

The image shows the cover of a guide. It features a central yellow square with the title 'Finding Housing' in large, bold, blue letters. Below the title, in smaller blue letters, is the subtitle 'A Housing Options Guide'. The yellow square is set against a dark blue background with a yellow border. The background has a geometric pattern of yellow lines forming a square within a square, with diagonal lines connecting the corners. On the right side of the image, there are thin black lines extending from the top and bottom edges towards the center.

Finding Housing

A Housing Options Guide

Credits

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We gratefully acknowledge the use of the following books in the production of this booklet:

Terry Libesman (ed), *The Housing Handbook*, Redfern Legal Centre Publishing, Sydney, 1992

Phillipa Bellemore in association with the Tenants Union of NSW, *Tenants Rights Manual*, Redfern Legal Centre Publishing, Sydney, 1997

Sydney University Students Council & Redfern Legal Centre, *The Share Housing Survival Guide*, Redfern Legal Centre Publishing, Sydney, 1997

This booklet was produced by Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, a project of Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre, and was funded by the NSW Department of Fair Trading. The information contained was accurate at the time of writing.

Thanks to Pauline Gallagher, Rolando Ramos and Esta Paschalidis-Chilas for their assistance.

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Private Housing

Private housing is the most common type of housing in Sydney and Australia. Private housing includes owning your own home, or paying money (rent) to live in a house that somebody else owns.

When you are looking for a place, think about where you want to live. Consider whether you need to be close to public transport, or your place of work, or family and friends.

Also think about what you can afford to pay for your accommodation. Different types of housing have different costs: some types of private housing can require a big financial commitment for a number of years.

Private Rental Housing ('Tenancy')

Private rental housing is a common form of housing in Sydney. The agreement to rent a house or unit is a legal contract called a 'Residential Tenancy Agreement' (sometimes called a 'lease'). This is made between you (the 'tenant') and the owner (the 'landlord'), but often the landlord is represented by a real estate agent. Real estate agents do not represent both landlords and tenants – the agent works for the landlord.

Finding a place to rent

The Sydney Morning Herald and most local newspapers have advertisements for houses and units available to rent in the 'To Let' or 'Rental Accommodation' sections of the paper. On the internet, www.domain.com.au and www.realestate.com.au have advertisements. Real estate agents also place advertisements for houses or units to let in the windows of their offices. You might also find advertisements on community noticeboards and shops.

There are some agencies that will look for accommodation for you if you pay a fee. Often these agencies only use the same sources as you and may not be very helpful.

When you have found a place you like, ask the landlord or real estate agent all about it – for example:

- when can you have a look at the property?
- how much is the rent?
- how many bedrooms are there?
- when is it available – that is, when can you move in?

Landlords and real estate agents might give you a time when you can inspect the property with them, and sometimes they might give you the keys to have a look by yourself. If they give you keys, they will usually ask for a deposit of \$20 or \$50, to be returned when you give back the keys.

It is important to look closely at the property to see if it meets your needs. Ask the landlord or real estate agent if you are not sure about what facilities are provided with the property. For example:

- is the property furnished?
- does the property include a garage, or car space?
- does the property have its own laundry?
- will you have to pay for water and electricity?

If you decide that the place is suitable and you would like to rent it, the landlord or real estate agent will usually ask you to complete an application form. A number of personal and financial questions are asked, and you will need to provide this information.

Landlords and real estate agents can ask questions relevant to tenancy – this includes your employment, your bank accounts, and any of your previous tenancies. They may ask for ‘references’ (recommendations) from your employer, previous landlord and friends. They are not allowed to check your credit record, or ask discriminatory questions (see below).

The landlord or real estate agent might also ask you to pay a deposit while they consider your application. If you pay a deposit, it should be equal to no more than one week’s rent, and the landlord or real estate agent is supposed to consider your application and not take any other applications. If you are not successful, the deposit must be returned to you. If you are successful but you decide not to accept the tenancy offered, the landlord or agent can keep one day’s rent from the deposit for each day you spent making your decision. If your application is approved and you decide to move in, the deposit becomes rent paid for the first week of your tenancy.

In New South Wales, it is illegal for landlords and real estate agents to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, marital status, disability, age and sexuality. If you think that you have been discriminated against, contact a Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service or the Anti-Discrimination Board for advice.

