Tenant Information Statement

What you must know before you start renting

Starting a tenancy

Landlords or agents must give tenants this **Tenant Information Statement** before signing a residential tenancy agreement.

You should read this information statement carefully before you sign a residential tenancy agreement. Ask questions if there is anything in the agreement that you do not understand. Remember, you are entering into a legal contract with no cooling-off period. You want to be certain you understand and agree to what you are signing.

The landlord or agent must:

- ensure the property is vacant, reasonably clean, fit to live in and in good repair at the start of the tenancy
- provide and maintain the property in a reasonable state of repair
- meet health and safety laws (e.g. pool fencing, electrical installations, smoke alarms, window and balcony safety)
- ensure the property is reasonably secure
- respect your privacy and follow entry and notice requirements.

When renting you must:

- pay the rent on time
- keep the property reasonably clean and undamaged and leave it in the same condition it was in when you moved in (fair wear and tear excepted)
- not use the property for anything illegal
- follow the terms of the tenancy agreement
- respect your neighbours' right to peace, comfort and privacy.

What you must be told before you sign an agreement

Sometimes a rental property has something in its history that you should know before you sign an agreement.

The landlord or agent **must tell** you if the property is:

- planned to be sold
- subject to court proceedings where the mortgagee is trying to take possession of the property
- in a strata scheme and a strata renewal committee is currently established for the strata scheme.

The landlord or agent **must tell** you if they are aware that the property:

- has been subject to flooding from a natural weather event or bushfire in the last 5 years
- has significant health or safety risks (unless obvious to a reasonable person when the property is inspected)
- has been the scene of a serious violent crime (e.g. murder or aggravated assault) in the last 5 years
- is listed on the loose-fill asbestos insulation register
- has been used to manufacture or cultivate a prohibited drug or prohibited plant in the last 2 years
- is part of a building where a fire safety or building product rectification order (or a notice of intention to issue one of these orders) has been issued regarding external combustible cladding
- is part of a building where a development or complying development certificate application for rectification has been lodged regarding external combustible cladding
- is in a strata scheme where scheduled rectification work or major repairs will be carried out to common property during the fixed term of the agreement

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- is affected by zoning or laws that will not allow you to obtain a parking permit, and only paid parking is available in the area
- is provided with any council waste services that are different to other properties in the council area
- has a driveway or walkway that others can legally use.

Penalties apply to landlords or agents if any of the above are not disclosed.

What you must be given before you sign an agreement

Before you sign an agreement or move into the property, the landlord or agent **must give** you:

- a copy of this Tenant Information Statement
- a copy of the proposed tenancy agreement, filled out in the spaces provided
- 2 hard copies, or 1 electronic copy, of the condition report for the property completed by the landlord or agent
- a copy of the by-laws, if the property is in a strata scheme.

What you must be given at the time you sign an agreement

At the time you sign the agreement, the landlord or agent **must give you**:

- for any swimming or spa pools on the property, a valid certificate of compliance or occupation certificate (issued within the last 3 years). This does not apply if you are renting a property in a strata or community scheme that has more than 2 lots.

Before or at the start of the tenancy

The landlord or agent **must give** you:

- the key (or other opening device or information) to open any lock, including other security devices, for the rented property or common property, at no cost to you or any tenant named in the agreement.

The **only** costs you can be asked to pay are:

- a holding fee (deposit) of no more than 1 weeks' rent
- up to 2 weeks' rent in advance
- up to 4 weeks' rent for the rental bond
- for agreements of 3 years or more – a fee for registering with NSW Land Registry.

The property must be fit to live in

The property must be reasonably clean, fit to live in and in a reasonable state of repair. To be fit to live in, the property must (at a minimum):

1. be structurally sound
2. have adequate natural or artificial lighting in each room, except storage rooms or garages
3. have adequate ventilation
4. be supplied with electricity or gas, and have enough electricity or gas sockets for lighting, heating and other appliances
5. have adequate plumbing and drainage
6. have a water connection that can supply hot and cold water for drinking, washing and cleaning
7. have bathroom facilities, including toilet and washing facilities, that allow users privacy.

