



**BIRRIBEE
HOUSING**



Welcome to Birribee Housing

Tenant Handbook

Helping you to understand everything you need to know about your tenancy with us.

Contents

About Us

- What We Do
- Our Vision
- Our Values
- Our Principles
- Our Team

Tenancy Support and Advocacy Groups

Rights and Responsibilities

- What we can expect from each other

Starting Your Tenancy

- The RTA (lease)
- Property Condition Form
- Safety and Security

Fair Trading New Tenancy Factsheet

Property Maintenance and Repairs

- Response times
- Emergency Water Leaks
- Tenant Damage

1 Your Rent

- How is my rent calculated?
- How do I pay Rent?
- BOND
- Water Usage and Utilities

5 Ending Your Tenancy

- Giving Notice
- Exciting your property

6 Appeals and Complaints

- How to make a complaint
- How to Appeal a decision

7 How to Lodge a Suggestion or provide General feedback

4 Contact Us

11

13

14

15

16



About Us

Birribee Housing is a new housing provider that has been established to increase housing options for Aboriginal people in NSW.

Birribee Housing is an Aboriginal community-controlled not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, established by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council in February 2019.

We are registered as a Tier 2 Community Housing Provider (CHP) under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH). As a registered Aboriginal CHP, Birribee can access funding and other opportunities to provide safe and affordable housing for Aboriginal people in NSW. Birribee is also an approved Growth Provider with the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office.

What We Do

Birribee Housing provides cultural and client centred services. This includes:

- Tenancy management
- Property management
- Support service coordination
- Community and tenant led housing services development
- Employment and training opportunities
- Community Development

Our Values



Our Vision

We will increase the amount and quality of housing available to Aboriginal people in NSW and deliver significant improvements in housing outcomes.

We will lead quality improvements in the delivery of culturally sensitive services and culturally appropriate housing.

We will generate employment and career paths for Aboriginal staff and opportunities for Aboriginal businesses in the delivery of housing and asset services.

Our Principles

Birribee Housing recognises that the way we deliver our services can contribute to Aboriginal people practising self-determination and meeting their social, cultural and economic needs. We are determined to embed a culture of respect for clients and are committed to continuous improvement.

Our approach to quality services is framed by principles:

- Grounded in community
- Understanding needs
- Strengths-based
- Focus on client well-being
- Fostering culturally appropriate service delivery
- Supporting Aboriginal economic independence

In delivering our services you can expect us to:

- Be easy to contact
- Treat you with courtesy and respect

Tenancy Support and Advocacy Groups

Birribee Housing has a close relationship with the Aboriginal Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service.

Our Housing staff will always provide all our tenants with information and access to Aboriginal services and specialists who can provide tenants with proactive, professional, and culturally sensitive services, including providing representation at NCAT hearings, providing advice, information, conciliation, and education.

Greater Sydney Aboriginal Tenants Service

Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hawkesbury, Macarthur, Northern NSW
Phone: 02 9833 3314

