



COVID-19 TENANCY LAWS LAUNCHED

The new COVID-19 Tenancy Laws were launched on 24th April and expire on 31st December 2020. The full details, including the definition of 'COVID-19 IMPACTED TENANCY' are available in the **Residential Tenancies Practice Guide** available on our website. Following is a summary of the main points:

Rent reduction for COVID-19 impacted tenancies

The government has asked lessors and tenants to negotiate temporary rent reductions where tenants are impacted and can provide documentary evidence to support their claims. The reduction can either be DEFERRED (the rent reduction must be paid back eventually) or WAIVED (the rent reduction is NOT to be paid back). The RTA (Residential Tenancies Authority) has launched a new lease document 'Form 18d- COVID-19 Variation Agreement' to be used when a new temporary rent has been negotiated. Note in this case, the bond amount can remain unchanged, and the rent can legally be increased back to the original amount without the normal waiting times. If the two parties cannot come to an agreement, the matter is referred to the RTA for compulsory conciliation.

Restriction on issuing Notices to Leave (Form 12) for Rent Arrears

For COVID-19 impacted tenancies, we are not permitted to issue a Form 12 for rent arrears. (We CAN, however, issue a Form 12 if the tenant breaches the agreement in another way). We are also not permitted to list them on a tenancy database. This is why it is imperative to negotiate a fair rent reduction so that owners can receive some rental income during the crisis.

Break Lease sanctions for COVID-19 impacted tenancies

Only for tenants whose income has reduced by at least 75% with savings of less than \$5,000: The tenant can break their lease agreement with two weeks' notice, and only be required to pay one week's rent as a re-letting fee.

Automatic extension of fixed-term Leases until 30th Sept 2020

To comply with the Federal Government's guidelines of 'no evictions for six months', tenants who are COVID-19 impacted must be offered a lease extension until at least 30/09/20 (unless the tenant requests a shorter term).

EXCEPTIONS – Two new approved reasons are available during the COVID-19 emergency period for lessors to end a tenancy with 2 months' notice if:

1. The lessor is selling or has sold the property and requires vacant possession
2. The lessor or immediate family needs to move in.

Property Entry restrictions and allowances

Tenants may refuse entry for non-essential reasons, such as routine repairs and inspections, particularly if they are subject to a quarantine direction for COVID-19 or if a member of the household is a vulnerable person. However, they must allow entry for emergency repairs, and compliance checks such as smoke alarm checks.

Supporting tenants experiencing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

Tenants experiencing DFV can (after providing evidence) leave the property with only 7 days' notice and have their bond contribution refunded to them. If the DFV victim is a sole tenant, that tenancy would end after the notice period, and the tenant would not be responsible for re-letting fees, rent arrears, or costs of disposing of abandoned goods.

For more information visit the Queensland Government website **THE HUB**

<https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/the-hub>

APRIL LEASING REPORT - 'APPS BEFORE VIEWING'

During this challenging time, we are constantly revising our procedures to determine the most efficient way of attracting and placing tenants in our properties.

Due to restrictions placed on people leaving home, we have decided to begin the leasing process with asking prospects to first submit an application form. If the applicant passes our office criteria (including income check and rental history), they are 'Short-Listed' and invited to view the property. After the viewing, they advise us if they would like to proceed with their application, which we present to the owner for approval.

This process is attractive to prospects as they are not wasting time viewing properties for which they would not be considered. It also allows us to focus our attention on pre-qualified prospects, providing them with a more personalised service.

The results for our owner clients are reduced vacancy times, as we are able to approve tenants quicker. Many tenants are even choosing to take properties without inspecting them!

VACANCY RATE:

NORTHSIDE - 0.96%
SOUTHSIDE - 2.26%

TOTAL OFFICE - 1.35%



MAY DISBURSEMENTS

Wed 6th
Wed 13th
Wed 20th
Wed 27th

SPECIAL END OF MONTH DISBURSEMENT & MAY STATEMENT

*** Mon 1st June ***

OFFICE HOLIDAYS

Labor Day
Mon 4th May

TECHNOLOGY IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

No Signature Required!

In April we began using 'One Touch Execution' for completing General Tenancy Agreements (Leases).

This state-of-the-art technology allows parties to legally and securely execute documents without the need for signatures or face-to-face meeting! Tenants are responding positively to this technology, signing and returning leases in record time.



Moving to the Cloud!

We are excited to announce that we are changing over to a fully cloud-based trust accounting system.

Apart from a more flexible work environment for our team members, the many benefits to you will include a fabulous new **Landlord Portal** which will feature comprehensive and detailed up-to-date information on your property and tenancy - all at your fingertips!



The switch will take place on 1st June, when we will perform an extra disbursement and issue statements. Stay tuned for all the details in next month's newsletter!