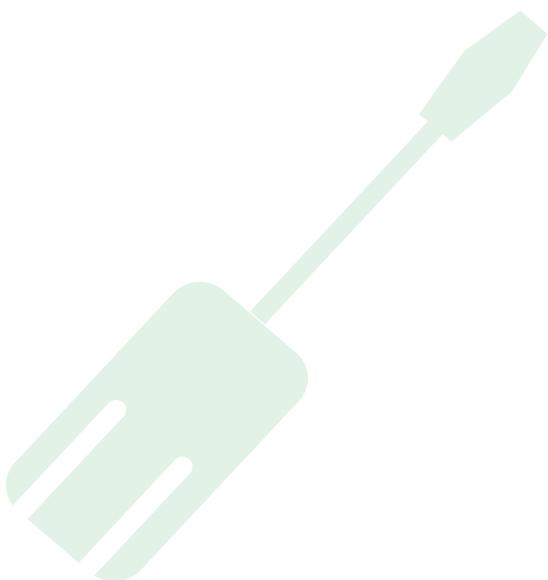
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About this Kit

To get the most out of your home, it is important to take a good look around and attend to any maintenance issues.

By doing so, your home will continue to be an enjoyable place in which to live for many years. This kit has been developed to present ideas on how to identify and address common maintenance issues. The suggestions in this kit are flexible; you can choose whatever tips suit you best. Please note that any major modifications to your home may require council approval.



1

Home maintenance – in general

Routine home maintenance keeps your home safe, helps maintain your independence and amenity, and can save you money.

There are three key areas to home maintenance:

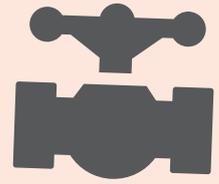
1. **Undertake regular, preventative maintenance** to help stop problems from occurring, eg cleaning gutters.
2. **Act to repair what needs to be repaired** as soon as you can so the problem doesn't get worse or more expensive, eg leaking roof.
3. **Plan ahead for major maintenance jobs**, eg painting, new hot water system or reroofing. These jobs can be costly so try to include an allowance for future expenses in your household budget.

A good tip for routine home maintenance is to make a list of all the maintenance that your home requires and to divide these tasks across the year, creating a 'home maintenance checklist calendar'. The checklist can act as a reminder of jobs to be done and allows you to spread the work and costs over a period of time. If you are unsure where to start, it may be useful to engage a professional building inspector to provide an initial report about structural integrity and any areas of concern. Before choosing an inspector:

- Check with the Building Commission to confirm their registration number at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-commission/builders or on 6251 1501, though private inspectors do not require registration in WA.
- Contact the Master Builders Association for members who are building inspectors. You can use the Master Builders' free Find a Consultant service.
- Check that they have adequate insurance.
- Confirm an agreed price before arranging an inspection, and
- Consider obtaining feedback from previous clients.

Be prepared

Know how to turn water, gas and power supplies off at the mains in case of emergency.



Each home has different maintenance needs.

Common routine maintenance tasks may include:

- Checking smoke alarms – test alarms each month (most systems have a ‘test’ button you can press) and change standard batteries once a year.
- Cleaning kitchen exhaust fans and range hood filters.
- Checking that water is flowing easily down internal drains and that there are no signs of blockages.
- Cleaning air conditioner filters as per manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Checking for mildew, fungus growth or water damage inside the home.
- Inspecting exterior walls for cracks, deterioration or peeling paint.
- Inspecting ceilings for signs of water leaks and sagging.
- Getting gutters cleaned before the winter rains.
- Inspecting for pest activity and considering arranging an annual termite inspection (some firms have a five-year contract arrangement).
- Checking that all doors and windows open, close and lock easily.
- Getting remote garage doors serviced on a regular basis.
- Checking foundations (the soil around the perimeter of the home), for movement or subsidence, drainage problems or signs of termites (see ‘Home Maintenance – specific areas’ for more information).
- Checking balustrades and hand rail fixings to ensure they aren’t loose or rusted through.
- Checking pathways and driveways for cracks and damage.
- Checking patios and decks for rotting wood, cracks or mould.
- Clean and oil decks, as required. High pressure water cleaners can make the job easier. Please visit www.watercorporation.com.au for further information, including restrictions on the use of high pressure water cleaners.
- Inspecting large trees and bushes for overhang or root problems, as this can lead to blocked gutters and sewerage pipes.

Do-It-Yourself?

Doing small maintenance jobs around the home can be rewarding and save you money. But it is important to be realistic – know when you can do a job yourself and when it is better to get help. Things to think about when deciding to do a job yourself are:

- Does the work require a licensed tradesperson, eg plumbing, gas, and electrical work?
- Is it safe for me to do the job myself, or might I put myself at risk?
- Am I confident that I know how to do the job?
- Will I save money doing it myself, or not? Sometimes by the time you buy or hire the right equipment and purchase materials, it can be more cost effective to pay for the work to be done by someone else.
- Is this a job that I could ask my family or friends to help me with?

If you would like to learn how to do certain maintenance jobs, local hardware stores and TAFE colleges often run DIY workshops you can attend for free or a small charge. The websites of major hardware chains usually have a DIY section with brochures, videos and helpful hints. Libraries can be a source of useful DIY manuals, as can the internet.

The right tools make a job quicker and easier to do. If you do not have the tools you need, you can usually hire them. Your local council may have information about community 'tool libraries' in your area. By planning ahead and doing as much preparation as you can before hiring equipment, you will save costs on the length of time you need to hire the equipment. Borrowing tools from a friend will save you even more money!



Asbestos

Asbestos can be found in a variety of housing materials, including cement products such as 'fibro', fences, switchboards and roofing, sprayed-on insulation and acoustic applications, vinyl asbestos tiles, and heater banks (air-conditioning ducts). If the product is in good condition and left undisturbed, it may not need removal. However, if there is a health risk all asbestos waste should be removed by a competent person. For further information, call Worksafe on **1300 30 78 77** or go to: **www.commerce.wa.gov.au** and visit the 'Safety Topics' tab on the left of the 'Worksafe' page.