Legal arrangements

Once your application is accepted, the landlord or real estate agent will ask you to sign the Residential Tenancy Agreement, or lease. This legal document will set out the terms of your tenancy: when the tenancy is to begin, what rent is to be paid and when you should pay it, and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

If you are moving in with your husband or wife or partner, you should think about whether to include their name in the Agreement. If their name is on the agreement, they have all the rights and responsibilities of a tenant. Depending on your circumstances, you may prefer your husband or wife or partner to be just an occupant, without the rights and responsibilities of a tenant.

Under the law, a Residential Tenancy Agreement must be in a standard form, and the landlord or real estate agent is required to provide you with a copy of the Agreement and a Condition Report for the property. The landlord or real estate agent must also give you a copy of the 'Renting Guide', a booklet about tenants' rights and responsibilities published by the Department of Fair Trading.

If the landlord does not ask you to sign an Agreement, or if the landlord does not give you a copy of the Agreement, you still have a valid tenancy. You may wish to seek advice from your Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service.

Expenses

Starting a tenancy is expensive. When you sign your Agreement, you will need to pay rent in advance (usually two weeks). In addition, you will probably need to pay a lease fee (no more than \$15) and an amount of money called a bond (usually equal to four weeks rent, or six weeks rent if the premises are furnished). The bond is money that the landlord can claim if you break the Agreement – if you do not break the Agreement, you will get the bond back at the end of your tenancy. Bond must be lodged by the landlord with Renting Services, a part of the Department of Fair Trading.

The Department of Housing is able to help people starting a tenancy who need money for rent and bond. This money is called RentStart, and can pay for half the bond and one week's rent. If you need more assistance, you should ask to be considered for RentStart Plus. RentStart and RentStart Plus are available to permanent residents and people who hold a temporary protection visa, and who meet the Department's eligibility criteria. The Department of Housing will only help if the rent on the property you want to rent is less than 50 per cent of your household's income.

Centrelink also pays Rent Assistance to tenants who meet Centrelink's income test. This payment is available only to permanent residents.

There are other expenses when you move in. You will need to pay for the connection of utilities such as the telephone, electricity and gas. You may also need to buy or rent furniture, and pay for removalists. Organisations like the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul may be able to help you with these expenses.

Contacts

Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service
(02) 9787 4679 (tenants only)

Tenants' Union of New South Wales
(02) 9251 6590 (tenants only), or www.tenants.org.au

Department of Fair Trading, Tenancy Information
(02) 9377 9100 or 1800 451 301

Department of Fair Trading, Bonds Information
9377 9000

Department of Fair Trading, Specialist Support Unit
(for complaints about real estate agents)
(02) 9895 0297

Anti-Discrimination Board
(for complaints about discrimination)
Level 17 201 Elizabeth Street Sydney
(02) 9268 5544

Share Housing

Share housing is a form of accommodation in which the house is shared with other occupants (your “flatmates” or “housemates”). Your housemates might be friends or strangers, and you all share the common areas of the property (eg the kitchen, bathroom and lounge) and expenses like rent and bills.

Finding share housing

There are two ways of getting into share housing. You and a friend, or a group of friends, can look for houses to let and start the tenancy as a group. The process is the same as that described above in ‘Private Rental Housing’.

Alternatively, you can look for a room to let in a house that has residents who want another housemate. Depending on the circumstances, you may have all the rights and responsibilities of a tenant, or you may be a lodger (see below). If you are looking for accommodation for yourself and your family, it may be difficult to find housing this way. If you need to find housing only for yourself or for you and a partner, looking for a room to let in a share house can be an affordable alternative to renting a property on your own.

The Sydney Morning Herald and some local papers have advertisements for ‘Rooms to Let’ or ‘Share Accommodation.’ You might also find advertisements on notice boards at shopping centres, community centres and universities and TAFE colleges.

The residents of a share house will usually interview you, either over the telephone or when you come to look at the house. You should ask the usual questions about rent, location and facilities, but you will also need to consider other factors. For example:

- what do the housemates do – are they workers, students or unemployed?
- do the other housemates smoke in the house?
- do they share food? Do they have a ‘kitty’ (a sum of money for household expenses to which housemates contribute each week)?
- are there any ‘house rules’?
- do they want your name on the Residential Tenancy Agreement (‘lease’)?

