



# Rental issues and support in NSW

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY



# Resolving a rental issue

Every now and again, you may encounter issues while renting privately. Whether it's a rent increase, or flatmates aren't paying for utilities, it's good to know what you can do to resolve disputes.

## **YOUR RIGHTS AS A TENANT**

Many tenants in Australia are unaware that they have rights which must legally be observed. These vary slightly from state to state so take time to check your relevant state's housing authority. The below resources will assist you in identifying your rights as a tenant:

### **NSW Fair Trading**

This website can provide you with information regarding rental and property, particularly during the pandemic crisis.

### **NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT)**

Access this link for any instances where, as a tenant, you would like to make an application to the Tribunal to break lease due to financial hardship.

### **Tenants Union of New South Wales**

Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services provide free, independent information, advice and advocacy for tenants in NSW.

International students in NSW can access free legal advice through the **International Student Legal Service NSW** at Redfern Legal Centre. The NSW Government has allocated additional funding to this service to help meet increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional support is provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman and the City of Sydney.

The NSW Government, in partnership with **Legal Aid NSW** and **LawAccess NSW**, has launched a free legal help service for people facing legal issues under the COVID-19 public health laws. International students are also eligible to use these services.

### **Ombudsman fact sheet**

If you're a student from overseas this fact sheet can assist with COVID-19 queries. It includes principles to encourage dispute resolution and provides guidance to private registered education providers on the views that the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) may form on common complaint issues. ACU students have access to additional services which may assist in resolving their rental issue:

### **ACU Legal Service**

A free service available for all ACU students.

### **ACU Rental Advisory Service**

A free service which will give you individual advice on how to proceed with your rental issue.

## **STEPS TO TAKE**

The first step to resolving any problem or complaint is to carefully read the terms of your rental agreement. If you have an issue supported by your agreement, then you should speak to your landlord/agent about reaching a resolution. You can access templates on how to send a letter to your landlord regarding issues on the RAS website

If an agreement cannot be reached, you may lodge a complaint with NSW Fair Trading to help mediate an agreement.

We recommend that if your case gets to this stage that you contact the ACU Rental Advisory Service for them to help advise you on proceeding with your case.



# Support available in NSW

Federal and state governments offer support options to a range of people in need. The below options are resources which you can access in NSW. Check the eligibility criteria to see if you can apply.

## **Short-term emergency accommodation**

The NSW Government is providing a \$20 million package for international students who are stranded in Australia due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The package will include:

- a temporary housing scheme delivered through approved student accommodation or homestay providers
- increased support via the International Legal Service NSW, making available 50,000 free subscriptions to the multilingual My Legal Mate student app
- a dedicated 24/7 international student support hotline offering free advice and information, and medical, mental health, legal and emergency support.

The crisis accommodation will be limited to international student visa holders in genuine need, who:

- have lost, or will be at risk of losing, access to secure accommodation
- have less than \$1,500 in savings and have no other avenues of support.

To apply, visit [Apply for international student COVID-19 crisis accommodation](#) or call the NSW Government COVID-19 hotline on 13 77 88.

## **Australian Homestay Network**

The Australian Homestay Network has launched an Australia wide program called the International Student Support Network to provide short-term, heavily discounted homestay to eligible international students impacted by the global crisis.

## **Ask Izzy**

Ask Izzy is a search tool to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness find shelter, food, health and other critical support services.

## **Rough Edges**

Rough Edges is a non-government organisation that aims to bring a greater sense of self to everyone who walks through their doors. Opening hours to be confirmed on a daily basis. Please call in advance for take away dinner (7.30 - 8.30pm), case management and counselling.

## **Wesley Mission**

Our services are non-means-tested and designed to help you stay in your home and avoid the costs and stress of eviction and potential homelessness. Any details that you give us will remain confidential and you will have immediate access to assessment and financial support options.



# Support available in NSW

## **Emergency Relief Package**

NSW Government has teamed up with both Foodbank and the Rapid Relief Team to deliver emergency relief packages and food boxes to people in need who have been directed to self-isolate, or who have to self-quarantine due to vulnerability.

## **Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA)**

International students may be eligible for the NSW Government Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme.

The EAPA scheme is available to people having difficulty paying their household energy bills because of a short-term financial crisis or emergency, such as reduced income due to COVID-19.

EAPA vouchers are sent electronically to your energy retailer and used to credit your home electricity or gas account. EAPA vouchers can't be used to put your energy account into credit.

## **Department of Social Services Grant Service Directory**

The Department of Social Services (DSS) Grants Service Directory includes details of active grants and organisations providing service delivery.

## **Access to superannuation**

Australian citizens who have been in Australia longer than 12 months who find themselves in financial hardship are able to access their Australian superannuation.

Applications for early release of superannuation will be accepted through myGov from 20 April. Register your interest by logging in to **myGov** and following the 'Intention to access coronavirus support' instructions.

If you don't already have a myGov account, you can set one up by selecting 'Create an account'.

## **Early Access To Super**