

EVERYTHING ABOUT RETRIEVING YOUR BOND AT THE END OF YOUR LEASE



ABSTRACT

Your rental bond is essentially a security deposit - usually equal to four weeks' rent - that you need to put down on the property before you move in. Paying a rental bond when moving into a rental property isn't mandatory, but a lot of the time, you will be asked to. While your landlord or property manager may organise for you to pay your rental bond through them, they don't actually hold onto the money. Instead, they need to submit it to the relevant state bond trust along with all your paperwork where it is held throughout the duration of your lease agreement.

WHAT IS A RENTAL BOND?

Most landlords or agents will ask you to pay a bond when renting a residential property. A bond acts as a security for the performance of the tenant's obligations under a residential tenancy agreement.

Lessors and agents are not required by law to take a bond from a tenant, however, if they do receive a bond, they are required to lodge it with the ACT Revenue Office. Bonds can be any amount up to a maximum of four weeks rent.

Lessors and agents must give the tenant a receipt as proof of payment of the bond. Occupancy agreements may require a security deposit be paid. When a refund is requested, a claim may be made by the lessor (also known as the landlord) for damage caused by a tenant (besides normal wear and tear) or outstanding rent owed.

The ACT Revenue Office is responsible for the receipt and management of residential tenancy rental bonds in the ACT under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (the Act) and the Residential Tenancies Regulation 1998 (the Regulation).

The ACT Revenue Office does not provide legal advice to tenants, landlords or real estate agents. The Renting Book is a guide to rental laws in the ACT, other useful resources are listed on the Related Resources page of this site.

If you are the lessor, you will need to pay land tax for both a rented or vacant property that is not your principal place of residence. You may be liable for the foreign ownership surcharge if you are not an Australian citizen or resident.

The Rental Bonds Portal

As part of the ACT Revenue Office's ongoing commitment to provide faster, more efficient digital services, we have developed an online Rental Bonds Portal.

The portal offers real estate agents and landlords the ability to lodge, manage and request refunds for bonds online. The new 360 view provides a detailed summary of bonds held in the portal, including the bond number, property address and bond status e.g. lodged, refund pending and refunded. The portal will also issue receipts, co-tenant change notices and Bond Refund Notices electronically, improving turnaround times.

Agencies have the added capability of being able to manage their own user accounts and can easily add multiple property managers to administer bonds on behalf of their agency.

Registering for the Rental Bonds Portal

Agents and lessors can access the portal via the 'Rental Bonds Portal' button on the top of this page or by clicking [here](#). This will take you to the portal sign in page. Select the 'Create Account' button to commence the registration process and follow the on screen prompts.

Agencies will need to elect an agency administrator to register their account, it is recommended to elect two administrators. The administrators may be a director, principal, an owner or person responsible financially for the agency that has been duly authorised to register the agency's account.

You will be required to provide the agency's ABN, licence number, contact information and bank details in order to complete the registration process.

Lessors managing their own properties will also need to register for the portal. This should be done by the principal lessor for a property, that is, the person responsible for lodging and managing the bond.

The principal lessor will need to supply contact information and bank details to complete the registration process.

Where there are multiple lessors for a property, only the principal lessor needs to register for the Portal. Additional lessors will be identified during the bond lodgement process but will not have access to view the account.

Tenants are being introduced to the Portal in beta trial stages, tenants will be notified if they are required to register with ACT Digital and the rental bonds portal via email.

TIPS TO GET YOUR FULL BOND BACK

There comes a time in every student's life that they dread. No, not exams—we're talking about when it's time to move out of your accommodation. You paid a lot when you moved in, and you want to make sure you get reimbursed the full amount of the security deposit that you paid when you move out, so we've got some tips for you so you can make sure you get your bond back.

Read your lease

Read it carefully. Make sure everything that's in there is reasonable, and so you know what to expect. It might say the ceilings need to be cleaned at the end of your tenancy, or the windows have to be cleaned inside and out, so it's a good thing to check to make sure of your obligations before you start living there.

Fill out the property condition report accurately

As soon as you move in. Include everything. It may take some time, but it'll be worth it in the long run. [dfp_ads id=9505] Make note of absolutely every crack, dent, and

smudge that you come across, just in case, so they're at least logged and don't come back to bite you when your lease is up.

Take photos of the property yourself

Paying special attention to any cracks, anything broken, any missing fittings. Send a copy of these to your property manager.

