



Updated May 2018

Targeted Assistance Strategy Factsheet - Some tips for tenants

What should I do if I cannot pay my rent?

What do I do if I can't pay my rent on time?

Your rent will be in arrears if you have not paid on the due date, or you have paid less than the amount you owe.

If your rent is unpaid for 7 days, your landlord or agent may be able to take legal action, so it is important that you deal with the situation as soon as possible.

The first thing you should do if you cannot make a rental payment is contact the landlord or agent as soon as possible and talk to them about the situation. Establishing and keeping a positive relationship with your landlord or agent is your best chance of maintaining your tenancy.

If you are unable to pay off the arrears in one payment, you may be able to reach an agreement to pay off the amount over time, for example you could offer to pay an extra amount per week. Do not offer more than you can afford, as this could possibly lead to other problems.

Make an offer in writing, and sign, date and keep a copy. If the landlord or agent agrees with the offer, get this agreement in writing if possible.

Remember that your landlord or agent is required to recover arrears under the terms of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. These can be found in the Standard Lease Agreement. Copies of the Agreement can be found at www.tenantsact.org.au.

Where can I seek help?

It's important to act quickly and as openly as possible – don't wait and think that the problem will go away. The longer you put off dealing with your debts, the harder it will be to sort things out.

The following organisations may be able to help you, or get you in touch with other people who can.

ACT Government [www.assistance.act.gov.au]

A "one stop shop" website is available to find out what assistance and advice you may be eligible for. Visit the ACT Government Assistance website at www.assistance.act.gov.au.

The Renting Book [www.ors.act.gov.au]

This book is a guide for all tenants, property owners and agents involved in renting residential property in the ACT. It aims to explain in simple language your rights and responsibilities under residential tenancy laws.

Enquiries about this publication should be directed to the ACT Office of Regulatory Services on (02) 6207 3000.

Care Financial Counselling Services Inc [www.carefcs.org]

In order to make a realistic offer to pay your rental debt you need to have worked out your budget. Care Financial Counselling Services Inc can provide you with information about options that may be available to you if you are in debt, and help you assess your current financial position.

Care may be able to refer you to other organisations that can assist you with resolving your situation. You can contact Care on (02) 6257 1788 from 9am – 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Supportive Tenancy Service

The Supportive Tenancy Service (STS) works with people whose tenancy is at risk (Tenancy Support) or who are facing barriers in establishing a private tenancy (Housing Options). STS can provide support, information and advocacy to assist you in addressing tenancy and related issues, and can refer you to other services for specialist legal or financial advice.

You can contact STS via OneLink: 1800 176 468, www.onelink.org.au.

Tenants Advice Service [www.tenantsact.org.au]

A tenancy agreement is a legally binding contract between you and your landlord or agent, and being unable to pay rent may have serious legal consequences that you need to be aware of. You may need help understanding your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

The Tenants Advice Service can provide legal advice and help you understand how the relevant laws apply to your current circumstances. Detailed information can be accessed at their website, including a factsheet on rent arrears.

To access this service, leave a message on the dedicated Advice Line on (02) 6247 2011 which is open between 10.00 and 11:30 on weekday mornings. An advice worker will call you back as soon as possible.

What can I do if I am about to become homeless?

If you are currently homeless, or if you feel that you are at risk of having nowhere to live, please contact one of the following organisations as soon as possible.

Centrelink

You can get help from a Community Engagement Officer if you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Community Engagement Officers can help you get income support and other services, and refer you to other sources of help that are available.

You can call 132 468 or visit a Department of Human Services Centre (DHS).

First Point [www.firstpoint.org.au]

First Point is a free phone service for Canberrans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to find services that meet their needs.

First Point is a central intake service, meaning it is the single and only access point for you to find support in the homelessness support system. One free phone call quickly and easily matches you to the best available resources.

First Point are available on 1800 176 468, Monday to Friday 9am-7pm and Saturday 10am-1pm.

Streetlaw [www.streetlaw.org.au/street-law.html]

Street Law will assist people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless by providing a free legal service and by connecting clients with other services.

Streetlaw can be contacted on 6218 7995, 1800 787 529 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or email info@streetlaw.org.au.