Northern NSW Aboriginal Tenants Service

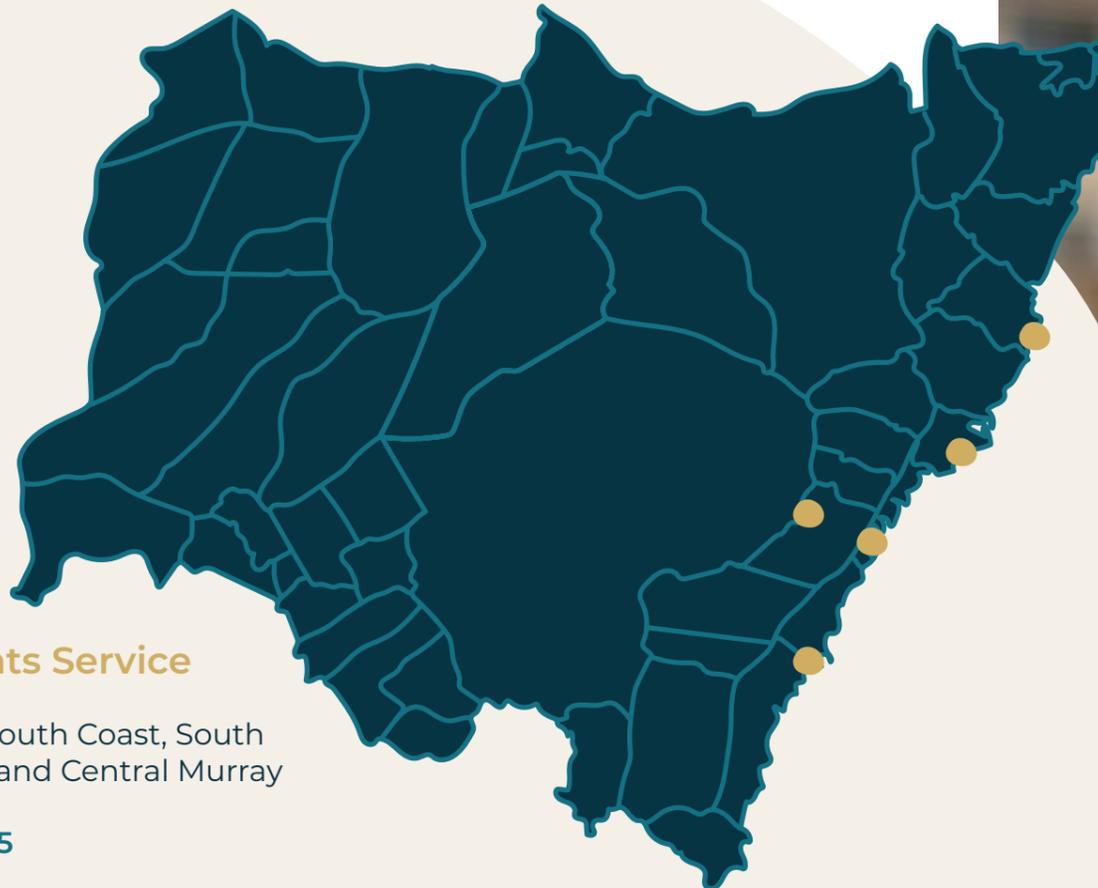
Hunter, North Coast, New England, and the Mid North Coast
Phone: 02 6643 4426
Free call: 1800 248 913
Newcastle: 02 4967 7756

Western Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service

Central West, North West and Far West
Phone: 02 6881 5700

Southern NSW Aboriginal Tenants Service

Murra Mia Illawarra, South Coast, South East, Riverina, Upper and Central Murray
Phone: 02 4472 9363
Free call: 1800 672 185



Rights and Responsibilities

What we can expect from each other?

Birribee Housing and our tenants have rights and responsibilities that guide what we both can do during your tenancy. NSW Fair Trading provides information to tenants, landlords and agents about their rights and responsibilities.

Their information covers all residential premises, including residential parks.



Starting Your Tenancy

As a new tenant Birribee Housing will:

- Provide you with clear and easy to understand information about how rents are calculated and how to pay your rent and water
- Provide you with information on how to contact us with any maintenance/repairs, needs and issues or complaints
- Provide you with information and understanding on support services and make referrals on your request
- Provide you access to support and information to help you remain in your house if circumstances occur that could affect your tenancy, including payments of rent
- Provide you information and supports on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant in partnership with Aboriginal Tenant Information Services

Residential Tenancy Agreement

The residential tenancy Agreement (lease) you signed at the start of your tenancy is a legally binding document and sets out the terms of the agreement. This includes the house address, the rent amount, how rent is to be paid, how long the agreement is, and any other conditions.

Property Condition Form

At the beginning of your tenancy, you will be required to complete and sign two copies of a Property Condition Form (PCR). This is a prescribed form (required under the law) used to note the condition of your property at the time you move in, to be compared with if you vacate.

Please ensure that this form is completed and return one of the copies to the Birribee office within 14 days of your tenancy start date.

Safety and Security



Locks

Birribee will provide and maintain locks and other devices as necessary to ensure that the premises are reasonably secure. Neither Birribee nor you, the tenant, shall alter, remove, or add any lock or device without the consent of the other party.



