

# Questions about renting

## for international students

If you are an international student who has come to Adelaide to gain skills and knowledge then finding a place to live is one of the most important things you will need to do. You will need to consider things like cost, location, conditions and rules.

You may end up renting a house or unit and have to sign a contract or 'Residential Tenancy Agreement', or you may choose to rent a room as part of a 'Rooming House Agreement'.

It is important to understand your rights and responsibilities. The information in this document will help you to make good decisions when it comes to your accommodation. You can call Consumer and Business Services (CBS) for information and assistance on 131 882.

### What is the difference between a rooming house agreement and a residential tenancy agreement?

A *rooming house agreement* is used where boarders or lodgers rent a lockable room in a property in which there is accommodation for three or more people. You (the resident) might rent your room on your own or with a friend. The owner (proprietor) might also live in the property or just visit regularly. Some owners visit to provide meals or to clean the common areas or just to check that all the residents are abiding by the house rules which the owner must have displayed in a place where all residents can see them.

A *residential tenancy agreement* is used where you (the tenant) rent a property from the owner (landlord). The landlord cannot come onto the property without your consent or without first giving you proper notice.

### Rooming House Agreements

#### • When I pay money to the owner (proprietor), should I get a receipt?

The owner (proprietor) must give you a receipt within 48 hours after receiving a payment from you. However, if you make payment into a bank account kept by the owner (proprietor) or their agent, a receipt does not have to be given. You may request a statement of relevant information for each payment from the owner.

#### • Can the owner come into my room without consent?

The owner may enter your room without your consent, but they must be reasonable about when and how they do this. The owner cannot stay in the room longer than necessary.

#### • The window in my bedroom won't lock. What do I do if this type of repair is required?

You need to tell the owner that the repair is required. It is best to request this in writing. If the problem is not fixed you should contact CBS on 131 882.

#### • How much money can the owner ask for at the start of the agreement?

The most you can be asked to pay is one week rent and a bond of no more than two weeks rent.

#### • What if I'm late with the rent? Can the owner charge me a penalty fee?

The owner cannot charge a penalty fee for being late with the rent. Additionally, the owner cannot seize your property as compensation for unpaid rent. But if the rent has not been fully paid for 2 weeks or 2 rental periods (whichever is the lesser), then the owner can give you 2 days notice that you may be evicted (asked to leave).

#### • What can I do if the owner won't return my bond at the end of the agreement?

If you still owe money for rent or for meals, facilities or services and/or you have caused damage to the room or property then the owner can keep an amount to cover the amount of money you owe and pay for the repairs. You should contact CBS on 131 882 if you have any concerns about your bond.

#### • Does my rooming house agreement have to be in writing?

This type of agreement does not have to be in writing. However it is best to have it in writing so that you have proof of the agreement.



## Residential Tenancy Agreements

- **Do I have to complete the inspection sheet at the commencement of the agreement?**

When you move into a property the landlord must give you two copies of a completed inspection sheet indicating the condition of the property. You should check the inspection sheet and note any areas where you disagree with the landlord's assessment of the property. Note these changes on both copies of the inspection sheet, sign both copies, and then give one copy to the landlord. Some people take photos as proof of the condition of the property. You will need this record at the end of the tenancy if there is a dispute about the condition of the property.

- **How much bond can my landlord ask for?**

If the rent is \$250 or less per week the landlord can ask for a bond that is equal to or less than 4 weeks rent. If the rent is over \$250 per week the landlord can ask for a bond that is equal to or less than 6 weeks rent.

- **Can the landlord hold on to the bond money?**

No, the landlord must lodge the bond money with CBS within 7 days of receiving it. If the landlord has an agent managing the property for them, the bond must be lodged within 30 days of receiving it.

- **Does my landlord have to give me receipts for the rent I pay?**

The landlord must give you a receipt within 48 hours if you pay rent directly to them. However if you pay rent into a bank account the landlord does not have to give you a receipt. You may request in writing that the landlord provide you with a statement of information about rent received from you.

- **My tenancy has ended and the landlord won't return my bond money. What can I do?**

You can lodge a bond refund form with CBS without the landlord's signature, or contact CBS on 131 882.

- **How can I get my landlord to do repairs?**

Firstly, advise your landlord of what needs repairing. It is best to do this in writing; you may wish to use the Request for Repairs form available from [www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/privaterentalforms](http://www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/privaterentalforms). If the repair is not carried out you can contact CBS on 131 882 for advice.

- **My friend stopped paying her share of the rent. What can I do?**

If both your name and your friend's name appear on the rental agreement then this is called a co-tenancy. If the rent has not been paid fully for more than 14 days then all tenants may be evicted (asked to leave the property). If you cannot sort out the problem with one of your co-tenants you may need to seek legal advice.

- **I vacated the property and left some furniture in there. The landlord refuses to give my furniture back because he says I owe him money for rent. How can I get it back?**

Your landlord cannot refuse to return your furniture to you because you owe rent. However, if your furniture is left in the property for more than two days after your tenancy has officially ended, the landlord is obliged to deal with the furniture as *abandoned property*. Depending on the value of the furniture, the landlord may refuse to return the furniture to you until you pay costs that have been incurred by the landlord as a result of complying with the *valuable abandoned property* process.

### Our head office address is:

**Consumer & Business Services  
Customer Service Centre  
91 Grenfell Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Tel: 131 882**

Further information can be found at  
[www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/renters](http://www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/renters)

### Advice in your language

Phone 131 450 to use the FREE Telephone Interpreting Service. A person will interpret for you in a three-way conversation. Ask to be connected to Consumer and Business Services on 131 882 for renting advice.