

Routine Inspection Policy & Procedure

Residential Property Management – South Australia

Policy Owner: [Agency Name]

Approved By: [Principal / Licensee]

Effective Date: [Date]

Review Date: [Date]

Version: 1.0

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to ensure routine inspections of residential rental properties managed by **[Agency Name]** are conducted:

- consistently and professionally;
- in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)* and associated regulations;
- with appropriate respect for the tenant's privacy, peace and comfort;
- to identify maintenance, safety and property condition issues;
- to assist landlords in meeting their obligations;
- to identify possible breaches of the tenancy agreement; and
- with clear and accurate records maintained on the property file.

Routine inspections are intended to assess the **condition and reasonable care of the property**, rather than the tenant's lifestyle or housekeeping preferences.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all residential properties managed by **[Agency Name]** and all employees, property managers, contractors or authorised representatives involved in arranging, conducting, reporting or following up routine inspections.

This policy applies to routine inspections only. Different entry and notice requirements may apply to:

- repairs and maintenance;
 - emergency entry;
 - checking whether a tenancy breach has been remedied;
 - garden maintenance;
 - valuations;
 - prospective tenant inspections;
 - prospective purchaser inspections; and
 - other genuine purposes.
-

3. Legislative Requirements

Routine inspections must be conducted in accordance with section 72 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995* (SA).

For a routine inspection:

1. The property must not be inspected **more than four times in a year**, unless the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) has made an order permitting additional inspections.
2. The tenant must receive **written notice at least 7 days and no more than 28 days before the inspection date**.
3. The notice must state:
 4. the purpose of entry;
 5. the date of entry; and
 6. a period of no more than **two hours** during which the inspection will occur.
7. The inspection must occur within **normal hours**, being between **8:00 am and 8:00 pm on any day other than a Sunday or public holiday**.
8. Where the tenant advises that they wish to be present, reasonable efforts must be made to arrange the inspection at a time convenient for the tenant, having regard to the work and other commitments of both the tenant and persons attending the inspection.
9. A current prescribed **Notice to Enter Premises** should be used where applicable.

Agency rule: Where this policy imposes a higher standard than the minimum legislative requirement, staff must follow the agency standard unless instructed otherwise by management.

4. Agency Inspection Frequency

Unless otherwise approved by the Department Manager, routine inspections will generally be conducted approximately **quarterly**, subject to the legislative maximum of four inspections per year.

The recommended inspection cycle is:

- first routine inspection approximately **8–12 weeks after commencement of a new tenancy**; and
- subsequent inspections approximately every **3–4 months**.

Property Managers must check previous inspection dates before scheduling an inspection to ensure the legislative maximum is not exceeded.

Inspections may be conducted less frequently where appropriate, including for long-term tenancies with a demonstrated history of satisfactory property care.

Additional inspections must not be arranged simply because an owner requests them where doing so would exceed the lawful inspection frequency.

Where additional monitoring of a property is considered necessary due to its condition or other circumstances, the Property Manager must discuss the matter with the Department Manager and consider whether a SACAT order is required.

5. Objectives of a Routine Inspection

A routine inspection should assess:

- the general condition of the property;
- whether the property appears to be reasonably clean and cared for;
- evidence of damage beyond fair wear and tear;
- maintenance or repair requirements;
- water leaks, moisture or visible mould;
- deterioration to fixtures, fittings or surfaces;
- condition of gardens and outdoor areas where applicable;
- obvious safety hazards;
- smoke alarm or other safety matters that are reasonably observable;
- signs of unauthorised alterations or installations;
- signs of unauthorised occupants where reasonably apparent;
- signs of unauthorised animals where reasonably apparent;
- compliance with relevant tenancy obligations; and
- preventative maintenance matters requiring owner attention.

An inspection is not an opportunity to:

- criticise a tenant's personal taste;
 - require a property to be presented to a sales or display-home standard;
 - inspect personal belongings unnecessarily;
 - open cupboards, drawers, wardrobes or personal storage areas without a legitimate property-related reason and appropriate authority;
 - photograph personal documents or sensitive personal information; or
 - interfere unreasonably with the tenant's privacy.
-

6. Scheduling the Inspection

6.1 Review the Property File

Before scheduling the inspection, the Property Manager must review:

- tenancy commencement date;
- previous routine inspection dates;
- previous inspection reports;
- outstanding maintenance;
- previous tenant concerns;
- outstanding owner instructions;
- relevant breach history;
- pets approved at the property;
- access arrangements;
- known safety risks;
- relevant contractor reports; and
- any special circumstances recorded against the tenancy.