It is a good idea to discuss all these matters with the housemates before deciding if you would like to move in.

Legal arrangements

Depending on the circumstances, residents of a share house may be ‘co-tenants’, ‘head-tenant and sub-tenants’ or ‘lodgers.’ If you want to know more about these different legal definitions, contact your Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service or read *The Share Housing Survival Guide*, from Redfern Legal Centre and Sydney University Students Representative Council.

Expenses

Share housing is cheaper than renting by yourself, because you can share expenses like bond, utilities connection, bills and food, and maybe some furniture. If there is a dispute between housemates, however, about who is liable for the rent and other expenses, it can become a complicated and unhappy situation. Community Justice Centres and your Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service may be able to help settle arguments.

Contacts

Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service
(02) 9787 4679 (tenants only)

Department of Fair Trading, Tenancy Information
(02) 9377 9100 or 1800 451 301

Community Justice Centre,

- City Office
(02) 9228 7455
- Bankstown Office
Ground Floor, Civic Tower
66-72 Rickard Road
Bankstown
(02) 9790 0656

Boarding and Lodging

Boarders and lodgers pay rent to a landlord to occupy part of a premises, usually a single room (boarders also receive a meal). Boarding houses, private houses, share houses, hotels, hostels and refuges may offer boarding or lodging accommodation.

In a boarding or lodging house, the landlord retains ‘mastery’ of the house. This may mean that the landlord or their caretaker lives at the house, or has set house rules that all the people in the house must obey, or that the landlord or caretaker is allowed to enter the lodger’s room to clean or change bed linen.

Boarding and lodging accommodation is not much cheaper than private rental accommodation, but it can be easier to get into if you do not have references and it is easier to leave. Boarders and lodgers do not have the same rights as tenants under the law. They are not covered by the *Residential Tenancies Act*. They may be evicted (forced to move out) with little notice – usually only a week, but sometimes even less. Rent may be increased with little notice. It is also difficult to protect the rights that boarders and lodgers do have.

Finding accommodation

The Sydney Morning Herald and local newspapers have advertisements for boarding and lodging accommodation, and boarding houses and hotels sometimes place advertisements for vacant rooms in their own windows. Often boarding houses and hostels are for single people or a single sex only (eg, ‘Gents Only’), but some boarding houses, hotels and private houses may offer accommodation to families.

Legal arrangements

When you move in, you may be asked to sign a contract, sometimes called a ‘Licence’, that sets out the terms of your agreement with the landlord. Often, you will not be asked to sign anything at all. You may also be asked to pay bond and ‘key money’.

Residents sometimes are called boarders or lodgers when really the terms of their agreements mean that they are tenants. If you are not sure whether you are a boarder or lodger or a tenant, contact your Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service.

Expenses

When moving in, you will usually have to pay bond (usually equal to one week's rent) and key money (usually \$25) as well as rent in advance. The room may have some furniture and facilities, but you may need to buy additional furniture. Utilities are usually already provided, but they may coin-operated.

Contacts

Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service
(02) 9787 4679

Tenants' Union of New South Wales
(02) 9251 6590

Caravan Parks ('Residential Parks')

Many people in New South Wales live in caravans or mobile homes in caravan parks or "residential parks". They either rent the caravan from the owner of the park, or they own their own van and just rent the plot of ground in the park. Some people stay temporarily – often while they look for other housing – and others live in parks permanently.

Depending on the park, the accommodation may include its own bathroom facilities, or there may be shared bathroom facilities (an 'amenities block'). Shared bathroom facilities may be coin operated.

Finding accommodation

Ring or visit parks in the area in which you want to live. Ask the park owner about the rent, the terms of your agreement, and the park rules. Park owners usually do not ask for references, but they may.

Legal arrangements

Some park owners do not ask people to sign contracts when they move in; others may ask you to sign a contract (sometimes called a 'Licence'). For the first 30 days of living at the park, you will have rights similar to a lodger: the park owner can force you to leave with little notice, and increase the rent. You must also observe the park rules.

