



BEYOND THE LETTERBOX

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Becoming a home owner not just a dream

Long-term renter Leanne lived with the frustration of trying to find affordable housing before discovering that she could afford to buy her own home through the **Opening Doors shared home ownership scheme**.

Leanne is a single working woman who always wanted a place of her own but found saving for her dream impossible with high rents biting into her pay cheque.

"After sharing with a friend for five years I needed to find somewhere else to live," Leanne said.

"Rental properties available were between \$400 and \$600 a week which on my average wage was crippling. At those prices I wouldn't have been able to afford much else after paying the rent."

A friend told Leanne about the Opening Doors program and **SharedStart** loans, so she set about learning as much as she could to realise her dream.

SharedStart home loans were developed by the Department of Housing as part of the Opening Doors shared home ownership scheme offered through **Keystart**. Leanne approached Keystart and completed the appropriate forms to see whether she was eligible for a SharedStart loan.

"Once they determined my eligibility, Keystart did some more number crunching and told me how much I could borrow and what the repayments would be," she said.

"I was amazed that it was going to be so much cheaper than renting."

Opening Doors staff found Leanne a home that matched her needs in a suburb where she was keen to live and at a price she could afford.



Leanne now owns a home that matches her needs, in the suburb where she was keen to live, at a price she could afford.

When she saw the house, Leanne says she fell in love with it and started the mortgage application process straight away.

"It was very exciting. Opening Doors staff helped me no end: they made sure I understood everything and I don't think they could've made the process any simpler," Leanne said.

"I can still live comfortably because the repayments are so manageable. I'd definitely recommend Opening Doors to anyone in the same situation—it's just brilliant!"

Could you become a home owner?

If you become income and/or asset ineligible for public housing, the Department's **Housing Pathways Unit** will assist you with information about your options, which may include community housing, renting privately or buying your own home.

If you would like more information about Keystart's SharedStart loans:

Website: www.keystart.com.au

Phone: 1300 578 278

Comments or feedback?

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



LPG Facility Fee

Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) is the alternative means of gas supply in areas of the state where there is no existing pipeline for natural gas. LPG for household use is usually supplied in the form of 45kg cylinders. Providers of gas services charge their customers for gas consumption and cylinder servicing. The Cylinder Service Charge is also known as the facility fee and is payable either annually or monthly in advance for the maintenance and upkeep of the cylinders.

By agreeing to the provider's Terms and Conditions, the customer enters into an agreement to pay all charges associated with the consumption of gas. Since the facility fee covers the cost of the maintenance due to wear and tear on the cylinders directly resulting from that consumption, the customer is responsible for that cost.



In the past, some providers thought the Department of Housing was responsible for paying the facility fee on behalf of tenants. Other providers did not charge the facility fee to customers occupying public housing properties at all. Both these practices have stopped.

How does this affect me?

If you use LPG cylinders and have always paid the facility fee, nothing will change. If you have not paid the facility fee before, it is now your responsibility. The facility fee is included on the invoice along with the other charges for gas consumption.

How much do I have to pay?

Facility fees can vary between providers and geographic areas. Remember that you are entitled to choose between the providers operating in your area so feel free to shop around for the best price and conditions.

What if I have difficulties paying my account?

It is important to contact your service provider as soon as possible if you are experiencing difficulties paying your account. Ideally, this would be before the due date of your latest invoice.

If you have a query about the facility fee or any other matter related to LPG consumption, please contact your service provider directly.

Service interruptions - Tenants are reminded that they should advise Housing Direct on 1300 137 677 immediately in the event of any interruption to utility services – electricity, gas or water. Tenants are also reminded that they will be in breach of their tenancy agreement if any utility services are disconnected due to non-payment of bills.

Tenancy WA

Tenancy WA is a community legal centre specialising in residential tenancy matters.

The centre was established in 2013 to fill the gap left by the closure of the Tenants Advice Service.

The centre aims to provide two distinct yet interrelated services:

1. Working with and on behalf of tenants to improve their ability to maintain successful tenancies and resolve their own tenancy issues.
2. Providing resources and support to the statewide network of advocates.

To achieve these aims, the centre provides free, quality legal services including information, advice, casework, representation, referrals, community legal education and training plus law and policy reform advocacy.

They are committed to providing services that are physically, financially, geographically and culturally accessible.

To receive free advice and assistance please call:

Metropolitan 9221 0088 or

Country 1800 621 888 (free call)

The advice line is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm (except public holidays).

Make sure you have the following items before you call:

- Pen and paper
- Any relevant documents, such as the tenancy agreement, any notices you may have received and any correspondence between you and the landlord. If you can't locate this information, they can advise you about getting the information you need.

For more information on common tenancy topics, see the fact sheets on the Tenancy WA website www.tenancywa.org.

Heating Your Home Safely With Gas

What type of gas heater do I have and why does it matter?

There are two types of gas heaters, flued and unflued. A flued gas heater has a flue or chimney that vents the emissions outside your house. An unflued gas heater has no flue or chimney and instead releases the emissions into your room.

How can I use my flued or unflued gas heater safely?

There are some safety tips unique to the type of gas heater you use.

Flued gas heaters:

- Where a flued gas heater is used the flue will lead from the heater through the wall. On the outside wall where the flue terminates it will be surrounded by a metal cage. This cage **MUST** be kept clear of all flammable materials including trees and shrubs.

Unflued gas heaters:

- The room should have two air vents (one high and one low) in the wall, door or ceiling to encourage airflow.
- The air vents must remain unobstructed.
- An unflued gas heater should be used for a minimal time.

Are there any other gas heater usage tips I should know about?

Regardless of what type of gas heater you use here are some operating, cleaning and safety tips:

- Never clean your heater when it is hot or still in operation. Use a damp cloth and don't use solvents such as mineral turps, which can melt or distort the plastic cabinets.
- Turn your heater off when you leave the house or go to sleep. This will also save you money.
- Do not lie down directly in front of the heater.
- Ensure that flammable and combustible materials do not come in contact with the heater.
- Do not place articles, such as pyjamas, on or near the heater.
- Ensure that no objects are placed on or against the heater.
- Children should be supervised at all times when the heater is turned on.

- If the heater won't light, for models connected to mains power check that the power is switched on and for battery ignition models check the heater's battery.

Further tips for unflued gas heaters can be found on the Commonwealth Department of Health website:

<http://www.health.gov.au/>

If there is no gas heater where you live, you can apply for one at your local housing office. Your request will be assessed on medical/disability needs and will be subject to waiting times. If you meet the Department's requirements and a gas heater becomes available, you will be required to sign a Room Heater Hire Agreement and pay an ongoing hire fee. These requirements don't apply if you are a senior living in a designated seniors' property.

If you decide to buy your own heater, which will involve structural changes to the property, you must obtain permission from the Department before it is installed by a qualified person.

You will be responsible for the costs involved in installing and maintaining your own flued or unflued gas heater during your tenancy, as well as removing it when you vacate.

If you are concerned about your Department of Housing heater, call Housing Direct on 1300 137 677.



Safety device testing

The Department of Housing has installed a number of safety devices in your home.

The first one is a combined Residual Current Device/Miniature Circuit Breaker (RCD/ MCB), which provides protection against electrocution and the overloading of all circuits in the property.

The second is a smoke alarm, which alerts you to smoke presence in the property.

How to test your RCD/MCB

- 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.



How to test your smoke alarm

- To test your smoke alarm turn your power off at the mains. Press the **TEST** button on your smoke alarm (as illustrated); 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 back on at the mains.



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.