The property could have other issues that may make it unfit for you to live in, even if it meets the above 7 minimum standards. Before you rent the property, you should tell the landlord or agent to take steps (such as make repairs) to make sure the property is fit to live in.

Residential tenancy agreement

The tenancy agreement is a legal agreement. It must include certain terms that cannot be changed or removed. It may also include additional terms. Verbal agreements are still binding on you and the landlord.

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Condition report

You should have already received a copy of the condition report, completed by the landlord or agent, before you signed the agreement. This is an important piece of evidence and you should take the time to check the condition of the property at the start of the tenancy. If you do not complete the report accurately, money could be taken out of your bond (after you move out) to pay for damage that was already there when you moved in.

You must complete and give a copy of the condition report to your landlord or agent **within 7 days** after moving into the property. You must also keep a copy of the completed report.

Rent, receipts and records

Rent is a regular payment you make to the landlord to be able to live in the property. You cannot be asked to pay more than 2 weeks' rent in advance. Your landlord or agent cannot demand more rent until it is due.

Your landlord or agent can serve you with a 14 days termination notice if you are more than 14 days behind with the rent.

Your landlord or agent must:

- give you rent receipts (unless rent is paid into a bank account)
- keep a record of rent you pay
- give you a copy of the rent record within 7 days of your written request for it.

Rental bonds

The bond is money you may have to pay at the start of the tenancy as security. It must be in the form of money and not as a guarantee. Your landlord or agent can only ask for 1 bond for a tenancy agreement. The bond cannot be more than 4 weeks rent. If the landlord agrees, you can pay the bond in instalments. Each tenant's contribution to the bond must be recorded on the residential tenancy agreement.

Your landlord or agent must give you the option to pay your bond using Rental Bonds Online (RBO). You can use RBO 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.

If you decide not to use RBO, you can ask your agent or landlord for a paper bond lodgement form for you to sign, so that it can be lodged with NSW Fair Trading. The landlord must deposit any bond you pay them with NSW Fair Trading within 10 working days. If the bond is paid to the agent, the agent must deposit the bond with NSW Fair Trading within 10 working days after the end of the month in which the bond was paid.

Discrimination when applying for rental property

It is against the law for a landlord or agent to discriminate on the grounds of your race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or pregnancy.

If you feel that a landlord or agent has declined your tenancy application or has treated you less favourably because of any of those reasons, you can contact the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board on 1800 670 812 or the Australian Human Rights Commission on 1300 656 419.

It is not against the law if a landlord or agent chooses not to have a tenant who smokes, or has a poor tenancy history or issues with rent payments.

Communicating with your landlord or agent

Your landlord must provide you with their name and a way for you to contact them directly, even if your landlord has an agent.

This information must be given to you in writing before or when you sign the tenancy agreement, or it can be included in the agreement you sign. Your landlord must also let you know, in writing, within 14 days of any changes to their details.

Some formal communication between you and the landlord or agent must be in writing to be valid, for example, termination notices. You can use email to serve notices or other documents but only if the landlord or agent has given you permission to use their nominated email address for this purpose.

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During the tenancy

Ways you can pay your rent

Your landlord or agent **must** allow you to pay your rent by:

- Electronic bank transfer (such as a funds transfer or BPAY)
- Commonwealth Government's Centrepay.

You may incur costs from your own bank, but your landlord or agent cannot charge or pass on any additional costs incurred by them if you pay your rent by one of the above options. You also **cannot** be required to use a specific service provider (such as an app) to make your payments.

Your landlord or agent can offer other ways for you to pay your rent, but you do not have to agree to these.

Can rent be increased during the tenancy?

Your rent cannot be increased in the first 12 months of your tenancy. After the first year, your landlord or agent can only increase the rent once in every 12-month period, even if your agreement is renewed or your lease type changes. This requirement continues even if the agreement is renewed or replaced as long as:

- the landlord and at least one tenant remains the same in both agreements
- the tenant hasn't moved out between agreements.

