## Real Estate Essentials

If you choose to rent a house or unit through a real estate agent or private provider please ensure you read the relevant information before you sign a lease. In Victoria, this is ‘Renting a Home – A Guide for Tenants’. Go to *www.consumer.vic.gov.au.* Click on the “renting” link on the left of the page and then either read the PDF version (771KB) or listen to the audio guide. In NSW, it is the ‘New Tenant Checklist’. Go to *www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/*, hover over the Tenants & Home Owners tab and select ‘renting a home’.

*Note that a lease or rental agreement is a legal document. Once you sign it, you must abide by the conditions in it or there can be legal consequences. Read it carefully and make sure that you agree with all the conditions before signing it. The landlord must also abide by these conditions, so a lease protects you as well as the landlord.*

**If you do decide to sign a lease these are the things you MUST do:**

* Thoroughly inspect the property prior to signing the lease or rental agreement.
* When you collect the keys you MUST complete a condition report. Ensure you take PHOTOS for your own evidence which you may need when you vacate the premises. Photos which are dated are better evidence than written format.
* Ensure you add or change the condition report to be true - every minor or major imperfection about the property must be put on the condition report.
* Keep a photocopy of the condition report for your own evidence, and take the original to the agent or accommodation provider within three days in VIC or seven days in NSW) of your lease commencing. Attach copies of photos to the condition report and keep original photos as your evidence.
* Ensure you report any issues with the house immediately directly to the property manager.
* Ensure you use the free ‘Consumer Advice Service’ for advice, conflict resolution, house and agent issues; phone 1300 558 181.

***There are some differences between the laws for renting in NSW and Victoria. Examples are:***

* In NSW you have 7 days to get condition report completed and returned to the agent. In VIC you only have 3 days.
* In VIC you **must have carpets steam cleaned** when you vacate. In NSW Landords and Agents often insist that carpets are steam cleaned prior to moving out, but it is not compulsory, unless specified in the rental agreement (such as if you have pets). The landlord can, however, withhold part of the bond to pay for commercial cleaning if the carpet is very dirty.

If you decide to opt for ***share housing*** there are three options: you can all be included on the one lease or rental agreement as co-tenants; one person can sign the lease and then sublet to others, or each tenant can have a separate lease agreement with the landlord. Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages. You should be clear about which situation you are in. If you wish to join an already established house of students who may already be renting, look at the off-campus accommodation register, or the Accommodation Notice Board outside Student Administration (Building 4, ground floor).

If you decide to opt for ***private board***, ask to have the arrangements put in writing and make two copies of this, both signed by you and the person who is providing the board. Include details like how much you have agreed to pay, how often you will pay it (weekly, fortnightly, monthly and on which day) and how you are going to pay it (cash, cheque, direct deposit into a bank account); what is included (which meals, who cooks, who does the laundry, who does the cleaning), any tasks that you have agreed to do and how much notice each of you needs to give to end the arrangement. If you do not pay your board directly into a bank account, make sure that you get a receipt every time you make a payment.

For additional accommodation information or advice look at the Frequently Asked Questions section of the accommodation website or contact the Campus Accommodation Officer in Admin Building 4, room 4239; phone: 02 6024 9847; email: accommodation.aw@latrobe.edu.au