The Property Manager must confirm that the proposed inspection will not result in more than four routine inspections being conducted within the applicable annual period.

6.2 Select Inspection Date and Time

The proposed inspection must:

- be during normal hours;
- not be on a Sunday or public holiday;
- provide an entry window of no more than two hours; and
- allow sufficient statutory notice to be provided.

Where reasonably practicable, inspections should be scheduled during ordinary agency business hours.

7. Notice to the Tenant

The Property Manager must issue written notice **not less than 7 days and not more than 28 days before the inspection.**

The notice must include:

- property address;
- tenant name(s);
- inspection date;

- purpose of entry;
- nominated inspection time or maximum two-hour entry window;
- details of the Property Manager or representative attending;
- instructions regarding pets where relevant;
- access/key arrangements where applicable; and
- agency contact details.

A copy of the notice and evidence of service must be retained on the property file.

Where electronic service is used, staff must ensure electronic service is permitted and that the tenant's nominated contact details are current.

8. Tenant Requests to Be Present

A tenant is not generally required to be present for a properly notified routine inspection.

However, if the tenant advises that they wish to attend, the Property Manager must make a **reasonable effort** to arrange the inspection at a convenient time, taking into account the commitments of all parties.

The Property Manager should not automatically cancel a lawfully notified inspection merely because the tenant cannot attend.

Any request to alter the inspection date should be considered reasonably.

Where an alternative is agreed:

- confirm the revised arrangement in writing;
- ensure the revised entry remains legally compliant; and
- issue a replacement notice where required.

9. Reminder to Tenant

As an agency service standard, a courtesy reminder should generally be sent approximately **24–48 hours before the inspection**.

The reminder does not replace the formal Notice to Enter.

The reminder may include:

- inspection date and time;
- request for safe access;
- reminder to secure animals;

- invitation to report maintenance concerns;
 - instructions regarding alarms, gates or access; and
 - Property Manager contact details.
-

10. Key and Access Management

Where agency-held keys are to be used:

- keys must be signed out or electronically recorded in accordance with the agency's Key Management Policy;
- keys must not identify the property address in a way that creates unnecessary security risk;
- keys must remain in the possession of authorised personnel;
- keys must not be provided to unauthorised third parties;
- lost or missing keys must be reported immediately; and
- keys must be returned and recorded following the inspection.

The Property Manager must knock or ring the doorbell before entering, even where the tenant has advised they will not be home.

After knocking, staff should allow a reasonable period before using the agency key.

Upon entry, staff should announce themselves clearly.

11. Safety Before Entry

The Property Manager must not enter or remain at a property where they reasonably believe there is a serious risk to personal safety.

Potential risks include:

- aggressive animals;
- threatening occupants;
- evidence of violence;
- unsafe structures;
- exposed electrical hazards;
- suspected illegal activity creating an immediate safety risk;
- hazardous materials; or
- any other serious workplace safety concern.

Where a risk is identified:

1. do not proceed or withdraw from the property;
2. contact the Department Manager;

3. document the circumstances;
 4. consider whether another person should attend a future inspection; and
 5. contact emergency services where an immediate threat exists.
-

12. Conducting the Routine Inspection

The Property Manager should conduct the inspection methodically and consistently.

The following areas should generally be reviewed.

12.1 Exterior

Where applicable:

- front and rear yards;
- lawns and garden condition;
- trees and vegetation;
- fencing and gates;
- exterior walls;
- roof condition visible from ground level;
- gutters and downpipes visible from ground level;
- windows and external doors;
- balconies, patios and verandahs;
- garages, sheds and carports;
- driveways and paths;
- retaining walls;
- pools and spas;
- external taps;
- visible drainage issues;
- rubbish accumulation; and
- obvious safety hazards.

