

Coronavirus Information Sheet

Renting in COVID 19

30 April 2020



What can I do if I can't pay my rent?

If you're suffering financial hardship due to COVID-19, the following new changes might help. These will be in effect for a period of six months (26 Sept 2020).

No Eviction

There are currently no evictions for people experiencing difficulties paying rent (see over if you have received a Notice to Vacate).

Agreed Rent Reduction

If you are unable to pay your rent because of a change in your financial circumstances or financial hardship, you may be able to agree on a temporary rent reduction with your landlord. (See opposite for how)

Help to Reach an Agreement

If an agreement can't be reached you can access fast-tracked dispute resolution service, through Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria who will mediate to ensure fair agreements are reached.

Early Breaking of Leases

Ability to apply to break the lease early if you are experiencing financial hardship and want to leave the tenancy. Fees for breaking a lease will not apply. The process for claiming your bond remains the same.

Ban on Rent Increases

Notice of rent increases on or after 29 March 2020, are not valid, for six months.

Rental Arrears (14 day or more)

If you owe more than 2 weeks rent you may be able to seek out financial support. Call Opening Doors on 1800 825 955, to find a local agency providing Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) support or see over for assistance to attend Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

COVID-19 rent relief grant

The Victorian Government has established a fund for those needing rent support. To be eligible for up to \$2000 you must be suffering financial hardship or your financial circumstances have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

- **Step 1:**

Work out how much rent you can afford to pay.

- **Step 2:**

Contact your agent or landlord and make a temporary rent reduction agreement. If you can't reach an agreement call Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria for free support on 1800 658 528.

For example rent reductions letters for landlords or agents visit:

<https://www.tenantsvic.org.au/advice/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- **Step 3:**

Register your agreement at www.online.justice.vic.gov.au/cav-forms/covidcomplaint.doj

- **Step 4:**

If eligible you will be sent an email. You will need to respond to this within 14 days, detailing your situation.

- **Step 5:**

After 2 weeks, if approved the grant will be paid directly to where your rent is regularly paid.

For more detailed information visit
<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/help-renting>

Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program (TAAP)

Available to residential tenants who are financially disadvantaged or experiencing family violence. TAAP services provide:

- Information and referrals,
- Negotiation with landlords or real estate agents,
- Assistance in preparing for and attending hearings at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Bayside Peninsula/Southern Melbourne - Peninsula Community Legal Centre: **9783 3600**

Brimbank Melton - Uniting Lentara: **9351 3600**

Hume Moreland - Uniting Lentara: **9351 3601**

Inner Eastern Melbourne - Uniting Harrison: **9051 3000**

North Eastern Melbourne - Uniting Kildonan: **1800 002 992**

Outer Eastern Melbourne - Uniting Wesley: **8870 4020**

Western Melbourne - WEstjustice: **9749 7720**

Goulburn - Beyond Housing: **5833 1000**

Inner Gippsland - Quantum Support Services: - **5120 2000**

For information about TAAP and other location they may be visit <https://www.tenantsvic.org.au/contact/taap/>



Homelessness or risk of homelessness

If someone is experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, free call **1800 825 955** at any time to speak with a housing and support worker. **Opening Doors** is a 24-hour statewide toll-free number and will direct the call to the nearest service, or if the call is outside business hours, it will be directed to Salvation Army Crisis Services.



Have you been given a notice to vacate:

You can be given a Notice to Vacate for rent that is 14 days overdue. Before you have to leave there are options that can help:

- Contact the landlord or real estate agent as soon as possible and explain your situation. Offer a payment plan - don't offer more than you can afford - put it in writing and keep a copy (you can use this as evidence, if needed).
- If you need help to make a payment plan contact National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 or talk to a support worker.
- You may be able to seek out financial support for the arrears, call Opening Doors on 1800 825 955 for help.
- If your payment plan is rejected or you are unable to make any payments, you will be given a Notice of Hearing from VCAT - its very important that you attend the hearing to explain your situation. For help to prepare for your hearing contact either TAAP in your area (see opposite) or visit <https://www.tenantsvic.org.au/>