Smoke Detectors

Birribee will ensure that all hard-wired smoke detectors are installed and maintained in all properties managed by Birribee and that Birribee will conduct yearly tests in accordance with Australian laws and standards.

Safety

- ✓ Any faults should be immediately reported to your Housing worker
- ✗ Do not overload your power outlets, especially with multiple power boards.
- ✗ Never attempt any electrical, plumbing or gas repairs yourself.
- ✗ Do not store any flammable liquids in large quantities in or around your home.
- ✓ Remember to control weed and grass growth to avoid fire hazards.
- ✓ Remember to advise Birribee of any fire dangers or other hazards.





Property Maintenance and Repairs

It is always best to report a repair as soon as you notice the problem. That way we can get the problem fixed quickly and stop any further damage occurring to your home.

Reporting a repair is simple and can be done by contacting:

All Tenants

Phone 1800 BIRRIBEE (1800 2477 4233)

Email repairs@birribee.org.au or visit your local office

Emergency or urgent repairs should be reported as soon as possible by calling Birribee.

After hours contacts will be diverted to partner agencies in locations:

Evolve Housing - Sydney
 Argyle Housing - Wagga Wagga
 Housing Plus - Bathurst/Orange
 Homes North - Moree

We classify emergency and urgent repairs with reference to the Residential Tenancies Act (2010)

If there is a fire – **call 000 immediately**



Tenant Damage

If you, anyone else living at your home or any visitors cause any damage to your home you need to report the damages and have them repaired. You will have to pay for the repairs. This can be done through contacting your Tenancy worker and making an arrangement to repay the repair account.



Emergency Water Leaks

Always turn the water off at the mains if you have a big water leak. The main tap is usually found in the front yard. Immediately Call our maintenance line to get it fixed.



Response times

Responsive Repair

Things that are general repairs such as a towel rail coming loose, or internal door handle has come away.

**Within 21 days
(about 3 weeks)**

Urgent Repair

Things that need prompt action because of safety or security concerns. For example, no internal working lights, blocked external drains, stoves or hot water heaters not working.

Within 48 Hours

Emergency Repair

Things that need prompt action because of health, safety, or security concerns. For example, electrical hazards, gas leaks, flood, or sewer overflows in common areas.

Within 24 Hours

Your Rent

How is my rent calculated?

Birribee Housing provides a rental subsidy to eligible households living in Aboriginal social housing properties. We charge rent in accordance with the NSW Community Housing Rent Policy and in accordance with AHO (Aboriginal Housing Office) policies for all AHO tenancies.

The amount of rent you are charged depends on your individual and household circumstances. In general, tenants are charged between 25% and 30% of the household's income plus 100% of their Commonwealth Rent Assistance CRA (Commonwealth Rent Assistance) entitlement.

How do I pay Rent?



Centrepay

Centrepay is the easiest payment method as it doesn't cost you any extra. Your rent is automatically deducted from your Centrelink benefit using Centrepay. To do this, you will need to contact Centrelink and sign a Centrepay deduction form or talk to your Tenancy Worker about what payment arrangements suits you.



Direct Debit

Direct Debit payments are made through your bank. You will need to supply your bank your rental account details and reference, talk with your tenancy worker and they will provide you with your rent account information.

Rent must always be kept 2 weeks in advance. You must pay your rent on time. If you can't pay on time, please ring, and talk with your Tenancy Worker as soon as possible and an arrangement can be made.

BOND

How do you pay the Bond?

You pay your Rental BOND Online directly to NSW Fair Trading. This is an Online service to securely pay your bond direct to NSW Fair Trading using a credit card or BPAY, without the need to fill out and sign a bond lodgement form. Once registered, you can continue to use your RBO account for future tenancies.

NSW Fair Trading will mail you an advice slip with a bond number and it will say how much you paid. Once you have your BOND number you will be asked to provide this number to your tenancy worker. Always keep your BOND slip in a safe place.

Why do you pay the bond?