Staff must not climb onto roofs or undertake activities requiring specialist qualifications.

12.2 Interior

Review, where applicable:

- walls and ceilings;
- floors and floor coverings;
- windows and doors;
- blinds and curtains supplied with the property;
- kitchen cabinetry and benchtops;
- cooktop and oven condition;

- bathroom fixtures;
 - toilets;
 - laundry;
 - visible plumbing;
 - evidence of water leaks;
 - visible mould or excessive condensation;
 - heating and cooling equipment;
 - light fittings;
 - obvious electrical concerns;
 - doors, locks and security;
 - smoke alarms where reasonably observable;
 - evidence of damage; and
 - general property condition.
-

13. Photographs and Video

Photographs may be taken where reasonably necessary to document:

- property condition;
- maintenance;
- damage;
- deterioration;
- safety concerns;
- repairs required; or
- compliance matters.

Property Managers should avoid unnecessarily photographing:

- family photographs;
- personal documents;
- computer screens;
- financial information;
- medication;
- children's personal information;
- religious or similarly private items;
- valuables; or
- other sensitive personal belongings.

Photographs should focus on the **property**, not the tenant or their possessions.

Where photographs or video are intended for later public distribution or publication and may capture the tenant's personal possessions, additional notice requirements apply. Written tenant consent is required before photographs or footage capturing their personal possessions are published.

Routine inspection photographs must:

- be stored within the agency's approved property management system;
 - only be used for legitimate property management purposes;
 - only be disclosed to people with a legitimate need to receive them; and
 - be handled in accordance with the agency's privacy and information security procedures.
-

14. Tenant Interaction During Inspection

Property Managers must remain professional, neutral and respectful.

Where the tenant is present:

- introduce yourself and any accompanying person;
- explain the purpose of the inspection;
- ask whether the tenant has maintenance concerns;
- listen to concerns without making commitments outside your authority;
- avoid argumentative or accusatory discussions;
- do not demand immediate rectification unless an urgent safety issue exists;
- do not comment unnecessarily on the tenant's personal lifestyle; and
- advise that any relevant matters will be confirmed in writing following the inspection.

Where a potential breach is identified, the Property Manager should document the issue rather than attempting to conduct a detailed confrontation at the property.

15. Maintenance Identified During Inspection

Maintenance items should be recorded according to priority.

Urgent / Safety

Examples:

- significant water leak;
- electrical hazard;
- serious security issue;
- structural concern;
- dangerous broken fixture; or
- another matter requiring immediate attention.

The Property Manager should contact the office and/or landlord promptly and arrange action in accordance with the agency's Repairs and Maintenance Policy and legislative obligations.

Priority

Issues likely to deteriorate or cause further damage if left unattended should be brought to the owner's attention promptly.

Routine

Non-urgent maintenance should be recorded within the inspection report and submitted to the owner for instruction where appropriate.

Preventative

The Property Manager should identify items that may not yet require repair but warrant future attention.

Examples include:

- ageing sealant;
- deteriorating paint;
- vegetation contacting structures;
- minor corrosion;
- deteriorating grout; or
- early signs of water ingress.

16. Suspected Tenant Breaches

Potential breaches may include:

- damage beyond fair wear and tear;
- failure to maintain reasonable cleanliness;
- unauthorised alterations;
- unauthorised subletting;
- unauthorised animals where relevant;
- excessive rubbish;
- significant garden neglect where the tenant is responsible;
- deliberate or negligent property damage; or
- another breach of the residential tenancy agreement.

Property Managers must distinguish between:

- an actual or reasonably suspected tenancy breach;
- fair wear and tear;
- owner maintenance;
- age-related deterioration; and
- personal housekeeping preferences that do not amount to a tenancy breach.

No formal allegation should be made without sufficient supporting information.

Where further action may be required:

1. photograph or otherwise document the issue appropriately;
2. review the tenancy agreement and entry condition report;
3. review relevant legislation;
4. discuss the matter with the Department Manager where appropriate;
5. inform the owner;
6. determine the appropriate formal action; and
7. issue any prescribed notice correctly.

17. Reinspection Following a Breach

A follow-up inspection to determine whether a formally notified breach has been remedied is **not to be treated simply as another routine inspection**.

