

Homeless Awareness

For Real Estate Agents



The face of homelessness is changing. Rising rental prices and low vacancy rates mean many renters are struggling to maintain tenancy and are increasingly at risk of homelessness.

We all have a role to play, but it can be hard knowing how to support people.

This resource is designed to support you as agents to help people at risk of homelessness stay in tenancies. Knowing what assistance and laws are in place helps you best support your landlords and tenants.

What help is available?

From time to time people can fall into difficulty with keeping up with rental payments, this doesn't necessarily mean they are a bad tenant – they may just be have a hard time in that moment. There are lots of supports available, all designed to prevent costly evictions.

Rentstart Tenancy Assist

Rent arrears payments – Hume Housing can pay up to 4 weeks for eligible clients.

Tenant support services

Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services offers a range of support to help tenants maintain their tenancies. This includes access to financial counselling, relief programs, and subsidies.

Support is also available for people experiencing domestic violence, child youth and family teams, playgroups and parenting courses.

What other laws/programs exist?

Domestic violence support

There are options available to tenants if they need to leave to escape violence, or if they wish to stay.

- **Ending tenancy** – If a tenant or their dependent child are in circumstances of domestic violence, they can end their tenancy immediately without being penalised.
- **Property damage** – A tenant who is experiencing domestic violence, is not responsible for any damage caused by a domestic violence perpetrator (whether or not the perpetrator is a tenant) during a domestic violence offence.



What can Real Estates really do?

There are so many simple steps you can take that can have a big impact.

1 Raise awareness of options

We know some landlords are looking for ways to help people experiencing disadvantage. Some agents ask their landlords if this is something they are interested in – then match them with the services and tenants. Services like Hume Housing have a range of options to support someone at risk of homelessness or link them with supports.

2 Reach out to services when you notice potential issues

Even if the tenant isn't on the services client list, they may be able to do a visit and welfare check.

3 Reducing the stigma

There's good and bad people from any demographic. Receiving support payments or centrelink support does not make them a bad tenant. Sometimes these payments can even act as a safety net as a secure and consistent payment. Agents can talk to landlords about positive experiences and help to reduce stigma.

Head Leasing

Head Leasing is where a private rental property is rented from the landlord/owner by a legal entity, such as a community housing provider (CHP) or a government agency, which then on lets the property to a low income or disadvantaged tenant. The CHP will take responsibility for making sure the property is maintained and that the landlord receives their rent on time.

More information can be found here:
[fac.s.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/
headleasing-policy](https://fac.s.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/headleasing-policy)

Rent Choice

Rent Choice is a private rental subsidy that helps you pay the rent for up to three years. Financial assistance may be available if you have had a major financial setback like illness or job loss, are escaping domestic and family violence, are a war veteran, or are a young person aged 16 to 24 years old.

More information can be found here:
[https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/
ways/renting-private-market](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/renting-private-market)

Local contacts

Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (HTAAS)
4969 7666

Hume Housing
Raymond Terrace
1800 004 300

Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Service
4987 1331



A Homelessness Stakeholder Advocacy Group project

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