2

Home maintenance – specific areas

Foundations

The foundation is the ground that supports a building, while footings are the structure that transfers load from the building to the foundation. Stumps (which can be made of timber, concrete or steel) are the footings used in timber framed homes. When things go wrong structurally with properties, problems with foundations and footings are often the cause. The first warning signs are usually cracks in walls, uneven floors, and doors and windows that don't open or close correctly.

- Check for cracks or breaks in concrete or brickwork – in particular look for cracks that have a 'stepped' pattern up the brickwork.
- Check for water 'pooling' near your foundation. This is best done after it has been raining or you have been watering the garden. If there is a depression in the ground that causes water to collect, fill the hole.
- Check that the ground slopes away from the external walls to enable water to be directed away from the property.
- Check that trees are not growing too close to the house. Roots can damage foundations by causing expansion or contraction of the soil near the house. Consider removing trees that are too close or installing a root barrier.
- Avoid garden beds against external walls – foliage can hinder ventilation and trap excess moisture against your home.
- Check down pipes to ensure that water is being directed away from your home.

Inside your home check for:

- Cracks coming from the corners of door and window frames.
- Doors and windows that jam when opening or don't lock easily.
- Cracks in your tiles.
- Uneven floors.

Timber stumps

If your home rests upon timber stumps it is a good idea to check the condition of the stumps at least once a year. To inspect stumps, you need to get under the house and have a look, or ask someone to do this for you.

- Check that the soil around stumps remains dry.
- Check for rotting wood (expose the stump 50mm to 100mm below the soil to check condition under the ground).
- Check for signs of termites (see the Termites section).
- Check for signs of damp in the sub-floor.
- Check that debris is not blocking sub-floor vents.

If you think you have a problem with your foundation or footings, contact a professional to inspect further and give you advice.



Door-to-door sales people

Be careful of door-to-door sales people calling unexpectedly with offers to coat your tiled roof. Unscrupulous traders may tell you that your roof needs recoating and "because we are already working in the area" offer you a cheap deal if you pay in cash. Never agree to any work or sign any papers without getting a second opinion from someone you trust.

For more information, call the Building Commission on **1300 489 099**. also has a handy fact sheet, 'Roof Coating – do you really need it?' in its 'Forms and publications' section. Go to: www.buildingcommission.wa.gov.au

Roof

Your roof is your home's first line of defence against the elements. Inspecting your roof once or twice a year can help identify small problems to be fixed and prevent more expensive repairs later on.

Looking for roof damage can begin inside the roof space. Always turn off the main switch in the meter box prior to entering roof space. When in the roof space start by checking for:

- Places where there is sagging of the roof framing, such as the battens.
- Signs of water damage on the rafters or insulation.
- Dark spots and trails (caused by leaks, environmental pollutants, vegetation, fungus, and algae growth).
- Excessive amounts of sunlight showing through the roof.

You may be able to see some indicators of damage from the ground, but a thorough inspection can only be done on the roof. If you or someone you know can safely get on to the roof:

- Check for cracked or slipped tiles or roof sheeting.
- Check that nails and screws are secure.
- Check that flashings (metal sheeting) around chimneys and stacks are in good condition.

- Check for corrosion holes in metal sheeting.
- Check that lichen is not blocking drainage channels.
- Check for cracked or broken mortar bedding to the ridge capping (these are the tiles that run along the top of the roof).

Gutters and downpipes direct water away from your home. Always keep gutters and downpipes clear of leaves and in good order. Gutter guards can help keep gutters free from debris.

- Clean gutters at least once a year. If your property has lots of trees, you may need to clean them more often.
- Check gutters and downpipes for signs of rust, loose joints or broken metal.
- Check that water from downpipes is being directed away from the property's foundations.

Walls and ceilings

It is normal for plaster on internal walls to develop some minor cracks in the first few years of a property's life and these cracks can be easily patched. If internal walls or ceilings show signs of new, major cracks, or if they reappear after patching, this may indicate a problem with the foundation, rotting stumps or termite damage.

- Check internal walls and ceilings for cracks and patch minor ones.
- Check internal walls and ceilings for water stains, blistering paint or chalky plaster. Identify and resolve the cause of the problem before fixing the damage.
- Check weatherboards for peeling paint. Weatherboards should be kept sealed and properly painted.
- Check weatherboards for signs of decay or buckling.
- Check for gaps in weatherboards and joints where water could get in.
- Check external brickwork for loose mortar and cracks.
- Check for signs of damp on internal and external walls.

Damp

Dampness in a home can aggravate health problems, cause structural damage and be expensive to fix. Preventing damp, and acting quickly when dampness occurs, is always better than ignoring the problem. Patching a damp area on a wall or ceiling will not solve the problem if the cause of the dampness is not fixed first.

Dampness in your home can be caused by:

- Damage to the roof or chimney, eg slipped or cracked tiles.
- Faulty mortar between the bricks in the external walls of the home.
- Poor drainage and leaking gutters or downpipes. Make sure your gutters are cleaned before winter rains.
- Damaged damp-proofing. Floors and walls have protective measures to prevent moisture passing into interior spaces. Patches of efflorescence (white, chalky powder) can be an indication that a damp-proof course is damaged.
- Inadequate sub-floor ventilation or sub-floor obstructions. Check that debris, paths or gardens do not block external sub-floor vents.
- Gaps around windows and doorframes. Minor gaps can be repaired by removing old mortar or sealant, cleaning away loose materials and applying new mortar or sealant.



- Condensation in a room that is not properly ventilated. Check that exhaust fans are clean and working properly.
- Water leaking from the bath or shower through damaged water-proofing, sealing or grout. Sealant may need replacing.

Dampness can often be detected by checking internal walls, ceilings and woodwork for:

- Damp patches.
- Mildew or discolouration.
- Peeling paint.
- Flaking plaster.
- Rotting timber, eg skirting boards, window and door frames.



A simple way to test for water leaks

Turn off all taps and check your water meter. If it is still turning over, there must be a leak.

