



BEYOND THE LETTERBOX

WA switches on to digital TV

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On 16 April 2013, the areas of Perth in white on the map published here will have their analogue TV broadcasting signals switched off and only digital signals will be transmitted.

You need to be ready for the switchover or you may not be able to watch TV.

Regional and remote areas of the state not highlighted here have already made the switch or are doing so on 25 June this year.

Why is Australia switching to digital TV?

Switching to digital TV has several benefits:

- Overseas TV programs are increasingly produced only in digital format.
- Turning off the analogue signals will free up a large amount of broadcast space for other services.
- Digital provides better picture and sound quality, new free-to-air channels, access to an electronic program guide and widescreen format.

What do I need to do to get ready?

Newer TVs

If you can receive ABC2 or SBS TWO, you are already watching digital TV and you don't need to change or upgrade.

Older TVs

From 16 April 2013, analogue TVs will be unable to receive broadcasts without a set-top box that connects to the TV and converts the incoming signal to digital. Your TV will only need replacing if it is too old to connect to a set-top box.

If your existing antenna is not picking up a strong digital signal after installing a set top box and tuning your TV, the antenna may need to be upgraded. The Department maintains antennas in unit complexes, **however in free-standing homes and duplexes it is the tenants' responsibility to install a new antennae if required.**

How much is this going to cost me?

For most people, the switch will be straightforward and inexpensive. Practical and financial assistance is available for those who need it.

The Household Assistance Scheme helps older Australians (and others on the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions) by sending an official representative to provide and install digital-ready equipment. The Satellite Subsidy Scheme was developed to help those in remote areas and is available at a subsidised cost of \$250 per household.

The Federal Government has already sent letters to potentially eligible individuals but you can also contact the Department of Human Services on 1800 556 443 to check your eligibility.

What if I need help to make the switchover?

You can receive more detailed information from these sources:
Website for general information www.digitalready.gov.au
Digital Ready Information Line 1800 20 10 13

Digital Switchover Liaison Officers

Liaison Officers work to help people who may find it difficult to switch to digital TV by themselves. Call **1800 20 10 13** to see if there is a Liaison Officer in your area.

*Based on information from the Australian Federal Government

Comments or feedback?

customerfeedback@housing.wa.gov.au or Locked Bag 22, East Perth WA 6892.



Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act



What is the Residential Tenancies Act?

The Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (RTA) is the legislation that outlines the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords in Western Australia. Both the tenant and the landlord must abide by this Act, which is upheld in the Magistrates Court.

Why is it being amended?

From time to time various Acts are reviewed and amended so they remain up to date with changing circumstances. Several areas of the RTA were identified as needing to be updated. In making these changes, the Department of

Commerce has incorporated a number of the Department of Housing's practices into the new Act, such as providing property condition reports when a tenant moves into a property. The changes aim to make the Act clearer and fairer for all people renting residential properties in Western Australia.

How will the changes affect you?

The Department of Housing will make changes to some policies, procedures and forms to make sure we comply with changes in the Act. Many will apply to both new and existing tenants, however existing tenants will not need to sign a new tenancy agreement.

Some of the changes to the Act include:

- Tenancy agreements must now be in a specific form.
- Minimum levels of security must be installed in most rental properties.
- New time limits for providing Property Condition Reports.
- New rules around terminating a tenancy when a tenant abandons a property.

Where can I get more information?

If you want more information on the changes to the RTA you can contact the Department of Commerce, (Consumer Protection) on 1300 304 054 or go to www.commerce.wa.gov.au

Staff step up for heatwave help

When Perth broke a 70-year-old hot weather record in December last year, the Department of Housing mobilised to identify tenants at risk from the extreme conditions and provide assistance if required.

The Department is a support agency under the Department of Health's heatwave response plan, which was activated on Thursday, 28 December when temperatures over 40 were predicted for the following three days. From Christmas Day to New Year's Eve some areas of the Southwest saw maximums above 37C for seven consecutive days, with New Year's Day finally providing comparative relief at just 34C.

The Department identified seniors over 80 years of age as the most vulnerable tenants and called for volunteers to work over the weekend to contact them. More than 40 employees volunteered to work through the weekend to staff the call centre.

By Sunday, 30 December, staff had contacted more than 90 per cent of 2,479 tenancies in the most vulnerable group and delivered more than 6,000 flyers carrying Health Department advice to seniors' complexes across the three metropolitan regions and the Wheatbelt.



Staff also visited a number of tenants, referring some with health issues to medical services.

A number of tenants and family members of tenants contacted various media outlets in the days after the heatwave to express their thanks for the efforts of the Department's hard-working staff.