After 30 days, the park owner may notify you that they are extending this period for up to another 30 days. After this period expires, you will be covered by the *Residential Parks Act 1998* and have similar rights to a tenant (see 'Private Rental Housing', above).

At this time the park owner may provide you with a written Moveable Dwelling Agreement setting out the terms of your agreement, and a Condition Report, much like the Residential Tenancy Agreement and Condition Report for houses and flats. The park owner must also provide you with a copy of the booklet 'Residential Park Living'.

Often park owners do not provide tenants with these documents and other information about their rights. Even if the park owner does not sign or provide a written Moveable Dwelling Agreement, you still have a valid agreement under the *Residential Parks Act 1998*. This agreement includes the park rules for your park. For more advice, contact your local Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service or the Parks and Village Service (PAVS).

Expenses

In addition to rent, some park owners may charge a bond; many do not. You will also usually have to pay a deposit for the keys (no more than \$15 if you are covered by the *Residential Parks Act*).

You will have to pay the park owner for utilities like electricity (but no more than the usual rate), and may have to pay security deposits for utilities. If your accommodation does not include its own bathroom facilities, or if the common bathroom facilities are not coin-operated, you may also have to pay an additional ‘visitors fee’ when you have guests staying with you overnight.

Contacts

Southern Sydney Tenants’ Advice and Advocacy Service
(02) 9787 4679

Parks and Village Service
(02) 9281 7967

Buying a House

Buying a house, especially in Sydney, is very expensive. There is a certain legal procedure that must be followed and various ways to find/buy properties for sale. For more detailed information, you should speak to a financial adviser and a solicitor before you buy a house.



SOCIAL HOUSING

About 5 per cent of people in Sydney live in social housing. Social housing includes housing that is owned by the Department of Housing, a part of the Government, and by Community Housing Associations. People living in social housing are usually tenants, and have residential tenancy agreements like private tenants, but there are some important differences.

When you apply for social housing, you do not look for a place. Instead your name will go on a waiting list and you will be offered accommodation when it is your turn. Compared to other countries, social housing is in short supply in New South Wales. Many people wait a long time for social housing, so you will probably need to find private housing while you wait.

Department of Housing

The Department owns and manages houses, flats and other accommodation ('public housing') throughout the State, and rents this accommodation to its tenants. To receive accommodation from Department of Housing, you must be eligible. The Department of Housing will consider your income, family size, and factors such as age, sickness, disability and need for housing. Department of Housing tenants usually pay a portion of their income (about 25 per cent for new tenants) in rent.

The Department can also provide money ('RentStart') to people to help them set up a private tenancy. To receive this payment you must be eligible for it, and the Department of Housing will consider your income and other factors. See 'Private Rental Housing' above.

Applying for accommodation

The Department of Housing has different application forms for different kinds of housing assistance. For accommodation you should fill out the Housing Register Application form. Depending on your circumstances you may also fill out applications for Priority Assistance or Emergency Temporary Assistance (see below).

When you fill out the Housing Register Application, you will be asked about your income, other household members, residency status and other personal details. You will also be asked what area you want to live in.

Unfortunately, people who hold temporary visas are not eligible for public housing (except for Emergency Temporary Accommodation – see below). They are eligible for RentStart to help start private tenancies. Also, sponsored migrants are not eligible for housing assistance while still under sponsorship.

After you have made your application, the Department will give you a number (called a 'T number') and decide if you are eligible. Make sure you keep your T number. If you have a T number, you know that the Department has received your application.

If you are eligible, you will be placed on the Housing Register – the ‘waiting list’. The waiting list is very long: for housing in Sydney, the wait can be about 10 years. If you move house or your circumstances change while you are waiting, advise the Department of the changes.

When it is your turn to be offered housing, the Department will notify you and invite you to inspect the property on offer. If you decline the offer, tell the Department why, as the Department will normally make only two offers. Insist that any unsuitable offers are not counted. Accepting an offer of an unsuitable property does not guarantee that you will be transferred to a suitable property any faster than waiting.

Legal arrangements

If you accept an offer of public housing accommodation, you will sign a Residential Tenancy Agreement with the Department of Housing. You become a tenant, and the Department of Housing becomes your landlord.