Water leaks

Water leaks can be hard to see. In addition to visual signs of moisture, higher than normal water bills can be an indication of a leak.

Some problems can be easily fixed using waterproof sealant. However, if you suspect a major water leak, contact a plumber as soon as possible.

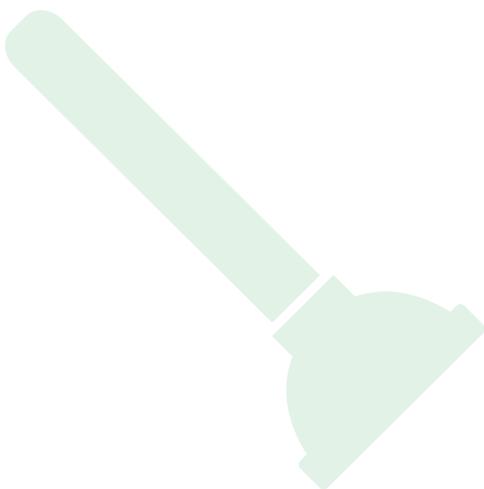
- Check that water pressure is normal.
- Check taps for leaks. It may be time to replace the washers.
- Check for leaking around internal pipes, such as under sinks.
- Check for rust stains around pipes.
- Check for signs of water damage around pipes, eg rotting timber in cupboards under sinks, discolouration of tiles around a toilet.
- Check for a leaking toilet, including water continually flowing down the cistern into the toilet bowl. If you are not sure whether or not your toilet is leaking, add some food colouring to the water in the tank. Come back in an hour or so and see if water in the bowl is coloured – if so, your toilet is leaking.

Blocked drains

The best way to deal with blocked drains is to prevent them from occurring.

- Never pour fats or oils down your sinks. If you accidentally do, put the plug in, fill with hot, soapy water and release the plug to flush the drain.
- Place hair strainers over bath and shower drains. Remove collected hair after each shower or bath.

If your drains appear blocked, avoid chemical products – they can damage pipes and cause expensive repairs. Plungers can help unblock sinks. Flushing a drain with hot, soapy water can help, as can putting a hose down a drain and turning the water on with high pressure. If none of these methods work, call a plumber.



Doors and windows

When doors and windows are not working well, your home's security can be compromised. Doors and windows that are difficult to open and close also create a potential fall risk.

Doors

- Check that doors open and close without jamming.
- Check that door frames are aligned.
- Check that locks work properly.
- Check that handles are not loose.
- Check for gaps around door frames.
- Check whether screws on hinges need tightening.
- Check for holes in walls made by handles. Patch the hole with filler and attach a door stop to prevent further damage.



Windows

- Check that windows open and close without jamming.
- Check for broken or cracked glass.
- Check that window locks and catches work properly.
- Check for gaps around window frames.
- Check that seals are in good condition.
- Check fly screens are securely attached and for damage to screen wire.

If a door no longer fits within its door frame, this can be a result of normal settling and planing the top or bottom of the door will generally solve the problem. Sliding doors or windows that have become hard to open or lock may require new rollers.

Persistent problems or evidence of major cracks around door or window frames may indicate foundation or footing problems.

Dealing with draughts

Draughts through poorly fitted windows and doors can increase heating and cooling costs. Installing draught seals and weather stripping can save you money on your energy bills.

Check for draughts by:

- Looking for gaps around doors and windows.
- Listening for rattling windows.
- Feeling for moving air around closed doors and windows, fireplaces, vents and skirting boards.

Note: Where exhaust fans are installed in a room, gaps are required under doors to enable replacement air to enter the room.

Simple ways to stop draughts

- Attach draught excluders or door sweeps on the bottom of doors.
- Seal gaps around doors and windows and install weather strips.
- Seal gaps between walls and skirting boards.
- Seal any gaps around the edges of your air conditioner.
- Replace old rollers on sliding doors and windows to better align the door or window with its frame.

Electricity

There are simple checks you can do to assess home maintenance needs but never be tempted to do your own electrical work as it is illegal for anyone except a licensed electrical contractor to do electrical work.

- Check for cracked or broken power point switches and sockets. Get a licensed electrical contractor to replace broken switches and sockets as soon as possible.
- Check for overloaded power points. If you need to connect more than one appliance to a single power point, use a power board instead of a double adapter.
- Check for worn, damaged or frayed cords, especially extension cords. Replace damaged cords – do not use PVC insulation tape to repair them.
- Check that electrical equipment, including extension cords, is not located near water.

- Check that expensive items such as computers and televisions are protected with some type of surge protection device, eg surge protected power boards and surge protection plugs.
- Check that there is a safe distance between power lines leading to your home and trees. Engage a qualified tree care business to prune branches that are close to power lines.
- Check your meter box – if it shows any signs of burn marks, worn wires or a strange smell get a licensed electrician to inspect further.

If you want a thorough inspection of the wiring in your home, engage a licensed electrical contractor.



Electric shocks

If you get an electric shock from taps or water pipes, switch off the power at the main switch and call **Western Power** immediately on **13 13 51** (24 hours).



Safety switches

Residual Current Devices (RCDs) can be fitted to power and lighting circuits to prevent the risk of electrocution and fire. RCDs detect an imbalance in the electrical current and automatically disconnect the power. In all homes built, bought or rented, there must now be a minimum of two RCDs fitted (one for the power circuit and one for the lighting circuit).

- Check your meter box or distribution board to see if you have RCDs fitted. They can be identified by a test button on the front of the device (the button will probably have 'T' on it). If you only have one RCD, it is likely to be on the power circuit, which means that your lightning circuit is still unprotected.
- If you rent your home and don't see two RCDs, contact your landlord or real estate agent.
- If you own your home, consider having two RCDs installed by a licensed electrical contractor.

