

Updated February 2016

## How do I find a place to live?

### Where do I look?

- The real estate section of The Canberra Times on a Wednesday and Saturday.
- [www.allhomes.com.au](http://www.allhomes.com.au) and [www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au) have comprehensive listings updated regularly.
- The Tenants Union has a fact sheet Finding Somewhere to Live available on their website [www.tenantsact.org.au](http://www.tenantsact.org.au) which lists a number of other sites.
- If you know that you are going to looking for a new place to live, then don't leave it to the last minute. It can take longer than you expect to find a private rental property.

### How do I apply for a property?

- Firstly consider whether the property has features that are right for you. Can you afford the rent being asked? What sort of condition is the property in? Does it have adequate heating, cooling, cooking and laundry facilities? You can find a checklist at [www.tenantsact.org.au/](http://www.tenantsact.org.au/).
- Many agents require you to complete an application form prior to inspecting the rental property. Some agents have forms on their websites, or will request that you express interest by phone before completing a form. Generally you should have the form filled out before the inspection.
- Private landlords less frequently use application forms, but will inform you of what information they require.
- Ensure you provide photocopies of your identification. Most agents will not process your application without the required number of points of identification.
- Take your time to complete all sections of the application neatly.
- If you are unemployed and looking for work, write "currently seeking employment". If you are a mother or father at home full time write "home duties".
- You will generally be asked to provide references. Ensure the phone numbers are correct and ask your referees to expect a call from the agent. Some people who may make good referees if you don't have a previous landlord may include your employer, employment agency, teacher or an employed friend.
- If you have them, provide written references and copies of previous rent payments.
- If you don't understand something ask someone to clarify it for you.

- A landlord cannot refuse an application for private rental because of sexuality, gender, disability, race, children, pregnancy, age or marital status. If you believe you have been refused to be considered for a property for any of these reasons you can lodge a complaint with the ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commission at [www.hrc.act.gov.au](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au) or contact (02) 6205 2222.

## How should I prepare for the property inspection?

- It's worth keeping in mind that owners and agents are looking for a tenant who will look after the property and pay rent on time.
- As a guide to what you may want to wear, perhaps treat the inspection like a job interview, or an occasion when you want to make a good impression. Everyone is different but most people will expect that you are neatly presented.
- Introduce yourself to the property manager or the owner. Ask to inspect the property and hand them your completed application form, identification and references.
- Make sure you look through the property carefully. If any maintenance needs to be done, ask if these will be repaired before you move in. Make sure any agreed maintenance to be done gets noted on the property condition report.
- Know your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Make list of questions. Ask whether you can negotiate the length of lease and the dates you move in and out of the property. You can find more information at [www.tenantsact.org.au/](http://www.tenantsact.org.au/).
- Always be punctual for appointments, and do not take too many other people with you. At the end thank the agent or the owner for their time.

## How much will it cost?

- Consider what you can afford to pay in rent after taking into account other bills and costs associated with running a household. You can find information on budgeting at [www.tenantsact.org.au/](http://www.tenantsact.org.au/).
- You will need to look at the weekly rent being asked for a property and then be prepared to pay up to six times this amount at the start of the tenancy. This is because you will need to pay a bond (up to 4 weeks rent) as well as two to four weeks rent in advance.
- If you need assistance with paying this up front you may be eligible for an interest free bond loan if you are a low or moderate income earner. You can contact Housing ACT on 133427 or find further information at [www.communityservives.act.gov.au](http://www.communityservives.act.gov.au).
- You also may be eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance which gives extra financial help to people who pay rent for their accommodation and receive a Centrelink payment. You can ring 132 468 or find more information at [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/rent-assistance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/rent-assistance).
- You may find it more convenient to have your rent paid on a regular basis directly to your agent using Centrepay or directly from your bank account. This way you don't have to remember to pay your rent every fortnight, or make a trip to visit your agent.
- You need to factor in the cost of moving between houses as it can be very expensive. You need to take into account paying rent on two properties for at least a couple of days and most likely longer.

- If there is a dispute about your previous bond being returned you may need to reach an agreement with the agent or landlord, or have the dispute resolved before you can afford to pay the bond for the new property and to ensure you get a good reference.

### **What will I be responsible for when I sign an agreement?**

- Completing the ingoing condition report and returning it to the agent or landlord within 14 days.
- Paying your rent on time.
- Paying all bills on time including electricity, and the telephone, gas and water where applicable.
- Keeping the property clean and tidy, and attending to the garden and the yard if you have one.
- Reporting any breakdown or fault in equipment, electrical or plumbing as soon as possible.
- Paying for any repairs for damage caused by you or your guests.
- Not using the property for illegal or unauthorised purposes.

You also may be required by your agreement with a landlord or agent to:

- not keep animals without permission.
- not smoke inside the premises.
- not change the locks unless permission is given by the landlord or it is an emergency.
- ensure that you or your guests not cause noise or disturbance to the neighbours.

### **What will your landlord or agent be responsible for?**

- Lodging the bond with the Office of Rental Bonds within 2 weeks of receiving it and providing a receipt to you.
- Providing you with a copy of the condition report within 2 days of commencement of the tenancy.
- Providing the property in a reasonable state of cleanliness and repair.
- Providing and maintaining locks and essential amenities in a reasonable state of repair.
- Completing urgent repairs as soon as necessary and non-urgent repairs within 4 weeks.
- Ensuring you have peaceful and quiet use (enjoyment) of the property.
- Giving notice prior to inspections and seeking your permission to access the property.