The Department will check the income details of yourself and other members of your household and calculate how much rent you have to pay. If your household income changes, or if the number of members of your household changes, you will need to inform the Department.

If you wish to move from your property – for example, if your family grows too large for the property you rent, or if you need to live in another area – you may request to be transferred to another Department of Housing property. Depending on your reason for wanting to move, you may wait a long time for a transfer.

If you think the Department of Housing has made a wrong decision, you can ask the Department to review its decision. Speak to your Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service for more advice.

Expenses

When you sign your tenancy agreement, you will need to pay two weeks rent in advance before moving in. You will also need to pay for furniture, phone and other utilities connections, and other moving costs.

Priority Assistance

If you are eligible for public housing and have an urgent need for housing, you may also apply for Priority Assistance. This means the Department will offer you a house ahead of other applicants on the waiting list. Because there is not enough public housing, many people who are genuinely in need of housing are not given Priority Assistance by the Department.

You will need to show the Department that you are in urgent need of housing. If you are homeless, about to become homeless, or if your household has had to separate to find accommodation, you may be eligible. You may also be eligible if you are aged 80 or older, chronically ill or disabled, at risk of violence or abuse, or if your current accommodation is dangerous or unhealthy.

Most importantly, you will need to show the Department that you cannot resolve this need yourself and that private housing is not suitable to your special needs.

You can nominate an area in which you want to live, but you may need to provide reasons if it is an area where many other people want to live.

If you are approved for Priority Assistance, you will be notified and in time offered a property (see above). You may still have to wait for a property to be made available, so you may have to find temporary accommodation at a friend or relative's house, a caravan park, or a refuge.

Emergency Temporary accommodation

The Department of Housing provides two types of emergency temporary accommodation.

The first type is for people who are eligible for 'RentStart Plus' but who would not be helped if they were assisted only with starting a private tenancy.

You may be eligible for temporary accommodation through RentStart Plus if you are:

- facing homelessness
- unable to find alternative accommodation
- at risk of violence or harm, or
- facing a short wait for more permanent housing (for example, if you have been approved for Priority Housing)

Under RentStart Plus, the Department may pay for up to four weeks accommodation in a caravan park, motel or refuge. In extreme circumstances, this can be extended. The Department does not own the accommodation provided through RentStart Plus: it is low cost private accommodation paid for by the Department.

The second type is for people who are homeless and cannot get housing assistance elsewhere, but for some reason are not eligible for public housing. This is called 'Emergency Temporary Accommodation'.

You will need to show the Department that you cannot get other housing assistance because you are not ordinarily eligible. In other words, you may be eligible for Emergency Temporary Assistance if you are a temporary resident applying for refugee status (an asylum seeker), or if you are a permanent resident who has been made homeless by a disaster such as fire or flood. You will also need to show that you have no resources to provide for yourself and are unable to get assistance from family.

Emergency Temporary Accommodation is not made available often. If you are offered Emergency Temporary Accommodation, you will be given a three month fixed term tenancy in a property owned or leased by the Department. If, at the end of the three months, your circumstances have not changed the tenancy may be extended for a further three months. If you refuse your offer, Department of Housing will not make another.

Contacts

Department of Housing

- Bankstown Office
Level 2, 406-410 Chapel Road
Bankstown NSW 2200
(02) 9796 9300 or (02) 9796 9333
- Burwood Office
4 Railway Parade
Burwood NSW 2134
(02) 9715 0600
- Hurstville Office
2 Woodville Street
Hurstville NSW 2220
(02) 9585 3311
- Miranda Office
14-16 Central Road
Miranda NSW 2228
(02) 9526 4700
- Riverwood Office
171 Belmore Road
Riverwood NSW 2210
(02) 9584 4800

Central Sydney South Regional Tenant Resource Service

(for assistance and information for public housing applicants and tenants)
164 Bemore Road, Riverwood
9584 8473

Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

(02) 9787 4679

Community Housing

Community housing is similar to public housing, with affordable rents for eligible people, but it is not managed by the Department of Housing. Instead, a local community organisation, called a 'Community Housing Association', manages the properties. Some of these properties are owned by the Community Housing Association or The Department of Housing and others are owned by private landlords and leased by the Community Housing Association.