- Test your RCDs every three or so months. To test your RCDs, press the 'test' button quickly and release it. By pressing the test button the power should turn off and the 'on/off' switch move to 'off'. To restore power, simply move the 'on/off' switch back to 'on'. Because testing the RCD turns the power off, you may need to reset electrical clocks and timing devices (make sure computers are shut down before testing). If the RCD does not switch power off when tested, a licensed electrical contractor should be contacted to test the device further and replace it if necessary.
- Sometimes an RCD trips (switches to 'off') because of a small amount of earth leakage current. You can fix this by moving the switch back to 'on'. If the RCD trips twice for no apparent reason, it can mean that you have a faulty appliance or wiring. Contact a licensed electrical contractor to test further.



Lighting

Incandescent globes have traditionally been the most commonly used type of lighting. Although inexpensive to buy, incandescent globes are not energy efficient, have higher running costs and need to be changed more frequently. Under government regulations, incandescent globes are gradually being phased out.

Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) are the most energy efficient form of lighting for households, using only about one quarter of the energy used by incandescent globes. A 14 watt CFL can replace a 60 watt incandescent globe and last eight to ten times longer. Although initially more expensive to buy than old incandescent globes, CFLs pay for themselves by cutting lighting costs up to 66 per cent. CFLs can fit conventional bayonet or screw fitting light sockets. Not all light fittings are suitable for CFL conversion but most are.

- Check to see which light fittings in your home still have incandescent globes and consider replacing them with CFLs.
- Ask a relative or friend to help change globes if you are not confident to use a step ladder. Always turn the light switch off before changing light bulbs.
- Clean light fittings and shades once a year – dirt reduces light output.
- Check with your local council to see if they have a CFL recycling scheme instead of putting old CFLs in with general waste.

Termites

Termites are often called 'white ants' because of their colour. There are many species of termites and most are not destructive to a home. However, those that are can cause serious damage.

Termites are not seen in the open. They live under the ground where it is warm and moist. While termites may invade a home, the nest can be some distance from the property. Termites can enter a home through wall cavities or cracks in the concrete slab or mortar. Termites travel above ground using thin mud tunnels ('leads'). Finding mud tunnels inside or outside your home is a strong indication that you may have a termite infestation.

Once in a home, termites can be hard to detect because they eat timber from the middle to the outer edge. It is important to check for termites – especially in the warmer months, when they are most active. You can do basic inspections yourself, but it is also a good idea to arrange a professional pest control inspection on an annual basis. Detecting and eliminating an infestation before serious damage is done will save you money and help protect your home.



To deter termites from entering your home

- Fix plumbing, drainage and roof leaks as soon as possible.
- Keep garden beds away from direct contact with outside walls.
- Make sure that drainage and ventilation openings in walls are not blocked.
- Avoid storing materials against outside walls.
- Ensure that the space under floors is kept well ventilated.
- Remove dead trees and stumps as soon as possible.
- Avoid using untreated timber for retaining walls and garden beds.

What to look for

- Look for mud tunnels on external decks, walls, stumps, wooden structures and foundations; and internal woodwork such as skirting boards and window or doorframes.
- Check for warping, staining or rippling on the surface of timber floors and walls with wood panelling.
- Using a large screwdriver, lightly tap the plastic handle along exposed timbers, checking for a 'hollow' sound.

- Walk around the garden and check timbers, stumps and posts that are in contact with the ground, eg fences, trellises, raised garden beds and wooden steps.
- Inspect behind dense shrubbery that is planted against external walls.
- Open and check exterior electrical meter boxes.
- Inspect timber in outdoor areas that get wet frequently, eg decks near pools.
- Inspect where plumbing and utility lines enter the house, eg air conditioning pipes, gas or electrical cables.
- Check ant caps (metal plates on top of stumps or piers) for signs of damage or termite activity.

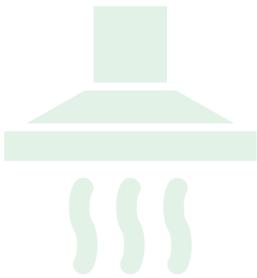
What to do if you suspect termites

If you think you have active termites, never disturb them. This will make the termites move somewhere else and make eradication more difficult. Do not panic – leave the area of activity as is and contact a registered pest control professional.

3

Dealing with tradespeople and businesses

When you need to engage a tradesperson to do home maintenance or modification work, it is important that you find someone who is properly qualified, affordable and reliable.



- All electrical work must be carried out by a licensed electrician. Licensed electrical contractors are required to display their licence number on all advertisements. You should receive an Electrical Safety Certificate within 28 days of any electrical work being done, as proof that the work complies with the law and is safe. To check an electrical contractor's licence, you can look online at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/consumer-protection/consumer-protection-licence-and-registration-search or contact Energy Safety's Licensing Office on 08 9422 5282. For more information about licensing requirements of electrical workers and contractors you can go online at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/energysafety/licensing-electrical-workers-and-electrical-contractors.

- Only licensed gas fitters can perform gas fitting work. Do not be tempted to do gas work yourself or to use a tradesperson who is not licensed to do this work. To check a gas fitter's licence, you can look online at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/licenceSearch or contact Energy Safety's Licensing Office on 08 9422 5282.

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- A licensed plumber is required to carry out water supply, sanitary and/or drainage plumbing work. Roof plumbing and storm water drainage can be performed without the need for a licence. To check a plumber's licence, you can look online at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-commission/plumbers-licensing-overview or contact the Plumbers' Licensing Board on 1300 489 099.



■ Anyone carrying out painting or wall-paper hanging work in excess of \$1,000 in value is required to be registered with the Building Commission. All registered painters are issued with identification cards. To check a painter's licence (wall-paper hangers are registered as painters), you can look online at www.buildingcommission.wa.gov.au/consumers/find-a-registered-building-service/painters or phone 1300 489 099.

■ Major construction, renovation or structural repair work is best done by a licensed builder. Builders must normally be registered by the Building Commission to undertake building work costing \$20,000 or more.

Registration and the licences of builders, building surveyors, painters and plumbers can be checked on-line at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-commission/find-registered-building-service-provider or contact the Building Commission on 1300 489 099, or the Plumbers' Licensing Board on 1300 249 223.