You must be given at least 60 days written notice before your rent can be increased.

Paying for electricity, gas and water usage

You may have to pay the cost for certain utilities as set out in the agreement. For example, you will pay for all:

- electricity, non-bottled gas or oil supply charges if the property is separately metered. Some exceptions apply for electricity or gas
- charges for the supply of bottled gas during the tenancy.

There are limits on when you need to pay for water usage charges. You can only be asked to pay for water usage **if** the property is separately metered (or water is delivered by vehicle) and meets the following water efficiency measures:

- all showerheads have a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute
- all internal cold-water taps and single mixer taps for kitchen sinks or bathroom hand basins have a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute
- any leaking taps or toilets on the property are fixed at the start of the agreement and whenever other water efficiency measures are installed, repaired or upgraded
- toilets are dual flush and have a minimum 3-star WELS rating.

Repairs and maintenance

The property must always be fit for you to live in. The landlord is responsible for any repairs or maintenance, so the property is in a reasonable state of repair. They must also ensure the property meets health and safety laws.

You are responsible for looking after the property and keeping it clean and undamaged. If the property includes a yard, lawns and gardens, you must also keep these areas neat and tidy.

You need to tell your landlord or the agent of any necessary repairs or damage as soon as possible. The landlord is responsible for arranging and paying for the repair costs unless you caused or allowed the damage. You are not responsible for damage to the property if the damage happened because of domestic abuse and you were not the alleged perpetrator of the domestic abuse.

If the repair is an **urgent repair** e.g. where there is a burst water service, a blocked or broken toilet, a gas leak or dangerous electrical fault, your landlord or agent should organise these repairs as soon as reasonably possible after being notified. If they do not respond to an urgent repair request, you can arrange the repair yourself and the landlord must repay you up to a maximum amount of $1,000 within 14 days of you requesting payment in writing. A list of **urgent repairs** is available at nsw.gov.au/housing-and-construction/rules/urgent-repairs-residential-rental-properties.

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You can apply to NSW Fair Trading for a rectification order if your landlord refuses or does not provide and maintain the property in a reasonable state of repair. Similarly, your landlord can apply to NSW Fair Trading for a rectification order if you do not repair damage you have caused or allowed. You can also apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the Tribunal) for an order if your landlord does not carry out repairs.

Smoke alarms must be working

Landlords must ensure that smoke alarms are installed on all levels of the property. Your landlord must maintain the smoke alarms in your property to ensure they are working.

You should notify your landlord or agent if a smoke alarm is not working. They are responsible for repairing (including replacing a battery) or replacing a smoke alarm within 2 business days after they become aware that it is not working.

You can choose to replace a removable battery if it needs replacing, but you must notify the landlord if and when you do this. You are not responsible for maintaining, repairing or replacing a smoke alarm. However, there are some circumstances where you can arrange for a smoke alarm to be repaired or replaced.

Privacy and access

You have the right to reasonable peace, comfort and privacy when renting. Tenancy laws restrict when and how often your landlord, agent or other authorised person can enter the property during the tenancy. Your landlord, agent or authorised person can enter the property without your consent in certain circumstances if proper notice (if applicable) is provided, for example:

- in an emergency, no notice is necessary
- if the Tribunal orders that access is allowed
- to carry out, or assess the need for, necessary repairs or maintenance of the property, if you have been given at least 2 days' notice
- to carry out urgent repairs, no notice is necessary
- to carry out repairs or replacement of a smoke alarm, if you have been given at least 1 hours' notice
- to inspect or assess the need for repair or replacement of a smoke alarm, if you have been given at least 2 business days' notice
- to carry out a general inspection of the property if you have been given at least 7 days' written notice (no more than 4 inspections are allowed during a 12-month period).

Publication of photographs or video recordings of the property

If the landlord or agent wants to take photos or videos of the inside or outside of the property for advertising or publishing, they must give you at least 7 days' notice and a reasonable opportunity to move your belongings out of the frame.