Tenants sign up to restrict drinking

Ten public housing properties in Carnarvon have recently been declared alcohol-free under the Liquor Control Act to assist tenants seeking to reduce disruptive behavior in and around their homes.

The Department of Housing's Area Manager, Natasha Dicks, said nine out of 12 properties in one Gooch Street complex have been declared restricted, along with a detached home in the same street.

"Both the Department and Carnarvon Police believe this is an enormously positive step towards reducing disruptive behaviour," Ms Dicks said. "The Department also has plans to make the common ground at the complex liquor-restricted to further enhance the tenants' ability to control unruly behaviour."

Liquor restrictions trialed in the far north of the state have made a substantial difference by reducing disruptive behaviour.

Trevor Gregory, the Department's Regional Manager for the Midwest-Gascoyne Region, said disruptive behaviour is often associated with abuse of alcohol, and tenants sometimes experience difficulties in controlling visitors to their property.

"In the past twelve months the police have notified us of numerous visits they've made to Gooch Street due to alcohol-related disturbances," Mr Gregory said. "This is of serious concern to the Department and we believe liquor



Senior Sergeant Drew Taylor, left, and Carnarvon Area Manager Natasha Dicks, right, with visitors to a liquor restricted tenancy

restrictions will benefit those tenants who might otherwise be at risk of losing their homes due to further incidents, as well as their neighbours and the Carnarvon Police."

Alcohol restrictions apply to both the interior of the homes and any external areas or buildings. Anyone convicted of bringing liquor onto restricted premises or consuming it there is committing an offence under the act and may be fined up to \$2000.

Changes to your water bill frequency



The Water Corporation is making some changes to their billing procedures. From **1 July 2013** you will start to receive your water bills every two months, instead of every six months. This will make your bills smaller and more manageable by spreading the cost of water

consumption across six smaller bills over a twelve-month period. Tenants serviced by AQWEST in Bunbury or by the Busselton Water Board will continue to receive water bills in line with their provider's current billing cycle.

Why is this changing? The switch to bi-monthly billing makes it easier for people to manage their budget and pay their bills. It will also help you keep track of your water use, detect leaks early and monitor any water efficiency systems you have put in place. The change will also bring the Water Corporation's billing procedures into line with other utilities.

How will this affect me? Other than receiving smaller but more frequent bills, we expect that the changes will benefit you and have no negative financial impact at all. Tenants with a concession will not be affected – you will still receive the same amount of annual concession.

Meter Readings. If a valid reading cannot be obtained from your meter, the Water Corporation will estimate the amount of water you have used, based on your actual water use during a similar period the previous year. If you receive an estimated bill and think it may be incorrect, ask the Water Corporation to review the estimated amount by contacting them on 13 13 85 or online at customer@watercorporation.com.au

Having difficulty paying your bill? If you are unable to pay your water bill in full by the due date, please contact your Housing Services Officer at your local Department of Housing office to negotiate a repayment arrangement.

For more information about the changes to water use billing, refer to the Water Corporation website http://www.watercorporation.com.au/c/changes_to_bill_frequency.cfm

RCD/MCB and Smoke Alarm Testing

The Department of Housing has installed a number of safety devices in your home. These are combined Residual Current Devices/Miniature Circuit Breakers (RCD/MCBs), which provide protection against electrocution and overloading circuits, and smoke alarms.

RCD/MCB TESTING

- Press the **TEST** button on the RCD/MCB; you should hear a click.
- The lever will flip downwards in the 'off' position.
- If the RCD/MCB doesn't flip downwards, you need to contact Housing Direct on **1300 137 677**.
- If the lever does flip downwards, then it works.
- Flip the lever upwards to 'on' and this will turn the power on.

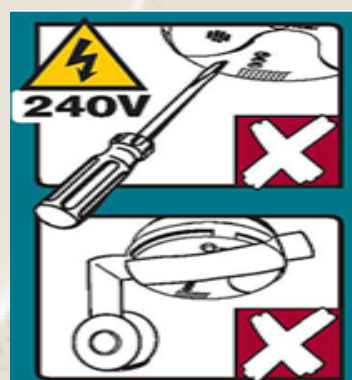


SMOKE ALARM TESTING

- To test your smoke alarm turn your power and light circuits off, press the **TEST** button; you should hear the alarm activate.
- The smoke alarm will automatically reset once the button has been released after testing. If you are unable to reach the test button, please use a broom handle.
- **DO NOT use a screw driver or put tape over the alarm.**
- If you don't hear a sound, contact Housing Direct straight away on **1300 137 677**.
- Once the test is complete, remember to turn your power and light circuits back on.



DO TEST



**DO NOT paint,
remove or cover up**

If you notice a problem with your RCD/MCB or smoke alarm please call **HOUSING DIRECT on 1300 137 677**.