Travelling conmen

If you suspect travelling conmen are in your area, contact the national hotline on **1300 133 408** or the Consumer Protection Advice Line on **1300 30 40 54**.



Tips for selecting a tradesperson:

- Ask friends, family and neighbours for tradespeople they would recommend.
- Always check that the tradesperson carrying out the work holds the necessary licence for the particular job you need doing and that the licence is current.
- Wherever possible, try to get more than one quote, so that you can compare affordability.
- Get the quote in writing and check whether or not it is a set price or if the cost could vary depending on the job.
- Discuss your expectations in regard to the standard of work and the expected finish – provide a sample of the colours or use photos or images to ensure both you and the tradesperson are clear on what is required.
- Be clear about what is included in the quote, eg that it includes all supplies and ask whether removing any rubbish or returning the furniture is part of the job.
- Ask for proof of the quality of the work – this could include referees for previous work undertaken.
- Ask when the work is likely to commence and finish.
- Keep your deposit to 10 per cent or less, and only pay it if it's required. Never pay the full amount upfront – wait until the item has been delivered, or the work carried out. Custom-built work may require a higher deposit, but those circumstances would be rare.
- Confirm whether or not you can expect the workers to clean up after the job.
- Ask what happens if the work is defective, not completed on time or not to your satisfaction.
- You should automatically get an itemised receipt for any work undertaken over \$75. For lesser amounts a receipt has to be supplied if you ask for one.

Consumer protection

When purchasing goods or services for your home, it is important to know your consumer rights. National consumer law guarantees your rights – including your rights to repairs, replacements and refunds. You have certain rights even if you do not have a warranty or extended warranty.

Special laws protect you if you purchase goods or services from uninvited door-to-door salespeople (unsolicited agreements). If the good or service is valued at more than \$100 the law provides a cooling-off period of 10 business days, during which you can reconsider the purchase. If the salesperson has breached your legal rights you may be entitled to a longer cooling-off period.



Getting assistance

The Department of Commerce's Consumer Protection Advice Line can inform you about your rights as a consumer and what to do if there is a dispute. Call **1300 30 40 54** or **13 36 77** for the National Relay Service for the hearing impaired. The Department's website has online information for consumers at www.commerce.wa.gov.au.

Travelling conmen and scams

There have been increased complaints about conmen who go door-to-door offering what seem like great deals for home maintenance and repairs, such as painting or roof repairs. Deals are often 'for today only' and people are pressured to make quick decisions on an offer that seems too good to be true. This can be because the deal is a scam. Seniors are often targeted. Travelling conmen frequently disappear and leave the job unfinished or done to a poor standard.

Be suspicious of people who:

- Knock on your door unexpectedly.
- Offer cheap deals using words like 'for today only'.
- Ask for cash up front.
- Offer to drive you to the bank to get money for payment.
- Make you feel pressured to accept their offer.

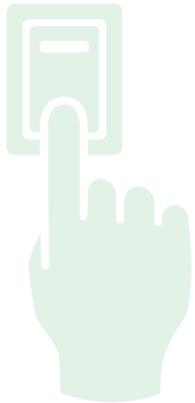
Avoid telling a door-to-door salesperson that you are alone at home. Simply say that you have to consult your partner or relative before making any decision.

4

Safety and security

Safety

- Be prepared for emergencies – know how to turn water, gas and power supplies off at the mains.
- Service gas and electrical appliances in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. Appliances that are not working well can cost money and be dangerous.
- Fit Residual Current Devices (RCDs) to power and lighting circuits to prevent the risk of electrocution and fire.
- Consider setting the water temperature to 50°C on an instantaneous system and 60 to 65°C on a storage hot water system. This can save you money and help prevent accidental scalds.
- Damaged switches, power points and lights are dangerous, and should be replaced – but only use a licensed electrical contractor to do the job.
- When painting, never remove switches or fittings. Use masking tape to keep paint off fittings and switches.
- Only purchase smoke alarms that carry the Australian Standards symbol and ensure that they are installed in the correct areas.
- Replace standard batteries in battery operated alarms once a year.



**Dial Before
You Dig**

Before planning or beginning any excavation work, check for underground pipes such as plumbing, gas or electrical cabling by contacting Dial Before You Dig on 1100.

- Replace all types of smoke alarm units every ten years or if they are not working. Hard wired smoke alarms must only be replaced by a licensed electrical contractor.
- If you have hearing difficulties, install smoke detectors in your house that give a visual sign when triggered.
- If you have deadlocks on external doors, keep the key handy (but out of sight), near the lock. If there is a fire, and you need to get out quickly, make sure you can find the key even in the dark or smoke.
- Ensure there are no objects obstructing pathways or corridors. Clutter may pose a fall hazard, and can also make it difficult to enter and exit a property in the event of an emergency.
- If you have small children visit, make your home child-friendly by establishing 'off limits' areas with childproof doors.
- Ensure any swimming pool, pond or spa is secured by pool fencing and child resistant, self-closing and self-latching gates.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services has created a new instructional video to help people check and maintain smoke alarms. The video is available at the DFES website at www.dfes.wa.gov.au and at the DFES YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/dfeswesternaustralia. You can also contact DFES on **08 9395 9300**.

One in three people over the age of 65 falls each year and around half of these falls occur at home. In maintaining your home, there are a number of things you can do to prevent the risk of falls. To find out more, call **08 9420 7212** or view the Stay on Your Feet guide at the Department of Health's webpage, www.health.wa.gov.au/stayonyourfeet/home.