Fix issues as they arise

If you break something, arrange for your landlord to fix it as soon as possible. Or, if it's in your agreement, fix it yourself. For example, if you break a window, don't wait until you move out for the landlord to fix it—let your landlord know immediately. You may have to pay to get it fixed, but if you can arrange the quote it's generally going to be cheaper than if the real estate company has to get one.

Make sure you pay all your rent

We know that it isn't always possible to pay your rent on time, every time, but just be sure that you do pay it. This way it won't be deducted from your bond when you vacate the property.

Don't lose the keys!

Lost keys can come out of your bond, so be sure to return all sets of keys that you were given at the start. If you do lose a key, be sure to get a spare key cut as soon as possible.

Clean during your tenancy

It may sound obvious, but it's a lot easier to remove a stain if you get onto it right away than if you leave it until the week before you move out. It might not be fun at the time, but ensuring you keep the place in good condition while you're living there can save you hours of hard, boring work in the long run.

Give proper notice that you'll be leaving

If you break the lease early and haven't paid the break fee, you might be liable to have that taken out of your bond. Do the right thing and notify your landlord, in writing, within the given timeframe stated in your contract.

Normal wear and tear on a property is okay

After all, you've been living there, not renting the place just for show. Faded curtains, flaking paint, a worn kitchen bench top, or thin cracks in the walls from building movement are all considered normal damage.

Smudges on the walls, burn marks on the carpet, wine stains in the floor, and an overgrown garden (if you have that luxury) are not. Give the whole place a really good clean, to a professional standard, when your lease is up and you should be okay.

Give yourself time to clean

When you're moving out, don't leave it to the last minute—work out a plan of attack, and go for it. It's much less stressful if you spend your whole last week carefully cleaning than if you rush around on the last day trying to get things done.

Clean the windows inside and out, clean all exhaust fans, wipe down the skirting boards, and don't forget the oven. While a tough job, having a clean oven can mean the difference between the full bond, and shelling out a hundred dollars for a professional oven clean.

If all else fails, consider the professionals

If you think you can't clean your accommodation to a professional standard, get a professional cleaner in.

Getting a quote for one yourself will save you quite a bit of your bond, as cleaners used by real estate agents will generally charge more money. Make sure you get a receipt from the cleaners too, so you can prove that you had the cleaning done.

Moving out doesn't have to be stressful. Give these eleven tips a shot, and you should be able to get your full bond amount back.

COMMON RENTER MISCONCEPTIONS



The rental market is tough – but you do have some rights. We help to make sure you're aware of them.

These days the prospect of home ownership is slipping further out of reach for many Australians, and not just those on lower incomes.

The growing ranks of renters face a shortage of properties, high rents, low quality rental stock, and the likelihood of having to find a new place to live on a regular basis.

In short, it's tough out there. Now more than ever, Australian renters need to be across their rights and be willing to exercise them.

Renters rights' advocates from South Australia and WA outlined to us a number of rights that tenants in their states don't always have their heads around. Given that tenancy legislation is similar around the country, it seems likely that renters in other states and territories have similar misunderstandings.

1. Property maintenance

"Many tenants [in WA] are not aware of their right to breach a landlord for a failure to undertake necessary maintenance," says WA Consumer Protection Director of Legislation and Policy Penny Lipscombe.

"For example, if a rental property has two bathrooms and only one bathroom is able to be used due to a failure by the landlord to undertake necessary repairs within a reasonable time, the tenant can breach the landlord and take them to court and seek a reduction in rent in compensation for the loss of the amenity."

In other states you may also be entitled to apply to your tenancy tribunal for a temporary reduction in rent, or to have your rent paid into a separate account until repairs are done.

A tenant may also have a right to compensation if their property is damaged as the result of poor maintenance.

"If damage to a tenant's goods is caused by the failure of a landlord, a tenant can seek compensation for their loss," says Lipscombe. "For example, if a ceiling collapses because a landlord fails to undertake necessary maintenance."

2. Getting your bond back

"Without a doubt, the bond refund process is the most common and consistent reason a tenant contacts RentRight SA," says Dawes.

"Tenants are not informed of the bond refund process and believe that the landlord or agent holds the bond and that it is their decision whether to give it back or not." (In South Australia, bond money is held by Consumer and Business Services.)

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"Tenants are encouraged to agree for the landlord to keep the bond and do not realise that they do have a right to dispute this and any charges through the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal [SACAT]."

3. Property condition when you vacate

"Tenants say that they are led to believe that they need to leave a property in a pristine condition when they vacate and have it ready for new tenants to move in," Dawes says.

"According to the RTA, a property needs to be left in a 'reasonably clean condition', which means it needs to be left in the condition it was when the tenancy started, with fair wear and tear."

