

Hints for tenants looking for accommodation

The first fact that has to be accepted by any person planning to rent, is that demand very definitely outstrips supply at the moment and this means that the tenant will struggle to find accommodation.

This is according to Wayne Albutt, national manager for the Rawson Property Group's Rental Franchise Division. Tenants should take to heart the fact that landlords are, by law, not allowed to discriminate against any person on any grounds other than a poor credit record or an inability to afford the rental property. This is commonly calculated on his rental being less than one-third of his total income or, more accurately, upon the tenant's monthly net surplus after paying for necessities.

"The landlord has every right to reject your application if, after receiving your permission to investigate your credit records and previous tenant performances, he then discovers you have a tarnished financial or tenant behavior record."

Have a credit check done

The right way to go about finding suitable rental premises, is to visit one or two agencies serving the area you favour and to get them to do the essential checks on your credit standing before you start looking at properties, so that you do not waste your time or that of the agent. Most agents, however, do not opt for this approach as it means spending considerable time with potential tenants which they might consider to be unproductive.

Tenants also tend to work the wrong way round by scanning the web for a suitable property and then go to the agent handling it, inspect it and make an offer - after which the credit checks begin. In these cases, inevitably, a fairly high percentage of the applications will eventually prove unsatisfactory, due either to credit failures or to the fact that the property is let quickly to a credit worthy tenant through a different agent before the application process is completed.

It is also essential to keep phoning the agent regularly, because in today's market, with demand so strong, clients will probably be treated on a first come, first served basis - and the most persistent applicants will be the most successful.

Lease must be in writing

Once you have agreed to a lease, it is important to insist that the lease is put in writing. Landlords are permitted in law to make verbal statements, but tenants still have the right to an agreement of lease in writing. "This," says Albutt, "can be very important if disputes arise later."

The tenant must also insist on doing a complete incoming inspection, at which every defect or potential problem should be listed in writing and the full report should then be signed by both parties. This inspection report must be jointly carried out by both landlord/agent and the tenant before occupation and prior to the finalization of the lease agreement, so as to

ascertain what defects or damage were evident before the tenant took occupation. If this is not done, the tenant could find himself being held responsible for problems he did not cause at the end of his lease.

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