Security

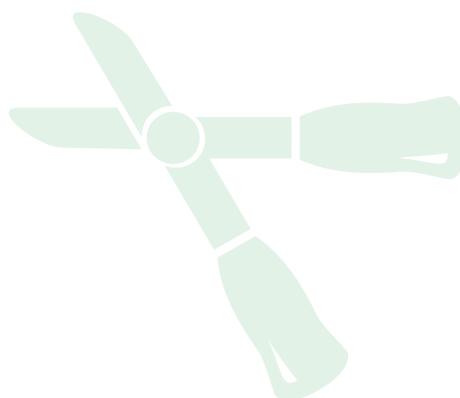
- Trim trees and bushes to allow a clear view of your home and to remove hiding places.
- Install security screens on doors and windows.
- Install quality deadlocks on all external doors.
- Install key operated locks on all windows making sure they can all be opened with a master key.
- Install motion sensor floodlights at the front and back of your home.
- Use laminated glass or shatter resistant window film to help prevent windows being broken.
- Check your doors are correctly fitted and working properly and doorframes are secure.
- Install a peephole in the front door.
- Secure garage doors and sheds with deadlocks or strong padlocks.
- Engrave or mark valuables for easy identification. Record serial numbers of appliances and valuables.
- Remove any keys hidden outdoors.



- Ensure your pet door is properly secured when not in use.
- Put a lock on your meter box and letterbox.
- Install an alarm system through a licensed company and keep it maintained.
- Install a telephone in the bedroom with emergency numbers handy or programmed in.
- Become a member of Neighbourhood Watch.

The WA Police have developed a 'Safety Advice for Seniors' brochure, which is available from the community safety website at: www.communitysafety.police.wa.gov.au/resourcesresources. Alternatively, you can call **08 9222 1300**.

For more information on Neighbourhood Watch, ring **08 9222 1513** or visit their website at www.nhw.wa.gov.au.



5

Home modifications



It is important to think about how well your home serves your needs now and in the future.

Modifications to your home can:

- Help reduce home maintenance requirements.
- Make it easier for you to live in your home.
- Help reduce living costs.



Minor home modifications often don't cost a lot of money and are usually quite easy to do. Major modifications are likely to be more expensive and require assistance. Before undertaking any major modification, be sure to seek professional advice and consider options and costs. Major modifications may require council approval and licensed tradespeople.

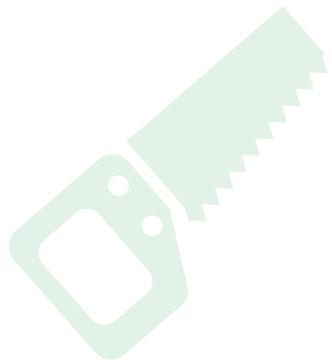
Getting assistance

The Disability Services Commission has a Liveable Homes website with many good design ideas. Visit www.liveablehomes.net.au or call 08 9426 9264.

The Home and Community Care program (HACC) may be able to provide assistance with the cost of some home modifications that are needed to keep you safe, eg rails and ramps. To find out more, ring 1800 052 222 or 1800 200 422.

COTA WA runs community education workshops on Modifying Your Home as well as other housing related topics. To find out more contact COTA WA on 08 9321 2133 or visit their website at www.cotawa.org.au.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' HomeFront service can assist eligible Gold and White Card holders with the cost of home modifications needed for clinical reasons. To find out more, call DLGC on 1800 80 1945.



6

Modifications to save costs

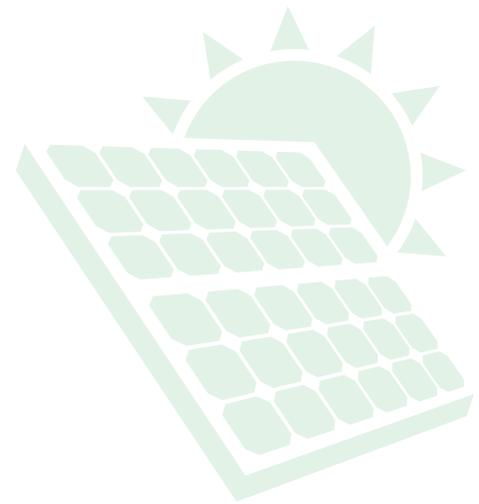
There are home modifications that can help you save costs by reducing water and energy consumption.

For example, did you know that households use over 50% of their total water inside the home and 28% of total household water use is in the bath and shower? Installing a low flow showerhead that is water efficient can save up to 12,000 litres of water per year. Because some of the saving is in hot water, it is a saving on energy costs too!

Other modification ideas for saving costs in the home include:

- Making sure your home has good insulation.
- Replacing incandescent light globes with energy efficient ones.
- Considering the cost benefits of solar hot water systems and solar panels.
- Ensuring natural ventilation.
- Designing gardens to allow winter sun to come into the home but shade it in summer.
- Putting timers on water heaters. For example, a timer can be set to warm water for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon.
- Choosing energy efficient appliances.





In the garden

Some water saving modifications in the garden:

- Apply a soil improver with a soil wetting agent.
- Group plants with similar water requirements together.
- Make your verge more water efficient.
- Apply water-wise mulch to reduce evaporation.
- Only water once on your rostered watering day.
- Get a trigger nozzle for your hose or use a watering can.
- Use a pool cover.
- Install water timers on sprinklers systems.
- Consider alternative water sources such as bores, rainwater tanks or grey water re-use systems.
- Choose water-wise plants – your local council can advise on plant species that are native to your area.



7

Independent living devices



There are a range of equipment and technology options that can assist with daily living and help with home maintenance jobs.

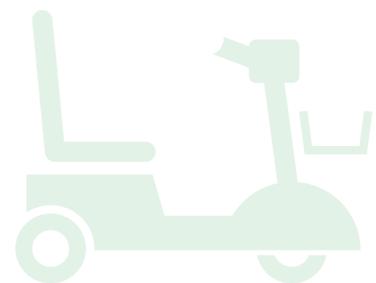
Many of these aids do not require major modifications to the home but can make a big difference to mobility and independence.

The Independent Living Centre of Western Australia (ILC) can help you find products and services that meet your needs and circumstances. The centre offers information, advice, assessments, hire services, equipment grants and training.

There are literally hundreds of assistive equipment and technology products available for the home.

To find out more, ring the Independent Living Centre on [1300 885 886](tel:1300885886) for personalised assistance on what your options are. The ILC also provides a number of help sheets on their website at www.ilc.com.au (type 'help sheets' in the 'Search ILC' box). Alternatively, you may wish to visit the centre at: The Niche, Suite A, 11 Aberdare Road, Nedlands Western Australia, 6009.