But, as Lipscombe says, "there can be confusion around what is 'fair wear and tear' and what is 'damage' at the end of a tenancy."

"A tenant is responsible for the cost of repairs for any damage they, or people they have allowed onto the premises, have caused.

Landlords are responsible for the costs associated with 'fair wear and tear' for example replacing old and worn floor and window coverings."

4. Eviction process

"Tenants are led to believe that landlords or agents have the right to enter their property, throw them out and change the locks," Dawes says. "Often they are not informed that the landlord actually needs to apply for a hearing at SACAT [for tenants in South Australia] to ask for possession of the property, and that the tenant will be a part of that hearing and will have a say."

5. Tenancy databases

"Tenants are generally unaware of their rights in relation to a listing on a tenancy databases, including how and why the listing occurred," Lipscombe says.

"This is despite the requirement for a tenant to be told why an agent or landlord is going to use a tenancy database."

WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL BOND CLEANING?

Ideally, you should get a rental bond refund within 14 days after completing and submitting the claim forms. It is only possible when the claim is undisputed, and the renter and landlord agree upon the refund amount.

Therefore, besides honouring the lease agreement's terms and conditions, you have to leave the rental premises in the same state of cleanliness they were in at the start of the tenancy. Renters who perform bond cleaning before vacating a rental property have a higher chance of getting their bonds back in full. You can do it yourself, but hiring a professional service for bond cleaning in Canberra is a better and more practical solution. Want to know why? Read on.

Avoid Hassle With Future Tenancies

Canberra has an expensive rental market, and you need to maintain an impeccable reputation to rent a property without the stress. Rental bond deductions happen when you owe rent or damage the property. If you cannot get a complete bond refund, it shows on your record and makes rental providers wary of accepting your applications.

Therefore, rather than risking your bond money by cleaning yourself, book professional end of lease cleaners in Canberra to deeply sanitise your rental property and help you get 100% of your bond back.

Avoid Losing Thousands Of Dollars

The security deposit can be up to four weeks of rent in Canberra, and the median weekly rent in the ACT for houses is \$695, and units is \$560. You can secure a bond refund of thousands by paying a few hundred dollars for professional bond cleaning in Canberra.

For example, if your weekly rent is \$550, your maximum rental bond will be \$2200. To get the entire amount back, you must end the tenancy successfully and perform the final clean well. Professional end of lease cleaners can help you with it because they have the expertise, experience and equipment to sanitise residential properties thoroughly.

Professionals Cleaned The Property

Rental providers cannot legally make renters hire professional cleaners for end of lease cleaning in Canberra. However, you must do it if the landlord or previous tenant had the rental property professionally cleaned. This way, you complete the responsibility of returning the house or unit in the reasonably clean condition it was in at the start of your lease agreement.

Just make sure to ask the landlord for the receipt to know which services you must avail. It will also be proof that professionals cleaned the rented premises.

Less Stress

Bond cleaning differs from house cleaning and requires attention to detail, quality products and high-performance tools/equipment. Investing time, energy and money for it can take a toll on your physical and mental well-being.

However, by taking the assistance of professionals for bond cleaning in Canberra, you can delegate the task and focus on other important things. It will help reduce your stress at the end of tenancy and ensure you can get a complete bond refund.

Bond Back Guarantee

When you perform bond cleaning yourself, there is no assurance you will get a complete bond repayment. But the same is not true when you hire a professional bond cleaning service in Canberra. Most reputed companies offer a bond-back guarantee to gain clients' trust and help put their minds at ease.

It is an assurance that the cleaners will deep clean the property according to industry standards and meet the expectations of the property owner/manager.

Additionally, during the guarantee period, they will re-clean as per the requirement to ensure you can claim your security deposit without deductions.

Convenience

Moving is challenging as you have to complete various tasks simultaneously. When you hire professional end of lease cleaners in Canberra, they will arrive to deep clean the rented premises on the dates you want. Usually, tenants and rental providers prefer the cleaners arrive when renters have vacated the house or unit.

Additionally, if you schedule a professional bond cleaning in Canberra, you don't have to worry about packing and moving your things before your tenancy ends. You can ask them to clean your property after moving by leaving the keys with the property owner/manager.

Get The Clean Done In Hours

Instead of spending days cleaning the rental property for the final inspection, hire professionals who will perform the bond clean within a few hours.

Usually, an end of lease clean takes between 2-8 hours, depending on the property's size and the number of cleaners. A two-bedroom house can take 2-3 hours to clean, whereas a 3-bedroom house can take 4-6 hours to clean.

