



newsletter

December 2011



I guess like a lot of people I get to the end of the year, stop and wonder where it's gone and what's been achieved. I hope 2011 has unfolded as you may have hoped for twelve months ago.

At this time last year we were preparing as best we could for the introduction of the new tenancy laws, which came into effect at the end of January. There was a fair amount of consternation about their potential impact, from both those representing owners and those advocating on behalf of tenants. Some areas still remain untested but I believe in the main the new regulations were implemented relatively seamlessly. One thing hasn't changed, if there is goodwill and respect all round then generally the elements of the law that cause most fear are taken out of play. This is often where we see our role in explaining the rights and responsibilities of all parties.

I would contend that the rental market this year has been almost unprecedented as far as demand for properties is concerned. You may even be able to attest to this if you were caught in the rush that has occurred at times. Certainly we've had strong demand before but it's been the consistency throughout this year that has been most striking; apart

from a minor dip at Easter, which is traditionally quiet in any case. This followed what I call the settling in period. March and April is the time when people settle after the holiday and relocation period at the start of the year. The winter months seemed to be no deterrent to prospective tenants and properties continued to be keenly sought after; this continued as the year progressed apart from a brief period in September, which I am still unable to account for. Frankly, we find ourselves on occasions exclaiming surprise as to the rents that some people have been prepared to pay, in some instances offering above the 'market' rent to simply "get a property". I assure you this is not something we seek or condone but we understand the motives behind the move. This does not happen in all areas around the region nor in all price ranges but when demand for a property is high, it can bring frustration and disappointment for people simply trying to find accommodation. And there doesn't appear at this stage to be any sign of demand slowing into 2012.

Twelve months ago we were getting set to relocate into temporary premises at East Maitland while new offices were being built; that's been ticked off and the crew settled into their sparkling new home in October. By December last year we had already put six months planning into our new website; it came to fruition in June this year and the fabulous feedback has made the project even more satisfying. It has been a rewarding year for these and other reasons, but again mostly because of the tremendous support and word of mouth endorsement we receive from owners and tenants alike. I say this with utmost sincerity and gratitude, and that has been the case since we took our first steps nearly eighteen years ago.

I wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Regards, *Leah*

Checklist

Here's a brief list of tips and reminders including some that are particularly relevant at this time of the year. As always if you have any concerns or questions, feel free to seek assistance from your property manager.

- The summer months generally mean good growing conditions for grass and lawn, which means they may need to be attended to more often. It is most likely that you are responsible for keeping the lawns and gardens looking presentable; if unsure check your lease agreement for clarification.
- Please be aware, if there is a swimming pool at your premises and there's 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 (including inflatable pools) and it may be that because of the capacity and/or depth you need to have the obligatory fencing installed; hence approval must be sought from the owner in the first instance.
- Smoke alarm maintenance is critical at all times. Tenants are required to change replaceable batteries as needed; however, the regulations state that tenants are not permitted to interfere with the normal operation of the alarm; you are certainly not permitted to disable it.
- Payment for water usage is NOT to be made to Hunter Water; all water usage invoices are to be paid direct to Leah Jay.
- Please remember to let us know if you change any of the contact details you originally provided us with; this includes work and private email addresses and phone numbers. Murphy's Law dictates that as soon as you change anything and don't let us know we'll have good reason to contact you.
- If you're thinking of moving, please let us know. 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 want to keep good tenants. That said, it's not always possible to help and particularly with high demand properties there can be many applicants and that can bring frustration and disappointment.

Snippets

- Have you checked out our new website yet? It was designed with the aim of making it even easier for people to find the right property; and for current tenants you can access a lot of information including tips about being a tenant. It's also a convenient way of contacting us if you have a query, particularly if you're not sure who your Property Manager is. Check out leahjay.com.au
- We were hardly a week in our new offices at East Maitland, when smoke was noticed billowing from the vet's premises across the road. Everyone rushed to volunteer a hand; and we knew we'd planned the space in the foyer of our new building for something... just not quite this! It provided emergency refuge for some of the little creatures in need of evacuation from the fire.



Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year
from all of us
at Leah Jay

Our longest tenancy?

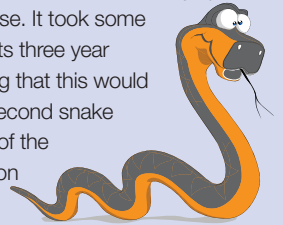
Many tenants have been with us for over five years and more than a few for over ten years but there's only one that's been with Leah Jay since the beginning in July 1994. And by coincidence with the same owner, who lives in southern NSW. For 17 years and 6 months this three way relationship has worked excellently, with a dream tenant it has to be said. In a small Islington house that the tenant has maintained as if it were her own from day one; with children and grandchildren coming and going over the years. While it's been one person's valuable nest egg, it's been another's precious home. We just love it!

All in a day's work!

We encounter all sorts of situations in our daily work and generally not too much surprises us, however we do get stopped in our tracks from time to time; and this year has been no different. We thought we'd share a couple with you.

Recently our Warners Bay office was visited by an exorcist seeking permission to carry out an exorcism on behalf of the tenants at a property we manage. The exorcist went on to explain to Property Manager Katie that the tenants were being unsettled by a spirit who was creating havoc with their phones and electricity and of even greater concern, was unsettling their four year old daughter. The exorcist advised that in order for the exorcism to be successful the "mortgage holders" consent must be given. It was a somewhat awkward phone call that Katie had to make to the owners; it was after all the first time we had been approached for approval for an exorcism. In this case the owners of the property decided against the exorcism and opted instead to provide the tenants with the details of local priests and churches that might assist.

Tenants at Marmong Point recently had to make a frantic phone call to a snake catcher when they spotted a large red belly black snake slithering around the downstairs area of the house. It took some time for the snake catcher to locate the snake, but with the help of the tenants three year old, they managed to find the snake and remove it from the property. Thinking that this would be the end of unwanted guests at the property they were horrified to find a second snake in the property the very next night... believe it or not curled up in the bottom of the dishwasher! A late night phone call to the same snake catcher sent this one on its way also...but it's fair to say the tenants were somewhat shaken by their unexpected visitors.



And even after 24 years in the industry it was all in a day's work for Leah, who turned up to a routine inspection only to be greeted at the front door by a sick little girl who proceeded to vomit all over her! Needless to say we rescheduled the inspection to a day when everyone was feeling a little better.

10thousandgirl campaign

Leah Jay is associated with the national 10thousandgirl campaign, which seeks to provide young women with the necessary tools and knowledge to achieve financial independence. At the Newcastle workshop held in November Leah was one of an expert panel that answered questions from the women on a wide range of topics. A few of our young property managers, Renee Ross, Rachel Gosper and Ashley Harper took the opportunity to attend. Feedback from the day was very positive.



Leah (r) at the Newcastle 10thousandgirl Workshop

And when we're not managing property...

Sophie's one of our Property Managers at Hamilton office. If you knew Soph, you'd understand us saying it was more than a little unexpected to hear about her recent weekend 'mud run'! Her weekend at the Glenworth Valley Stampede was full of crawling through mud, running through a herd of cows, giant swings and slides... not to mention the 5km run! Sounds exhausting – but in Soph's words, she's addicted and can't wait to tackle the 20km event next year.

Please note: As at 12/12/2011, 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.

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