ILC Australia has a national website and equipment database where you can search more than 10,000 assistive technology and equipment products at www.ilcaustralia.org.au.



8

What if I don't own my home?



Most of the ideas presented in this kit apply to everyone, regardless of whether you own your home or are renting. The main things to know are:

- If you rent your home (either as a private, public or community housing tenant), you cannot make modifications without the owner's permission. For example, before installing hand rails or non-slip floor treatments, always check with your landlord or real estate agent first.
- Some home maintenance tasks are the responsibility of the owner, eg fixing a leaking roof or a broken hot water system, so let them know if there is a job that needs doing.
- Major repairs fall into two categories: essential services and other urgent repairs. Once you notify the landlord or real estate agent, they must arrange a suitable repairer for an essential service within 24 hours or 48 hours for any other urgent repair. The repair does not need to be fixed within this time but they must make an appointment with the repairer to fix the problem. The landlord or real estate agent must then ensure that the repairs are carried out as soon as practicable after the arrangements have been made.
- If they fail to ensure that the repairs are carried out, you can arrange for the repairs yourself to the minimum extent necessary. You must also use a suitably qualified repairer and the landlord or real estate agent is required to reimburse you for any reasonable expense to pay for the repairs.
- If you rent and want or need to be home when a tradesperson attends to conduct repairs, make sure that you talk to your landlord or real estate agent about the best time for a tradesperson to come. If you are not home when that tradesperson attends and they cannot enter your property to do the work, you may have to pay the cost of a call-out fee.



■ If you live in a strata complex, you can generally make modifications within your home, but may need to get approval from the strata company before making modifications to the outside of your home. This can include changing external doors or adding screens. Some home maintenance and repair jobs are the responsibility of the strata company. These jobs are usually ones that are needed outside the internal walls of your home, eg fixing a leaking roof or cleaning gutters.

■ If you live in a retirement village or residential park (including caravan parks), your residential agreement, lease or contract will determine what changes you can and cannot make without first getting permission from the complex manager. Your agreement should also say what maintenance you are responsible for and what maintenance the village or park is responsible for.

■ Home maintenance services such as HACC or those provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs are available to eligible people regardless of the type of accommodation they live in. Some home modification assistance, such as installing hand rails or ramps, can still be provided to renters, as long as the owner agrees.

■ Assisted technology and equipment services offered by the Independent Living Centre often do not require any structural modifications to the home so are suitable for people in any living arrangement.

The Department of Commerce has the following guides, which you may find useful:

- Renting a home in Western Australia: a tenant's guide
- Information booklet - park living: a guide for consumers
- Seniors housing guide

You may obtain a copy from the Consumer Protection Advice Line on [1300 30 40 54](tel:1300304054) or download the booklets at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications.



To find out more about your housing options, contact the Seniors' Housing Centre. The centre is a collaborative venture between and the Department of Commerce and COTA WA, which is a not-for-profit organisation run by older people for older people. The Department of Local Government and Communities also provides support to the service. The centre provides information and referrals to seniors on housing options as they move towards retirement and beyond. The centre does not directly offer housing, financial or legal advice, but can provide information to seniors to enable them to make informed decisions about housing.

The service is available by contacting the Department of Commerce (telephone [1300 367 057](tel:1300367057)) and at COTA WA (telephone [1300 734 838](tel:1300734838)). You can visit the Seniors' Housing Centre at Level 2, 140 William Street, Perth WA 6000.

You can find out about the Seniors' Housing Centre at www.commerce.wa.gov.au visit the 'Seniors Housing' tab in the 'Property and Renting' section. You can also visit the 'Programs and Projects' page of www.cotawa.org.au.



9

Financial assistance

Maintaining a home can be expensive, especially when living on a limited income. This section outlines services that can assist.



- You can get a WA Seniors Card if you are aged 61 years or more, work 25 hours or less per week averaged over a 12 month period and are a permanent resident of Western Australia. Seniors Card holders are entitled to a range of government concessions and discounts on goods and services from more than 500 businesses listed in the WA Seniors Card Discount Directory.
- ConcessionsWA is a website where you can search rebates, concessions and subsidy schemes provided by the Government of Western Australia. To see all the benefits available, visit the website at www.concessions.wa.gov.au.
- Concessions are provided to pensioners and seniors (including Seniors Card holders) on their local government rates, annual water service charge and Emergency Service Levy. The concessions can be a rebate or deferment of the charge (depending on eligibility criteria). Concessions are available upon application from the Water Corporation (telephone [1300 659 951](tel:1300659951)) and local councils. There are also rebates and concessions available that can reduce electricity and gas costs.
- The Financial Counselling Helpline is a free, confidential service for people with financial problems or queries. It provides information, options and guidance and can refer you to a local financial counsellor for face-to-face assistance if required. You can contact the Financial Counselling Hotline on [1800 007 007](tel:1800007007).



WA No Interest Loans Network (WA NILS) is a not-for-profit organisation that enables people on low incomes to obtain interest free personal loans of up to \$1,500 per year. The loan can be for a variety of purposes, including hot water systems, ovens, solar panels, awnings, window tinting, insulations and water tanks. For more information contact WA NILS on [08 9345 7611](tel:0893457611) or [1300 365 301](tel:1300365301) (landline only) or visit their website at www.wanils.asn.au.

Centrelink Financial Information Service (FIS) provides free education and information about financial and lifestyle issues. FIS can help you:

- understand your financial affairs
- learn more about investing, property and superannuation
- plan your retirement and understand the options available
- use credit in a sensible way
- plan and budget for long term maintenance costs or future home modifications.

Assistance can be provided over the telephone, at interviews and through education seminars. To find out more, contact FIS on [132 300](tel:132300).



