

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

These agencies may be able to provide you with free information, advice and referral.

Telephone Advice for Rental Problems or Disputes:

TENANTS ADVICE SERVICE (TAS)

A not-for-profit, community legal centre protecting tenants' rights in WA. TAS provides free legal information to tenants through its telephone advice line. TAS can also refer you to a tenant advocate in your local area who may be able to give you more support and assistance.

Telephone Advice Line:

Metro: 9221 0088 Country (Freecall): 1800 621 888

Free Booklets:

- A Guide to Renting in WA
Available in English, French and Arabic.
- Tenancy and the Law in WA
Available in English.

Ring the Tenants Advice Service on 9221 9499 for a copy.

Website: www.taswa.org

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION (DOCEP)

Provides a telephone advice service on many issues including information about renting.

Tel: 1300 621 188

Migrant and Refugee Assistance:

CENTRECARE INC (Catholic Migrant Centre)

Tel: 9221 1727 (Perth)

COALITION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND DETAINEES (CARAD)

Assists refugees, not migrants.

Tel: 9227 7322

COMMUNICARE INC

Tel: 9458 2611 (Cannington)

METROPOLITAN MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 9345 5755 (Northern suburbs)

MULTICULTURAL SERVICES OF WA INC

Tel: 9328 1544 (North Perth)

SOUTH METROPOLITAN MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 9335 9588 (Fremantle)

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Emergency Assistance:

HOMELESS HELP LINE

Helps homeless people access emergency accommodation.

Freecall: 1800 065 892

CRISIS CARE LINE

24 hour telephone service for people needing urgent help.

Tel: 9223 1111 Country Callers (Freecall): 1800 199 008

Financial Assistance:

CENTRELINK

Ring and check if you are eligible for Rent Assistance and a Concession Card for discounts on your utility bills and connection fees.

Tel: 13 10 21 (For an appointment)

Tel: 13 12 02 (For an interpreter)

HOMESWEST

Ring and check if you are eligible for a government Bond Assistance loan and public housing.

Toll Free: 1800 093 325

FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS RESEARCH PROJECT (FCRP)

Can refer you to someone for help with budgeting and managing debt.

Tel: 9221 9411

Translating Assistance:

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE (TIS)

For interpreting assistance ring TIS on 131 450

First edition printed August 2006

Produced by the Tenants Advice Service Inc

Funding by the Law Society of Western Australia

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With special thanks to our reference group

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ENGLISH

Renting Your First Home in WA?



We Can Help

INFORMATION FOR NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

This publication is available in:
English, Arabic, French, Burmese, Dinka, Swahili, Somali,
Amharic, Dari, Kirundi, Farsi and others.

WELCOME TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This pamphlet will introduce you to renting in Western Australia and suggests agencies which may be able to help you.

Renting is where the owner of a home allows you to live in their house (separate from the owner), for a regular payment of money called rent. If you live in a home and pay rent you are called a tenant. The home you rent is called a rental property. The time you live in that home is called a tenancy. Some owners pay real estate agents to be their property manager.

Understanding more about renting in Western Australia will help save you time and money.

For more detailed information about renting, ask for a free copy of A Guide to Renting in WA booklet from the Tenants Advice Service.

LAWS ABOUT RENTING

The way of doing things here in Western Australia may be different to where you have come from. There are specific laws that protect tenants' rights and the rights of owners of rental properties.

The law is known as the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 and sets out these rights and responsibilities.

It is important that you understand what you and the owner or real estate agent are allowed and not allowed to do, so you can avoid problems and protect your rights.

When you and the owner or real estate agent can not resolve a tenancy dispute the courts will do it for you. Don't be afraid to go to court. It is low cost and fair.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 there are many rights and responsibilities for tenants and owners or real estate agents. These are some:

- Tenants must always pay their rent on time.
- Tenants only pay for damage they have caused, like breaking a window or staining carpet.
- Owners usually pay for costs of maintaining things, like a broken hot water system or a leaking roof.
- Tenants have to keep the rental property in a reasonable state of cleanliness, allowing for fair wear and tear.
- Owners or real estate agents can not force you to leave a rental property without a special court order.

LOOKING FOR A HOME

Getting a rental property can be difficult, so start looking as soon as you need one.

Think about where you want to live, the size of the rental property and how much rent you can afford.

Look for rental properties in the Saturday 'West Australian' or the Thursday 'Quokka' newspapers and the Internet. These are free to use in libraries. Visit real estate agencies, ask friends or community workers for assistance.

When looking at rental properties dress neatly and if possible leave your children behind with a friend so you can have a better look.

Take someone along who can translate.

Be prepared with personal documents like your birth certificate, passport and bank statements. Have money ready for an application fee (Option Fee) when you lodge your application.

There are documents like an Application Form you will need to understand before you sign.

You may need to apply for many rental properties before you have your application approved by the owner or real estate agent.

Apply for one rental property at a time or you could lose your application fee.

If you are eligible for low cost public housing (Homeswest) make sure you apply as soon as possible.

OFFERED A HOME

When the owner or real estate agent offers you a rental property you will be asked to sign a Tenancy Agreement. This is a legal contract. When you sign it, you are agreeing to its conditions. The Tenancy Agreement will state what you and the owner or real estate agents' rights and responsibilities are and may include costs that you may need to pay.

Not all Tenancy Agreements are the same.

Make sure you understand and agree to what you are signing. If you do not, get some help BEFORE you sign!

HOW BUSINESS IS DONE

In Australia, it is important to have everything in writing when you agree to take on a rental property. This is how people do business here. Verbal agreements are not always enough.

Written agreements can be complicated. Even people born in Australia have to ask questions to understand them.

SETUP COSTS

When you are offered a rental property you will need to have money ready to give to the owner or real estate agent before you can move in. These may include money for a letting fee, [bond] and rent in advance, and usually amounts to 7 weeks rent. Make sure you have it ready. Ask for a receipt for any money paid. Contact Homeswest to see if you are eligible for a Bond Assistance loan.

LIVING IN YOUR NEW HOME

Look after your rental property by keeping it clean and undamaged. Look after your garden. This may include mowing lawns, weeding and watering the garden often.

Make sure you are given a Property Condition Report or do one yourself when you move in. If you do not understand what it is, ask or get help!

Organise the connection for electricity, water, gas and the telephone before you move in. Check with Homeswest to see if you are eligible for a discount on the Connection Fees.

Find out what regular cleaning is required. Sometimes the way we clean can cause damage. Learn how to do it properly. If you are unsure on how it's done, get advice or help.

There may be equipment that you are not familiar with, such as stoves, air conditioners, heaters and ovens. Make sure you learn how to look after them and use them properly. Otherwise you may have to pay for any damage.

The owner or real estate agent can inspect the rental property to check if it is being looked after. Before entering the property they must give you the correct notice or have permission from you at the time.

Always pay the rent and on time. If you can not pay it on time, let the owner or real estate agent know immediately and get help.

You will receive regular bills for Utilities such as water, gas and the telephone. Make sure you pay them on time. If you can not pay them, get help and advice.

Put all your rental papers like rent receipts, Property Condition Reports, letters, Tenancy Agreement and booklets together in a file and keep this in a safe place.

There are rules about how much notice you need to give to the owner or real estate agent when vacating a rental property. Get assistance and advice before vacating or it could cost you a lot of money.

Never ignore letters or phone calls from the courts, owners or real estate agents.

If you do not understand any of the above information, don't be afraid to get help and advice!