



# Your rights as a tenant

When you make the decision to rent privately, there are lots of things to consider like paying rent, living with housemates and liaising with a landlord or real estate agent. These things can be very daunting, especially if you are living out of home for the first time.

That's why it's important that you are aware of your rights and obligations as a tenant.

## ACU Rental Advisory Service

The Rental Advisory Service can assist you with any issues you may experience while renting privately. This includes:

- guidance on how to liaise with your landlord on issues about your tenancy eg rental reprieve, maintenance, breaking lease
- advice on resolving issues with your housemates
- resources, such as letter templates, to use when communicating with your landlord/real estate agents.

## Who else can help you

There are many services and resources available to you that you can access if you are experiencing issues as a tenant.

## FINANCIAL HELP

### ACU Student Loans Scheme

Sometimes circumstances change, and you may just require some extra help. ACU's Student Loan Scheme can provide emergency support for students experiencing financial hardship. You can apply for this loan via the Student Portal.

### ACU Student Urgent Relief Fund

This grant is for students suffering financial hardship due to COVID-19. Each grant is \$300. Applications are open now and you can apply through the Student Portal.

## International Student Hardship Loan

If you're an international student at ACU and have lost your casual job, or can't get money from home, please apply for this loan. You may be able to receive up to \$4,000. Please contact [international@acu.edu.au](mailto:international@acu.edu.au) if you require more information.

## Australian Government Available to domestic students only

The Australian Government has financial support options available for domestic students. If you are experiencing financial difficulty, or could just benefit from having some extra support available, check out the [Centrelink](https://www.centrelink.gov.au) website. The site has a useful tool to find what payments you may be eligible for.

## OTHER SUPPORT

### ACU Legal Service

As an ACU student, you have access to a free legal service. ACU has engaged Wisewould Mahony Lawyers to provide basic legal advice at no cost. Each student has access to up to two 45-minute virtual appointments with a specialist lawyer, including provision of written advice.

To access this service, simply contact [Wisewould Mahony Lawyers](https://www.wisewouldmahony.com.au) with your student ID and ACU student email.

# Your rights as a tenant

## FAQS

### Where can I find my rights as a tenant in the Australian Capital Territory?

Each state has a legislation for tenants and landlords about renting a property. These legislations outline the rights and obligations for people that rent, and the people that own the property.

Some important resources in the ACT include:

Residential Tenancies Act 1997

Tenancy Advice Service Act (Division of Legal Aid ACT)

### How do I negotiate a rental reduction with my landlords?

If you need to negotiate a rent reduction with your landlord, it's important that you do so as soon as possible. Don't leave it until the last minute because it may make things more difficult when it comes time to negotiate.

Legal Aid ACT can provide you with a guide on how to negotiate with your landlord about rent.

### I need to move out of my current accommodation. How do I do this?

You can break your agreement, however it is important to know that by doing this, you may be liable to pay for additional costs or compensation to the landlord. This is a useful guide about how to break your lease.

### My housemates said I need to pay more rent but I haven't heard anything about this from the landlord. Do you I still need to pay?

Living with other people can often lead to disputes. If housemates are asking you to do something that you aren't comfortable with, definitely try to find some more information about whether or not you need to comply with their requests. There are some really great Community Legal Centres across Australia. These not-for-profit community organisations can provide legal services to all students about a variety of issues.

### I never signed a rental agreement, does this mean I have no rights as a tenant? Can I get into trouble?

The period of tenancy on your agreement will determine whether you need a written or verbal agreement.

There are usually three types of lease:

- Short fixed-term lease – a period of time, up to five years
- Long fixed-term lease – a set period of time, more than five years
- Periodic lease or month-to-month

It is strongly recommended that you always have your lease in writing. This helps to accurately reflect the terms of the lease and avoids any miscommunication or assumptions. Access Canberra has templates for a residential tenancy agreements that you can use for reference.

### I need to return home overseas urgently. Can I just leave?

You need to try and give notice to your landlord or agent that you will be vacating the property as soon as possible. However, this does not mean that you will not be liable for compensation or costs for doing so. This could include reletting fees, advertising costs and rent until new tenants are found and have commenced take-over of the lease.

### My landlords won't give me my bond back but I followed the break lease procedure correctly. What do I do?

When you commenced your tenancy, you would have been required to pay a bond. This bond should have been registered with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority. If you have issues getting your bond returned to you, you may need to apply to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