Getting further assistance

Home maintenance

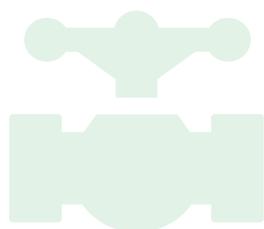
The Home and Community Care program (HACC) is funded by the Commonwealth Government and provides services that support older people, people with disability and their carers to live independently at home. Depending on your circumstances, HACC services may be able to provide home maintenance assistance. HACC home maintenance focuses on jobs that are required to keep people safe and independent – they will not provide assistance with jobs that are simply about the appearance of your home. If eligible, you will be asked to pay a contribution toward the cost of the services, based upon your income and the level of support that you receive. To find out more about HACC, ring [1800 052 222](tel:1800052222). Centre staff will be able to talk to you about your needs, your circumstances and what services may be of assistance. You can also find out more by visiting www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-home or calling [1800 200 422](tel:1800200422).

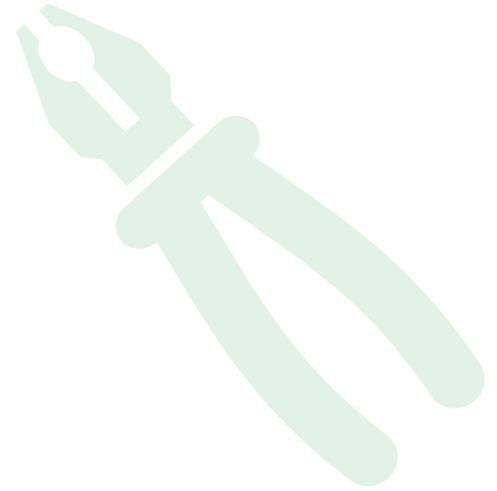
COTA WA members can use the national COTA Home Maintenance Service for any home repairs. The service links members with private tradespeople individually selected by COTA Australia, fully licensed and police checked. Bookings can be made by ringing [1300 658 842](tel:1300658842).

The Department of Veterans' Affairs can help veterans and war widows and widowers. The Veterans' Home Maintenance Helpline provides maintenance advice and referrals to tradespeople. To find out more, contact the Veterans' Home Maintenance Helpline on [1800 80 1945](tel:1800801945).

There are a number of private businesses that provide home maintenance services. Read the section on dealing with tradespeople for tips on finding the right tradesperson for you.

Your local council may also have information on home maintenance services in your area for seniors.





Cost saving modifications

For more information on water saving programs and tips, contact the Water Corporation's Waterwise Helpline on 13 10 39, or visit their website at www.watercorporation.com.au/save-water.

For people who live in the Perth metropolitan area, including Mandurah, H2O Assist provides water efficient products that are delivered and installed at an affordable cost. Products include dual flush toilets, rainwater tanks, automatic irrigation controllers and the re-programming of your existing controller. The H2O Assist program is delivered by Select Solutions with support from the Water Corporation. To find out more contact Select Solutions on [1300 235 874](tel:1300235874).

H2ome Smart is a free program to help households save water through small changes. H2ome is available in Perth and a number of regional towns and cities. To find out more and see if you live in an eligible area, contact H2ome Smart on [1300 426 610](tel:1300426610).

Alinta Energy Assist can provide information and cash back offers for residents wishing to switch to gas appliances, including water heaters, stoves and clothes dryers. To find out more, contact Alinta Energy Assist on [13 13 58](tel:131358).

LivingSmart is an innovative community-based behaviour change program that engages with households on a personal level and encourages them to reduce their energy and water use, waste disposal and car-based transport.

LivingSmart has a range of useful resources for households to increase sustainability. Visit www.transport.wa.gov.au/activetransport/23778.asp.



Contacts

Building Commission	1300 489 099 www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-commission
Centrelink Financial Information Service	13 23 00
ConcessionsWA	www.concessions.wa.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx
Consumer Protection Advice Line	1300 30 40 54 13 36 77 (National Relay Service for the hearing impaired) www.commerce.wa.gov.au
COTA WA	08 9472 0104 www.cotawa.org.au National COTA Home Maintenance Service – 1300 658 842 COTA WA – Seniors Housing Centre – 1300 734 838 www.cotawa.org.au/programs-projects/senior-housing-centre
Department of Veterans' Affairs Home Maintenance Helpline & HomeFront	1800 80 1945
Dial Before You Dig	1100 www.1100.com.au
Energy Safety Licensing Office	08 6251 1900 www.commerce.wa.gov.au
Financial Counselling Helpline	1800 007 007 www.financialcounsellors.org
Independent Living Centre	1300 885 886 www.ilc.com.au and www.ilcaustralia.org.au
Liveable Homes – Disability Services Commission	08 9426 9276 www.liveablehomes.net.au
LivingSmart	08 9432 9877 www.livingsmart.org.au
My Aged Care national gateway	1800 200 422 www.myagedcare.gov.au

Health Direct (WA)	1800 052 222
Neighbourhood Watch	08 9222 1513 www.nhw.wa.gov.au
Police Safety Checklist	08 9222 1300 www.communitysafety.police.wa.gov.au/resourcesresources
Plumbers' Licensing Board	1300 249 223
Safety for Seniors - WA Police	www.police.wa.gov.au/Yoursafety/Forseniors/tabid/1129/Default.aspx
Seniors Housing Centre, Department of Commerce	1300 367 057 www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/Content/Property_renting/Over_55s/
Smoke Alarms – Department of Fire and Emergency Services	08 9395 9300 www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/fireinthehome/Pages/smokealarms.aspx
Stay on Your Feet – Department of Health	www.stayonyourfeet.com.au
WA No Interest Loans Network Inc. (WA NILS)	08 9345 7611 or 1300 365 301 www.wanils.asn.au
WA Seniors Card Centre and Seniors Telephone Information Service	08 6551 8800 (metro callers), or 1800 671 233 (country freecall) www.seniorscard.wa.gov.au
Water Corporation Waterwise Helpline	13 10 39 www.watercorporation.com.au/save-water
Worksafe	1300 307 877 www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe
Western Power	Emergencies / Power Interruptions 13 13 51 General Enquiries 13 10 87 www.westernpower.com.au

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