You pay it in case you do not pay all your rent, and/or you damage the house you are renting, or your visitors do some damage. The Bond is a form of security for the house and will be returned to you or used to cover costs related to the property.



Rent Review

Birribee conducts rent reviews twice a year. Rent reviews ensure that you are paying the right amount of rent based on your income and personal circumstances.

Rent Statements

You can request your Rent Statement from us at any time.



Water Usage and Utilities

Birribee strives to make sure that all our homes meet water efficiency standards and regulations. The legal water efficiency measures are:

- a maximum flowrate of 9 litres per minute for all showerheads, all internal cold-water taps and single mixer taps in kitchen and bathroom sinks
- no leaking taps at the start of the tenancy or when water efficiency measures are installed – whichever is later.

Billing for water usage

You are only required to pay for water usage. Birribee will:

- give you a copy of the bill from the water supplier (or other evidence) showing the cost of water used
- give you at least 21 days (about 3 weeks) to pay, and
- request payment within 3 months of receiving the bill from the supplier.

Most tenants set up a fortnightly Centrepay deduction which covers their future water bills, talk with your Tenancy worker to work out your usage and payment plan.



Ending Your Tenancy

Giving notice

Tenants must try and give as much notice as they can, but we do ask that you give us a minimum of two weeks written notice that you are vacating the property. Your rent will be charged to the last day of the notice period or when the keys have been returned to Birribee Housing.



Upon receiving your written notice, Birribee will be in contact to arrange an outgoing inspection and finalise your tenancy.

Exiting your property

When you vacate the premises, you must make sure that it is presented in a reasonable state, by the date of the outgoing inspection, you must:

- ✓ pay your rent until the last day of your tenancy
- ✓ remove all personal belongings
- ✓ remove all rubbish from inside and outside of the property
- ✓ repair any damage caused during the tenancy
- ✓ clean the property to a reasonable state
- ✓ pay any outstanding water or maintenance invoices
- ✓ return the keys to the housing officer conducting the outgoing inspection
- ✓ notify Birribee of your forwarding address and updated contact details for the release of your bond.



Appeals and Complaints

We are here to help, so if you are not happy with a decision that we have made or the way we have delivered our services we want to hear about it.

We take your feedback and suggestions seriously as it gives us the opportunity to improve our service delivery to you.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint if you are not happy with the quality or standard of service you have received from Birribee. This includes our staff and contractors.

You can talk with your Tenancy worker who will be able to help fill out the form with you.



How to Appeal a decision

If you do not agree with a decision that Birribee Housing has made about your tenancy, you can appeal the decision for review by a Birribee Housing Manager.

You can talk with your Tenancy worker who will be able to help fill out the Appeal form.

If you are not happy with our decision on your 1st Appeal, you can lodge a Stage 2 appeal with the independent Housing Appeal Committee.

You can lodge an appeal by:

- Completing and returning the Housing Appeals Committee second Level Appeals Form
- Submitting an online appeal.

The Committee will review all available information, including your tenancy file, and conduct an informal interview or hearing with you. You can bring a support person to the hearing and an interpreter can be arranged if needed.

The Committee will write a report with recommendations, which they will send to you and to Birribee Housing.

How to Lodge a Suggestion or provide General Feedback

You can give us a suggestion or feedback to a particular housing matter. Suggestions and feedback help us to improve our services, and we believe in our people's understanding, knowledge, and ideas to continually make improvements.

How to lodge your suggestion or feedback

You can talk with your Tenancy worker who will be able to help fill out the feedback form with you or you can email us at office@birribee.org.au

An acknowledgment letter will be sent, and a copy placed on the tenant file.

All complaints and/or appeals will be resolved within 21 working days.

All complaints appeals and feedback by a tenant will be dealt with fairly, promptly and confidentially.

All complaints and appeals are to be in writing. We appreciate that there can be difficulties in submitting written responses. In these circumstances, Birribee staff are able to assist you.





Need to yarn?

Call: 1800 BIRRIBEE (1800 2477 4233)
(02) 7252 9516

Email: office@birribee.org.au
Web: www.birribee.org.au

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