



Offices: 102 North Road
Postal Address: PO Box 484, ALBANY WA 6331
Phone: (08) 9841 9333
Fax: (08) 9841 4099
Email: staff@albany.wa.gov.au
Synergy Reference No: NIS099322

LIVING IN SHEDS

Living in a shed is often seen as a cost effective option to escape the rent trap and occupy land while planning or building a house. However this is not the most cost effective option and residents can fall into the trap of a temporary home becoming permanent. The plan may be to live in the shed while building a house, but circumstances change and the money spent on the site works and making the shed comfortable could result in never making a start on a new house.

Can I live in a shed?

No, it is illegal to occupy a shed, garage or Temporary Accommodation for residential purposes on a permanent basis. Residential buildings require a higher standard of construction than sheds.

In brief, Temporary Accommodation is only permitted in a caravan or similar small transportable structure (e.g. donga), on properties zoned Rural or Special Rural, and where the applicant must be an owner builder with a current building licence. A further information sheet titled Temporary Accommodation which provides other criteria and further information along with an application form is available from the Council.

Why live in a shed?

The construction cost of building a small house compares favourably with the cost of building a shed and then converting it for temporary occupation. The cost of establishing a temporary kitchen, bathroom, laundry and toilet facilities are significant costs when initially setting up.

Sheds are typically too hot in summer or too cold in winter and can be uncomfortable, dusty and difficult to seal against insects and vermin. It makes better financial sense to build a small house in the first instance, as the finished value of a house will far exceed the value of a shed set up for temporary occupation.

How do I build a small house?

The design of the house can be the minimum floor area required for residential occupation e.g.

a single room with a separate wet/bath room (either attached or partitioned within). The property should be capable of being easily extended, and could be constructed of material that might differ from the external finish of your future dwelling (ie Colourbond, to be eventually finished in brick veneer). It is expected that the small house be extended or built on to, to provide the main dwelling in the future, and therefore careful consideration of its location is strongly advised.

The minimum facilities required are a kitchen & stove, bath or shower, washtub and space for a machine, water closet & basin. A small house could be later converted into a bedroom, or possibly additional accommodation as part of the main dwelling, by removing the kitchen and/or laundry facilities.

How do I apply for a second dwelling on my property?

In most cases only one dwelling is permitted per lot. Therefore the original dwelling must be either completely demolished/removed, or converted to an outbuilding (size permitting under the outbuildings policy) before Council can approve a further dwelling on the lot. These works will need to be undertaken before a Planning Scheme Consent is approved with the site/structure needing to be inspected by a Council officer.

To convert a dwelling to an outbuilding all of the internal fixtures and fittings must be removed, including internal walls, wall linings, insulation and floor/wall coverings. The only exceptions permitted will be one wet room/area that may include a toilet, a shower and a wash basin. The main electrical wiring system may remain where proved safe and acceptable to do so, however all domestic electrical items (such as cookers, additional electrical showers, music/entertainment systems etc) must be removed.

Can I live in my old dwelling while I build my new one?

No, even if the structure has the appearance of a shed/outbuilding it is in fact a dwelling, and in most cases Council cannot approve two dwellings on the one lot. Similarly it cannot be considered as ancillary accommodation, as this cannot be approved if there is no main dwelling on the property, i.e. it must be constructed or approved as such after the main dwelling is occupied.

If you wish to live on the lot during construction you must apply for and fulfil, the Temporary Accommodation criteria.

**** DISCLAIMER ****

This information sheet is a guide only. Verification with original Local Laws, Acts, Planning Schemes, and other relevant documents is recommended for detailed references. The City of Albany accepts no responsibility for errors or omissions.

© City of Albany, 2009