



newsletter

Tenant Newsletter

Where is your rent paid up to?

Probably the question asked most often by tenants and a point of conjecture at times. What we have found is that in almost all cases it is because of a misunderstanding on a couple of points:

- The first 2 weeks you pay when you commence the lease is immediately applied to rent payable and the 'paid to date' shown takes this into account. The money does not sit in our trust account as some form of deposit. The bond you pay is sent to the rental bond board and returned at the end of tenancy; there is no other deposit as such.
- The 'credit' shown on a receipt or ledger does not mean the rent is in credit; it shows the amount that has been paid towards the following week's rent. For example if your rent is \$320 per week and you make a payment of \$340, there will be a credit of \$20 towards the next week's rent. This does not indicate you are paid in advance; it could still be the case that you are in arrears... that's why you need to look at the paid to date.
- Some people think if they pay 4 weeks rent at a time they are covering each month, which of course they're not... \$300 per week is \$1303 per month not \$1200 (i.e.\$300/7*365/12)
- Sometimes in share situations tenants will pay their individual portion of the rent to us and believe they are "up to date" and are understandably upset when they find out others haven't paid their share. Of course, the total rent is due and payable and all tenants are jointly responsible. It is more efficient to do as the vast majority do and that is to pool the rent and then pay it as one sum weekly/fortnightly.
- On occasions rent may be increased but tenants continue paying the old amount and thereby fall into arrears, increasing gradually over the weeks.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time and particularly if you experience difficulties paying your rent, please talk with your Property Manager.

Thinking of moving?

The rental market is generally tight so we suggest if you are thinking of moving, start looking as early as possible. If you want to stay local, let your property manager know and we may be able to assist.

We always like to keep good tenants. That said, it's not always possible to help and particularly with in demand properties there can be great disappointment. We have even turned down attempted bribes from prospective tenants on a few occasions!

Water leaks!

Please let us know as soon as you notice any water leaks or evidence of leaks anywhere. This may be the obvious dripping tap or less obvious signs such as wetness/stains in walls, vanities and kitchen cupboards for example.

Awards Win

Leah Jay has a proud tradition when it comes to the industry's most coveted awards, the NSW Real Estate Institute's annual "Awards for Excellence". At this year's awards held in October, Brooke Purvis from our Warners Bay office was named 'Young Property Manager of the Year' in NSW. Brooke follows in the footsteps of Leah and others over the past 16 years who have received major awards. We also had finalists this year in two other categories (see photo); Karen Tresidder from our Hamilton office (for 'Property Manager') and Cassandra Lantry from East Maitland (for 'Corporate Support'). We look at these awards as more than kudos for the individual and the company; it's a reflection of the commitment and pride we take in our collective roles. Hopefully they also give tenants added reassurance because our values and adherence to professional and ethical standards often form part of the judging criteria.



Right: Brooke Purvis
"Young Property
Manager of the Year"
in NSW



Left: Cassandra, Brooke,
Leah and Karen at the
NSW REI awards

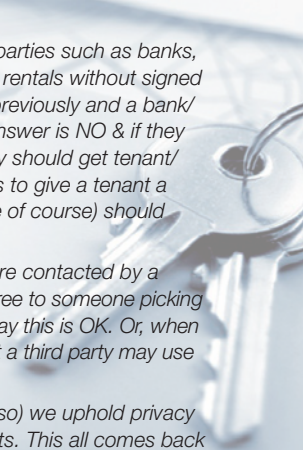
And on that note...

Below we have reproduced an email exactly as it was received. In response to a general email to all Leah Jay staff asking what tips or information they would like passed on to tenants in a newsletter, it came from Eliza, a part time Property Officer at our East Maitland office, who had been with us for over two years until recently leaving to concentrate on the final stages of her university degree. In her own words Eliza has spontaneously expressed very simply, genuinely and accurately our policy and the values that underlie the policy concerning tenants' privacy and security.

"I took a call from Radio Rentals today – they wanted to confirm a tenant's address. I told them we can't do this & they weren't prepared to wait for the PM (Property Manager) to receive a privacy statement & call them back. This brings up two common issues we deal with regularly:

- *We do not release any information to third parties such as banks, other real estate agents or places like radio rentals without signed privacy content. I have been on reception previously and a bank/lender has asked for a tenant ledger. The answer is NO & if they can't provide a privacy statement, then they should get tenant/their applicant to ask for one. It's no worries to give a tenant a ledger (after qualifying them over the phone of course) should they need one at any point.*
- *We do not release keys to anyone. If they are contacted by a tradesperson/selling agent/owner & they agree to someone picking up keys they MUST contact the office and say this is OK. Or, when they report the repair they must indicate that a third party may use the keys.*

We do these things because it's the law but (also) we uphold privacy passionately because we care about our tenants. This all comes back to our values of courtesy toward other people... future clients, current clients, tradespeople, competitors are all deserving of our respect."