If your belongings, or your dependent child's belongings, are visible in the photos or videos, the landlord or agent must give you a copy of the photo or video free of charge and get your written consent before publishing them. If there is more than one tenant, each tenant must give written consent.

The landlord or agent must ask for your consent each time they start a new sale or rental advertising campaign. They cannot ask for your consent more than 3 weeks before the property is first advertised for that campaign.

You cannot unreasonably refuse consent. However, you can refuse consent if publishing the photos or videos could expose you or your dependent child to domestic abuse.

Changing locks, including other security devices

In most cases, locks and other security devices can only be changed if both you and the landlord agree.

You may be able to change a lock without the landlord's agreement in some situations, including where:

- there is an emergency
- if the Tribunal allows it
- if someone is legally banned from accessing the property, or
- you reasonably believe the lock change is necessary to protect you, your child, or another person living at the property from domestic abuse.

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If you change a lock without the landlord's agreement, you must generally use a locksmith. However, this does not apply if the lock is changed in an emergency or you have a reasonable excuse.

If you change the locks without the landlord's agreement, there are timeframes for giving keys to the landlord and any co-tenants. You do not have to give a key to a co-tenant who is legally prohibited from accessing the property.

How to keep a pet on the property

You can request to keep a pet on the property by filling out a pet application form and giving it to your landlord or agent. Your landlord or agent must respond within 21 days of receiving the form. If they don't respond within this time, you can keep the pet.

Landlords or agents can only refuse consent for a pet if:

- there would be more than four animals on the property, and the number of animals is unreasonable
- the property is not suitable for the animal due to fencing, lack of open space or because it will harm the animal's welfare
- the animal is very likely to cause more damage than could be repaired using the bond
- the landlord lives at the property
- keeping the animal would break other laws, local council rules, strata or community scheme by-laws, or a residential community rule
- you did not agree to a reasonable condition on keeping the animal on the property.

There are limits on what kinds of conditions a landlord or agent can set for your pet. For example, landlords or agents cannot require an increased bond or rent as a condition. Acceptable conditions may include requiring professional carpet cleaning and pest control.

If you disagree with the landlord or agent's decision or believe the condition for consent was unreasonable, you can apply to the Tribunal to challenge this.

However, if you live in purpose-built student accommodation, your landlord can refuse a pet without a specific reason.

How to make 'minor' changes to the property

You can only make minor changes to the property with your landlord's written consent, or if the agreement allows it. Your landlord can only refuse your request if it is reasonable to do so e.g. if the work involves structural changes or is inconsistent with the nature of the property.

There are certain types of 'minor' changes where it would be unreasonable for your landlord to refuse consent. For example:

- secure furniture to a non-tiled wall for safety reasons
- fit a childproof latch to an outdoor gate in a single dwelling
- insert fly screens on windows
- install or replace internal window covering (e.g. curtains)
- install cleats or cord guides to secure blind or curtain cords
- install child safety gates inside the property
- install window safety devices for child safety (non-strata only)
- install hand-held shower heads or lever-style taps to assist elderly or disabled occupants
- install or replace hooks, nails or screws for hanging pictures etc.
- install a phone line or internet connection • plant vegetables, flowers, herbs or shrubs in the garden • install wireless removable outdoor security camera
- apply shatter-resistant film to window or glass doors
- make changes that don't penetrate a surface, or permanently modify a surface, fixture or structure of the property.

Some exceptions apply. The landlord can also require that certain minor changes be carried out by a qualified person.

You will be responsible for paying for the changes and for any damage you cause to the property. Certain rules apply for removing any modifications at the end of the tenancy.

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Your rights in circumstances of domestic violence

Every person has the right to feel safe and live free from domestic abuse. If you or your dependent child is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing domestic abuse in a rental property, there are options available to you to support your safety.

1800RESPECT is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence. Call 1800 737 732 or visit 1800respect.org.au.