Most residents of community housing are tenants, and the local Community Housing Association is their landlord. Some Community Housing Associations may also offer share accommodation and boarding house accommodation.

Many Community Housing Associations are set up as co-operatives or 'co-ops' (eg, Canterbury Bankstown Community Housing Co-op), but they operate very differently to the tenant managed co-ops discussed further below.

Applying for accommodation

You can apply by completing an application form with Community Housing Associations in the areas you want to live in. Also, when you apply for housing with the Department of Housing you can ask that your name and details be given to a Community Housing provider.

To be eligible for Community Housing you usually have to be eligible for public housing with the Department of Housing and have a 'T-number'. Sometimes, however, Community Housing Associations have special projects for people who miss out on being eligible for public housing. Community Housing Associations currently keep their own waiting lists, and these are shorter than Department of Housing's register. You will still need to find accommodation while you wait for a Community Housing Association to offer you a property.

Legal arrangements

If you accept the property offered to you, you will sign a residential tenancy agreement with the Community Housing Association. You become a tenant, and the Community Housing Association becomes your landlord.

If the property you rent is leased by the Community Housing Association from a private owner, you are still a tenant of the Community Housing Association and pay rent to the Community Housing Association.

The Community Housing Association will calculate your rent based on your household's income. Tenants of Community Housing are eligible for Rent Assistance from Centrelink.

Contacts

Canterbury Bankstown Community Housing Co-op

Suite 11, Level 2 Compass Centre
Bankstown NSW 2200
(02) 9796 3093

St George Community Housing Co-op

Level 1, 7 Barratt Street
Hurstville NSW 2220
(02) 9585 1499

Western Suburbs Housing Co-op

Suite 2, 106 Pendle Way South
Pendle Hill NSW 2145
(02) 9896 6399

Sutherland Shire Housing Network

Suite 2, 764 Princes Highway
Sutherland
(02) 9545 4423

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Womens Housing Company

(for women only)

74 Foveaux Street

Surry Hills NSW 2010

(02) 9281 1764

Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

(02) 9787 4679

Co-operative Housing ('Co-ops')

Co-operative housing ('co-ops') is a type of social housing in which the tenants themselves, as a group, manage the properties in which they live. The Office of Community Housing, a part of the State Government, owns the co-op's properties and subsidises the rent, but the tenants are responsible for collecting the rent, making sure that repairs are done, and allocating vacant properties to prospective tenants. Each tenant is a member of the co-op.

Co-ops are groups of people who have collectively organised their accommodation usually because they have something in common. There are co-ops for women, families, sole parents, people with disabilities, older people, and many co-ops are based around the residents sharing a common cultural or national background.

To become a member and resident of a co-op you must be eligible and be approved by the co-op members. It is also possible to start a new co-op with funding from the Office of Community Housing.

Some co-ops are located in one building; some house their members in separate houses in one area; some provide share accommodation. There are currently about 35 co-ops in Sydney.

Applying for accommodation

You can apply to join an existing co-op by contacting the co-op that suits your lifestyle or circumstances. Each co-op has its own application procedure.

If you are part of a group that is interested in setting up a new co-op, you can apply for funding from the Office of Community Housing. Setting up a co-op requires a lot of work, so first contact the Association to Resource Co-operative Housing (ARCH) for assistance. ARCH provides information and training that new groups need to successfully set up co-ops and keep them operating smoothly.

Legal arrangements

If the co-op has a vacancy and you are approved to join, you will be offered a residential tenancy agreement for the premises that you are to live in. You will then become a tenant, and the co-op will be your landlord.

As a member of a co-op, tenants have other responsibilities in the management of the co-op's affairs. Co-op members must attend co-op meetings and contribute to the running of the co-op: for example, by doing administrative work, maintaining financial records, or arranging for repairs.

Contacts

Association to Resource Co-operative Housing (ARCH)

(02) 9361 6834 or 1800 066 834

Extended Family (women and families)

Dulwich Hill

(02) 9559 2758

Hope Faith and Love (Tongan Christian families)

San Souci

(02) 9529 3826

Kapit Bahayan (Filipino families)

Auburn

(02) 9645 6670

Marrickville Arabic Housing Co-op (Arabic families)

Marrickville

(02) 9558 6715

WINC (women sole parents, singles)

Cabramatta

(02) 9727 3777

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Crisis or emergency accommodation is for people who need accommodation urgently because they are in crisis and have no where else to go. It is provided by a variety of organisations, which aim to help people with specific needs in different ways.