Before booking a professional service, ask how long the cleaners will take and schedule your move accordingly.

HOW TO REQUEST A BOND REFUND

A request for a refund of a bond is usually made after the completion of a tenancy. Lessors, agents and/or tenants can request the refund. Once the refund has been processed and released from the Rental Bonds Office, the refund is deposited into a nominated account.

Refund requests can be made before a tenancy has been completed if:

- the application is signed jointly by the lessor and the tenant;
- the application is signed by the lessor to be paid to the tenant;
- the application is signed by the tenant to be paid by the lessor; or
- the Australian Capital Territory Civil & Administration Tribunal (ACAT) orders the full, or part of the bond be paid to either party.

Disputes

Disputes where a lessor or agent are claiming part or full bond

The ACT Rental Bonds office on application by either lessor or tenants will refer a dispute between lessor/agent and tenants to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

Disputes in relation to co-tenant refunds

Co-tenant changes may lead to disputes between co-tenants regarding if, and when, a person should have been added or removed from a bond, the ACAT can decide on disputes relating to co-tenants. Tenants can apply to the ACAT directly or ACT Rental Bonds can refer a dispute between co-tenants to the ACAT if requested. If a tenant is not listed on a bond held the referral will be independent to the bond held, until the ACAT notifies the ACT Rental Bonds office by Tribunal Order.

Who can go to ACAT?

Both landlords and co-tenants can apply to ACAT to resolve a tenancy dispute. Under the new laws, co-tenants can apply to ACAT to resolve a dispute between co-tenants (so long as the dispute is related to the tenancy agreement). The factsheet, Disputes in Relation to Co-Tenancies, outlines the dispute resolution processes if disputes do arise.

Lessors and Agencies

All bond refunds need to be requested online through the Rental Bonds Portal. You can refer to the User Guides for step by step instructions on how to set up an account for the portal and complete a refund request online.

In addition to the online refund request, you are also required by law to provide the tenant/s with a signed bond release application. You may continue to use the Bond Refund Form for this purpose.

If the whole bond amount is to be refunded to the tenants, they will receive an email notification advising them of this and the bond will be refunded to the bank account/s provided.

If less than 100% of the bond is to be refunded to the tenants, they will be emailed a Bond Refund S33 Notice. This will detail the requested distribution of the bond. Tenants have 14 days to respond to the Bond Refund S33 Notice in writing and advise if they agree to the requested refund or if they wish to dispute it.

If the tenants agree to the requested refund distribution as detailed in the Bond Refund Notice, all parties will be refunded as requested. Refunds will be paid via bank transfer.

Refund Disputes

If the requested refund is disputed, the Rental Bonds Office will notify the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) of the dispute. Both bond parties will also be notified that the matter has been referred to the ACAT.

Any portion of the bond that is undisputed will be refunded at this stage. The disputed portion of the bond can be refunded at any time, should the parties resolve their dispute, by lodging a completed Bond Refund form signed by all parties.

Tenants

To apply for a refund you will need to complete a Bond Refund form and email it to rb@act.gov.au.

Please read the instructions carefully. You should not sign a Bond Refund Form prior to the refund amounts being entered. Completed forms will be processed within 14 days. Once a completed form has been received, any further revised versions of the form will not be accepted.

The lessor or their agent, and any tenants that did not sign the Bond Refund form, will be issued with a Bond Refund S33 Notice advising of the requested bond refund. They have 14 days to respond to the Bond Refund Notice in writing and advise if they agree to the requested refund or if they wish to dispute it.

If the lessor or their agent agree to the requested refund as detailed in the Bond Refund Notice, all parties will be refunded as requested. Please allow up to 48 hours for the refund to be deposited into your nominated bank account following processing. The description of the refund is ACT Rental Bonds.

Refund Disputes

If the requested refund is disputed, ACT Rental Bonds will notify the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) of the dispute. Both bond parties will also be notified that the matter has been referred to the ACAT.

Any portion of the bond that is undisputed will be refunded at this stage. The disputed portion of the bond can be refunded at any time, should the parties resolve their dispute, by lodging a completed Bond Refund form signed by all parties.

CONCLUSION

Above all else, make sure you understand your rights as a tenant before you move into a rental property. Know what leg you have to stand on and what your responsibilities are. Understand the difference between wear and tear and damage. Always pay your rent as scheduled and, above all else, just be a good tenant. If you always do the right thing, there should be nothing that can be misconstrued or used against you.

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