Ending a tenancy due to domestic abuse

If you or your dependent child needs to leave the property to escape violence, you can end your tenancy immediately and without penalty. To do this, you need to give your landlord or agent a domestic violence termination notice and attach evidence. More information on ending a tenancy in circumstances of domestic abuse is provided in the 'Ending the tenancy' section below.

If you want to stay in the property

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and want to stay in the property, you can apply to the Tribunal to be listed as the tenant (if you are an occupant), or to remove the alleged perpetrator from the tenancy agreement (if they are a co-tenant).

You may also be able to change locks without your landlord's agreement. See 'Changing locks, including other security devices'.

Property damage caused by domestic abuse

You and any other tenants who are not the alleged perpetrator are not liable for property damage if the damage was caused by domestic abuse.

More information about dealing with domestic violence in a rental property is available on nsw.gov.au/renting-domestic-violence.

Photos and videos of the property

Your landlord or agent must get your written consent before publishing photos or visual recordings of the property that show your or your dependent child's belongings. This applies to photos and videos taken inside and outside the property, including areas such as yards, driveways or balconies where belongings may be seen.

You cannot unreasonably refuse consent. However, you can refuse consent if you have either provided evidence of domestic abuse, or you reasonably fear that publishing the photos or videos could expose you or your dependent child to domestic abuse.

Tenancy database listings

Your landlord or agent must not list information about you on a tenancy database if you have given them evidence of domestic abuse that could be used to end a tenancy, even if you did not use that evidence to end your tenancy.

Ending the tenancy

Termination notice must be given

A tenancy agreement is a legally binding agreement that can only be ended in certain ways. A tenancy will usually be ended by you or your landlord giving notice to the other party and you vacating on or by the date specified in the notice.

If you are ending a tenancy, you need to give the landlord or agent a written termination notice with the applicable notice period. In some cases, you can apply directly to the Tribunal for a termination order without issuing a termination notice (for example if you are experiencing hardship).

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If your landlord or agent is ending a tenancy, they need to give you a written termination notice in most cases. The notice must include the reason for ending the tenancy. The amount of notice you must be given will depend on the reason used. A **Termination Information Statement** must be provided with the termination notice.

If you do not leave by the date specified in the termination notice, the landlord or agent can apply to the Tribunal for termination and possession orders. If you do not comply with the Tribunal order, a Sheriff's Officer can legally remove you from the property under a warrant for possession.

You cannot be locked out of your home under any circumstances unless a Sheriff's Officer is enforcing a warrant for possession issued by the Tribunal or a court.

If you are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, contact **Link2home** on 1800 152 152. This is the NSW statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Ending a tenancy in circumstances of domestic abuse

If you or your dependent child are in circumstances of domestic abuse, you can end your tenancy immediately and without penalty. To do this you must give your landlord a domestic violence termination notice and attach evidence. There is no minimum notice period.

This notice does not need to be given in person. No minimum notice period applies to a domestic violence termination notice, but it must include a termination date that is on or after the day the notice is given.

Your landlord or agent will notify any remaining co-tenants that you have served a domestic violence termination notice within 7 days after the termination date.

More information about ending a tenancy due to domestic violence is available on nsw.gov.au/renting-domestic-violence.

Break fee for ending a fixed term agreement early

If you decide to end a fixed term agreement early, and the agreement is for 3 years or less, you will need to pay a break fee. The amount of the break fee will depend on how far into your lease you are when you end it. For example, the fee will be:

- 4 weeks rent if you are less than 25% through the term of your lease
- 3 weeks rent if you are at least 25% but less than halfway through the term of your lease
- 2 weeks rent if you are at least halfway but less than 75% through the term of your lease
- 1 weeks rent if you are at least 75% through the term of your lease.

The break fee does not apply if you end the agreement early for certain reasons allowed under the Act, such as when you or your dependent child are in circumstances of domestic violence.