There is not enough emergency housing available, and many people who need it are left without shelter. Between 1 500 and 2 500 people sleep on the streets of Sydney every night.

Some people who are homeless find shelter by occupying empty or disused buildings without the owner's permission. This is known as 'squatting.' Although it provides shelter for people who need it, squatting is illegal.

Crisis Accommodation

There are a number of other services that provide crisis accommodation: some are operated by religious or charitable organisations; some are operated by the government; others are operated by community groups. Places that provide crisis accommodation are often called refuges, shelters, or hostels.

Emergency Temporary Assistance from the Department of Housing (see above) is one type of crisis accommodation available in very limited circumstances. The Department of Housing is also sometimes able to provide accommodation for people for a few days at a motel.

Some organisations try to provide accommodation to anyone who is homeless. Other organisations help only certain kinds of people. For example, some refuges help only women and children escaping from domestic violence; some help only young people; others help single men.

Different services also provide different kinds of help. Some services do not provide accommodation themselves, but will refer people to other services who may be able to provide crisis accommodation. Some services will provide a person with a bed to sleep in overnight; some will provide a person with a room for themselves and their family for a few days; some will provide accommodation under a short-term residential tenancy agreement. No crisis accommodation service, however, will let you stay permanently.

Some agencies also provide other services to help alleviate problems that are associated with homelessness. Many crisis accommodation services provide cheap meals. Some refuges assist with drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Finding crisis accommodation

If you are homeless or about to become homeless, it is a good idea to contact the Homeless Persons Information Service. This service does not provide accommodation, but instead keeps an up to date register of other crisis accommodation services that have vacancies. The Homeless Persons Information Service can then provide you with contact details for other services.

You can also ring the services directly. For some services, it is acceptable to go in person; other services require that people are referred to them by another service.

Different services allocate vacancies in different ways. At some services, if you have an urgent need for accommodation and they have a vacancy, you can be offered accommodation. Some shelters have a lottery draw – if your name is chosen, you get a bed for the night.

Legal and financial arrangements

Arrangements differ between services. Services that provide only a bed for the night usually charge a couple of dollars; others that provide accommodation for a longer period often require that residents pay a portion – for example, 20 per cent – of their income in rent.

Crisis accommodation services usually have rules that residents must follow. Most crisis accommodation services will not allow drugs or alcohol, or people affected by drugs or alcohol, on the premises. Many women's refuges are for women and small children only, and will not allow males over the age of 15 to come to the premises, including residents' husbands, boyfriends and sons. Services may turn you away or require you to leave if you break their rules.

Contacts

Homeless Persons Information Service

(for all people who are homeless; provides referral to suitable accommodation services)

(02) 9265 9081 or (02) 9265 9087

Womens Refuge Referral and Resource Service

(for women and their children; provides referral to suitable accommodation services)

(02) 9560 1605

Womens and Girls Emergency Centre

(for women and girls suffering domestic violence and abuse; provides day refuge and referral to suitable accommodation services and counselling services)

(02) 9281 1275

Youth Emergency Accommodation Line

(for young people; provides recorded information, updated daily, about vacancies at suitable accommodation services)

(02) 9267 5918 or 1800 424 830

Canterbury Youth Accommodation Service

(for young people)

(02) 9740 4227

Squatting

Living in premises without the consent of the owner, or ‘squatting’, is a form of shelter, but it is illegal and can be risky. People who find shelter by squatting are known as ‘squatters’, and buildings that are frequently used by squatters are known as ‘squats’.

For most squatters, their shelter is a disused or empty building, factory, house or store room, that provides no more than a roof over their head. Some squats are more established and have been made more comfortable by squatters in a co-operative manner.

All squatters, however, are at risk of eviction by the property owner. They also face risks to their safety because of unsafe buildings and surroundings.