Snippets

- If there is a swimming pool at your premises and there is any problem whatsoever with the gate or fencing or there is no resuscitation chart affixed nearby, please notify us. Be aware there are strict regulations in place; even for relatively small pools and it may be that because of the capacity and/or depth you need permission from the owner and then correct fencing put in.
- If you are in a shared tenancy and the situation changes in any way, you need to let us know in writing. This includes anyone moving out or planning to move in; we have to ensure all the necessary documentation is completed.
- Please remember to let us know if you change any of the contact details you originally provided; this includes work and private email and phone. Murphy's Law dictates that as sure as you change anything and don't let us know we'll have good reason to contact you.



Merry Christmas
& best wishes
from everyone
at Leah Jay

Our Values

Below are three of the "values" referred to by Eliza in her email (see "and on that note"). These values underpin the way we go about business. They are displayed in our offices and are regularly referred to as a benchmark or last point of reference when dealing with issues. We would never profess to always get it right or that we don't make mistakes; the main thing for us is how we carry out our roles each day...with diligence, commitment, respect and courtesy to all.

- Respect & Courtesy – underpins how we deal with everyone we encounter; all clients including property owners and tenants, our colleagues, other stakeholders, the general public and even our competitors
- Integrity & Ethics – are not to be compromised in the pursuit of commercial or personal objectives.
This entails being open and honest with clients and others even when it may be easier and perhaps more profitable to do otherwise. We adhere to all relevant rules, regulations and codes of practice that apply to our industry, business and operations.
- Diligence & Earnestness – in all areas of work endeavour; we will do the best job we can and apply the maximum effort possible to achieve the desired result

So if you feel at anytime genuinely that we have not lived up to these, let us know. This also includes any representatives or contractors that we may use from time to time.

What happens if the owner of the premises you are renting wants to sell?

If you are in the fixed term of a lease, then you are covered for at least that time. Any purchaser of the premises must honour the lease and any notice given cannot terminate the lease before the date it expires. In all cases, from 31st January 2011, the owner will be required to provide 30 days notice that they have sold the property and require vacant possession. In other words 30 days is the minimum time you will have and more if the lease has longer than that to expire.

In all cases, the following will also apply from 31st January:

- The owner must give written notice to the tenant that they intend to sell the property, at least 14 days before the premises are made available for inspection by potential purchasers
- The owner must make all reasonable efforts to agree with the tenant as to the days and times when the premises are to be available for inspection
- The tenant must not unreasonably refuse to agree to days and times for inspection
- The tenant is not required to allow inspections more than twice in a period of a week
- If there is failure to agree then the owner can show the property as long as they provide 48 hours notice to the tenant each time and not more than twice in any week.

The best approach involves common sense but unfortunately that isn't always applied. While it may be an inconvenience, mutual respect and courtesy usually make it work, though we can't promise that on behalf of all selling agents. To tenants we suggest try and be a little flexible because that's better than not coming to an agreement and then having to accommodate inspections that are even more inconvenient.

Smoke alarms

No apologies for repeating this item each year; it is just too important even if it is only a small number of people who need to be informed or reminded. It is still the case that our Property Managers express concern, after completing inspections, about smoke alarms not functioning because batteries have been removed and not replaced or in some instances, the whole alarm has been removed. This is actually illegal and obviously risky.

Here's a brief summary of what you need to know and do; but please if you have ANY concerns or questions contact your Property Manager.

- ALL premises must have smoke alarms installed and functioning. How many and where is determined by the size and layout of the place; some will have battery operated and others hard wired alarms.
- The regulations state that tenants are not permitted to interfere with the normal operation of the alarm; certainly you are not permitted to disable it.
- Tenants are required to change replaceable batteries as needed. We explain this at the signing of the lease and as a hint suggest you select a date of some significance to you and make that the time to change the battery.

Please note: As at 17/12/2010, this newsletter is intended as general news and not as advice, as each individual's situation will vary depending on specific circumstances relating to that individual. You should seek professional advice as it relates to your own circumstances.

LeahJay
the property management specialists

suite 1, 74-84 tudor street, hamilton nsw 2303
suite 3, 87 king street, warners bay nsw 2282
suite 1, 19 mitchell drive, east maitland nsw 2323

t: 02 4965 3153
t: 02 4948 4188
t: 02 4931 4811

f: 02 4965 3163
f: 02 4948 8279
f: 02 4933 1115

e: enquiries@leahjay.com.au w: www.leahjay.com.au

MULTIPLE WINNER - REI AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Vacating?

There is substantial turnover of tenancies at this time of the year and we know there's plenty to do without having problems, particularly with the final inspection, so here's the checklist again:

- ✓ Return the keys to our office on date of vacating
- ✓ Fill out the 'vacating tenant form' in reception when you return the keys
- ✓ The form has a question whether you wish to be at the final inspection or not –
If yes, the Property Manager will contact you once keys are returned and an appointment time is made
If no, the Property Manager will attend the property at their first opportunity and then advise you of any issues
- ✓ Provide copies of any receipts for carpet cleaning and pest control if applicable
- ✓ Provide us with a forwarding address (and ensure you have your mail redirected and services disconnected)

Once any issues are finalised and as long as there's no money outstanding, we can release the bond.

Snippets

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