The break fee also does not apply if your landlord gives you a termination notice, and you decide to leave before the termination date. However, to do this you must give the landlord an early exit notice with the date you will leave, and give at least 14 days' notice before you move out.

Getting the rental bond returned

You should receive the bond in full at the end of the tenancy unless there is a reason for the landlord to make a claim against the bond. The landlord can claim the bond if:

- rent or other charges (e.g. unpaid water usage bills, break fee) are owing
- copies of the keys were not given back and the locks needed to be changed
- you caused damage or did not leave the property in a reasonably clean condition compared to the original condition report, apart from 'fair wear and tear'.

You are not liable for fair wear and tear to the property that occurs over time with the use of the property, even when the property receives reasonable care and maintenance.

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The condition report can be used to compare the state of the property at the start and end of the tenancy.

You are not liable for damage that has been caused by domestic abuse if you are not the alleged perpetrator of the domestic abuse.

You may apply to the Tribunal to make an order about the payment of a rental bond between co-tenants. The application must be made within 6 months after the day the tenancy ends.

Checklist

You should only sign the agreement when you can answer **Yes** to the following.

The tenancy agreement

- ☐ I have read the agreement and asked questions if there were things I did not understand.
- ☐ I understand the fixed term of the agreement is negotiated before I sign, which means it can be for 6 months, 12 months, or some other period.
- ☐ I understand that any additional terms to the agreement can be negotiated before I sign.
- ☐ I have checked that all additional terms to the agreement are allowed and any terms relating to pets are reasonable conditions.

Promised repairs

For any promises the landlord or agent makes to fix anything (e.g. replace the oven, etc.) or do other work (e.g. paint a room, clean up the backyard, etc.):

- ☐ I have made sure these have already been done or
- ☐ I have a statement in writing (before signing the agreement) that they will be done.

Upfront costs

- ☐ I can **only** be asked to pay:
  - — no more than 2 weeks rent in advance
  - — no more than 4 weeks rent as a rental bond
  - — no more than 1 weeks rent as a holding fee (deposit)
  - — a fee for registering the agreement with NSW Land Registry (if 3 years or more).
- ☐ I am **not** being charged any other costs, including:
  - — the cost of preparing the tenancy agreement
  - — the initial supply of keys and other opening devices to each tenant named in the agreement.

Top tips for problem-free renting

Some useful tips to help avoid problems when renting:

- Keep a copy of your agreement, condition report, rent receipts, Rental Bond Number and copies of letters/ emails you send or receive in a safe place where you can easily find them later.
- Photos are a great way to record the condition of the property when you first move in. Take date-stamped photos of the property, especially areas that are damaged or unclean. Keep these photos in case the landlord objects to returning your bond at the end of your tenancy.
- Comply with the terms of your agreement and never stop paying your rent, even if you don't think the landlord is complying with their side of the agreement (e.g. by failing to do repairs). You could end up being evicted if you do.
- Never make any changes to the property, or let other people move in without asking the landlord or agent for permission first.

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- Keep a written record of your dealings with the landlord or agent (for example by keeping copies of emails or a diary record of your conversations, including the times and dates, who you spoke to and what they agreed to do). It is helpful to have any agreements in writing, for example requests for repairs. This is a useful record and can also assist if there is a dispute.
- Consider taking out home contents insurance to cover your belongings in case of theft, fires and natural disasters. The landlord's building insurance, if they have it, will not cover your belongings.
- If the property has a pool or garden, be clear about what the landlord or agent expects you to do to maintain them.
- Be careful with what you sign relating to your tenancy and do not let anybody rush you. Never sign a blank form, such as a 'Claim for refund of bond' form.

More information

Visit nsw.gov.au/renting or call 13 32 20 for more information about your renting rights and responsibilities. The NSW Government funds a range of community-based Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services across NSW to provide advice, information and advocacy to tenants. Visit the Tenants' Union website at tenants.org.au.

Contact us
T: 13 32 20 W: nsw.gov.au/fair-trading For language assistance, call 13 14 50 (*ask for an interpreter in your language*)

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