Where a breach notice has been served, the prescribed procedure and notice requirements for checking whether the breach has been remedied must be followed.

In South Australia, written notice for entry to determine whether a notified breach has been remedied must generally be provided **not less than 7 and not more than 14 days before entry**, using the prescribed process.

Property Managers must not use repeated routine inspections as an alternative to the correct breach procedure.

18. Completion of Inspection Report

The Property Manager must complete an inspection report promptly after the inspection.

The report should include:

- inspection date;
- Property Manager attending;
- whether the tenant was present;
- general property condition;
- room-by-room observations where relevant;
- photographs;
- maintenance identified;
- safety concerns;
- potential tenancy breaches;

- follow-up actions;
- recommended owner actions; and
- any relevant tenant comments.

Reports must use objective language.

For example:

Appropriate:

"Approximately 30 cm section of damaged plaster observed to hallway wall. Photograph attached."

Avoid:

"Tenant clearly doesn't look after the house."

Reports must distinguish factual observations from assumptions.

19. Owner Reporting

The inspection report should be provided to the landlord within **[2-3 business days]** of the inspection wherever reasonably practicable.

The owner communication should identify:

Property Condition

Overall assessment of how the property is being maintained.

Maintenance

Items requiring attention and recommended action.

Tenant Matters

Any tenancy compliance concerns requiring consideration.

Preventative Maintenance

Items the owner may wish to budget or plan for.

Action Required

Any specific owner decisions or approvals required.

Where urgent maintenance is identified, the Property Manager must not wait for the routine inspection report before raising the matter.

20. Tenant Follow-Up

Where appropriate, the tenant should receive written confirmation of matters requiring their attention.

The communication should:

- clearly describe the issue;
- distinguish tenant obligations from owner maintenance;
- specify any action required;
- provide a reasonable timeframe where appropriate;
- avoid threatening or inflammatory language; and
- advise where a formal statutory notice is being issued.

Minor observations that do not amount to a breach should generally be addressed cooperatively before formal action is considered.

21. Unable to Gain Entry

If the Property Manager cannot gain entry:

1. verify the inspection date, time and notice;
2. attempt the authorised access method;
3. do not force entry;
4. photograph or record relevant access circumstances if appropriate;
5. contact the tenant;
6. document the failed inspection;
7. notify the Department Manager if required; and
8. arrange further action consistent with the legislation.

If access was prevented despite valid notice, the Property Manager must obtain guidance before issuing further notices or commencing SACAT action.

A second routine inspection should not simply be scheduled without considering how it affects statutory inspection-frequency requirements.

22. Tenant Refuses Access

Where a tenant advises that access will not be permitted:

1. remain professional;
2. confirm the tenant's concerns;

3. verify that the Notice to Enter is valid;
4. attempt to resolve reasonable scheduling concerns;
5. confirm the agency's position in writing;
6. document all communication; and
7. seek management guidance regarding SACAT or other lawful remedies if access continues to be refused.

Property Managers must not:

- threaten the tenant;
 - force entry;
 - enter outside the lawful entry provisions; or
 - repeatedly issue notices as a means of harassment.
-

23. Pets

Where an animal is known to be kept at the premises, the inspection reminder should request that the animal be safely secured where necessary.

If an animal presents a safety risk:

- do not enter;
 - contact the tenant where possible;
 - record the issue; and
 - arrange an alternative inspection in accordance with legal requirements.
-

24. Keys, Doors and Security on Departure

Before leaving, the Property Manager must where applicable:

- ensure external doors used for entry are secured;
- return keys to their original location only where specifically authorised;
- ensure gates are closed;
- ensure lights or appliances operated during the inspection are returned to their previous state where practical;
- ensure animals have not escaped;
- ensure alarm requirements are followed; and
- take reasonable care to leave the property secure.

Agency keys must be returned in accordance with the Key Management Policy.

25. Record Keeping

The following must be retained on the property management file:

- Notice to Enter;
- evidence of service;
- tenant communications;
- inspection report;
- photographs;
- owner correspondence;
- maintenance instructions;
- work orders;
- breach documentation where applicable; and
- records of follow-up actions.

Inspection records must be stored securely in the agency's approved system and not on personal devices after they have been transferred to the agency system.

26. Privacy and Confidentiality

Information obtained during an inspection must only be collected, recorded, stored and disclosed where reasonably necessary for legitimate property management purposes.

Property Managers must not:

- discuss tenant circumstances with unrelated parties;
 - circulate inspection photographs unnecessarily;
 - retain inspection photographs on personal devices;
 - post inspection material on social media;
 - use photographs for marketing without ensuring legal requirements have been met; or
 - disclose sensitive information unnecessarily to an owner, contractor or third party.
-

27. Professional Conduct

Property Managers conducting inspections represent **[Agency Name]** and must:

- carry agency identification where applicable;
- dress professionally;
- behave courteously;
- respect the tenant's home;
- minimise disruption;
- maintain confidentiality;

- avoid discriminatory conduct;
 - avoid arguments;
 - comply with work health and safety requirements; and
 - follow all agency procedures.
-

28. Routine Inspection Workflow

Before the Inspection

- ☐ Check previous inspection date and annual inspection count.
- ☐ Review previous inspection report.
- ☐ Review outstanding maintenance.
- ☐ Review tenancy notes and known risks.
- ☐ Schedule compliant inspection date and two-hour window.
- ☐ Issue written Notice to Enter 7–28 days before inspection.
- ☐ Record notice and evidence of service.
- ☐ Send courtesy reminder.
- ☐ Confirm key availability.
- ☐ Review known pets, access issues and safety concerns.

At the Property

- ☐ Arrive within the notified entry window.
- ☐ Knock/ring before entry.
- ☐ Announce entry where using agency keys.
- ☐ Introduce all attendees if tenant is home.
- ☐ Ask tenant about maintenance concerns.
- ☐ Inspect property systematically.
- ☐ Record factual observations.
- ☐ Take property-focused photographs where appropriate.
- ☐ Identify maintenance and safety issues.
- ☐ Record potential tenancy breaches without confrontation.
- ☐ Ensure property is secure before leaving.

After the Inspection

- ☐ Return and record agency keys.
- ☐ Upload photographs promptly.
- ☐ Complete inspection report.
- ☐ Escalate urgent maintenance immediately.
- ☐ Send report to owner.
- ☐ Obtain owner instructions.
- ☐ Issue work orders as authorised.
- ☐ Communicate relevant matters to tenant.
- ☐ Commence formal breach procedure where authorised and appropriate.
- ☐ Diary all follow-up actions.

- [] Schedule next routine inspection without exceeding four inspections per year.
-

29. Escalation

A Property Manager must refer the matter to the Department Manager, Licensee or Principal where:

- there is uncertainty regarding legal entry rights;
 - a tenant repeatedly refuses lawful access;
 - serious property damage is discovered;
 - illegal activity is suspected;
 - significant health or safety concerns exist;
 - serious mould, structural or habitability concerns are identified;
 - a vulnerable occupant may be at risk;
 - additional inspections beyond the statutory maximum appear necessary;
 - SACAT proceedings may be required; or
 - the Property Manager believes attending the property presents a personal safety risk.
-

30. Compliance

Failure by employees to comply with this policy may expose the agency and landlord to:

- breach of residential tenancy legislation;
- SACAT proceedings;
- compensation claims;
- regulatory action;
- privacy complaints;
- reputational damage; and
- workplace health and safety risks.

Employees must therefore ensure that every routine inspection is properly authorised, correctly notified, professionally conducted and accurately documented.

31. References

This policy should be read together with:

- *Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)*, particularly section 72;
- *Residential Tenancies Regulations 2010 (SA)* and any successor regulations;
- Consumer and Business Services SA tenancy guidance;
- current prescribed Notice to Enter forms;
- [Agency Name] Repairs & Maintenance Policy;

- [Agency Name] Breach Management Procedure;
- [Agency Name] Key Management Policy;
- [Agency Name] Privacy Policy; and
- [Agency Name] Work Health & Safety Policy.

Legislative note: South Australian tenancy laws and prescribed forms may change. This policy must be reviewed at least annually and whenever legislative or regulatory changes affecting property entry or routine inspections commence.