Legal situation

Squatters have no legal protection from eviction. Under the *Inclosed Lands Act 1901*, it is an offence to enter inclosed lands (including public and privately owned property) without consent of the person in charge of the property. It is also an offence to remain on the property after you have been asked to leave by the person in charge. The owner can call the police and have you arrested if you refuse to leave on request.

Contacts

Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service
9787 4679

Sydney Housing Action Collective
Website: <http://squat.net/shac>

TENANTS ADVICE AND ADVOCACY SERVICES

This booklet was produced by Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, serving the areas of Bankstown, Canterbury, Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale and Sutherland. We are part of Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre, and are especially focused on providing information and advice about housing and tenancy to migrant and refugee communities in our region. Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services provide free, confidential information and advice to tenants. They also provide community education to tenants and community workers, and work with the Tenants' Union of New South Wales to promote the rights of tenants.

Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service

Level 2, 59 Evaline Street

Campsie NSW 2194

Postal address: PO Box 503 Campsie NSW 2194

Telephone advice line: (02) 9787 4679

(Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 am –1 pm, and 2–4 pm.)

If you need an interpreter, please ring 131 450 before calling the advice line.

If you live outside the Southern Sydney area, contact Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service or the Tenants Union hotline for a tenants service near you. Also, the www.tenants.org.au website contains the contact details of tenancy services covering various parts of New South Wales (use the search engine to find the service covering your postcode).

THE TENANTS UNION

The Tenants' Union of New South Wales represents the interests of tenants (both in private rental housing and social housing), boarders and lodgers and caravan park residents throughout New South Wales. It runs a statewide hotline for tenants, and produces a newsletter, *Tenants News*, and other publications for tenants. The Tenants Union also runs campaigns for improvements to the law, and exposes unfair or illegal practices by landlords and real estate agents.

The more tenants who join the Tenants' Union, the more chance we have to gain better rights for all tenants.

Tenants Union of NSW

68 Bettington Street

Millers Point 2000

Office: 9247 3813

Tenants advice hotline: 9251 6590

Website: www.tenants.org.au

GLOSSARY

apartment	see <u>unit</u>
boarder	a <u>lodger</u> who also receives meals with their accommodation
bond	an amount of money paid by a tenant at the beginning of a tenancy as security against the tenant breaking any terms of the tenancy agreement
caretaker	a person employed by the landlord to collect rent and care for the property. Not many properties employ caretakers; those that do are usually boarding houses or lodging houses
coin-operated	a machine or facility that requires payment by coin to operate
common property	any part of a <u>strata scheme</u> not included in the individual units or lots. Rules relating to common property are administered by the <u>owner's corporation</u>
co-op	1) a type of social housing in which the tenants as co-op members collectively manage the properties and tenancies 2) a Community Housing Association set up as a co-operative, with members from the community managing the properties and tenancies
deposit	1) an amount of money paid as a security for the return of keys 2) an amount of money paid as a security for premises while the landlord or real estate agent considers your application 3) an amount of money paid as security for the sale of a property
duplex	premises that share a building with one other premises
ensuite	a small bathroom off a bedroom
flat	see <u>unit</u>

head-tenant	a <u>tenant</u> who lets part or all of the premises they rent to another tenant (called a <u>sub-tenant</u>). A head-tenant has all the rights and responsibilities of a <u>landlord</u> as regards a sub-tenant
key money	an amount of money paid by a boarder or lodger when they move in as security for the key, to be returned to the boarder or lodger when they return the key
landlord	the owner of a property rented to a <u>tenant</u> , <u>boarder</u> or <u>lodger</u>
lease	a contract between landlord and tenant for accommodation; also called a <u>residential tenancy agreement</u>
lodger	a person who pays to occupy a room or rooms for accommodation, but who is not a tenant because the landlord retains mastery of the premises
moveable dwelling	a caravan or manufactured home
owners' corporation	the decision-making body of a <u>strata scheme</u> , whose members are the owners of each of the units or lots in the strata scheme; also called the <u>body corporate</u>
property manager	see <u>real estate agent</u>
real estate agent	a person who is authorised by the owner of a property to deal with that property on the owners behalf; also called a property manager . Real estate agents work for and are paid by the owner of the property; they do not represent tenants
reference	a recommendation from a friend, employer or landlord relating to your ability or good character
refurbished	improved; that is, the owner has done some work to the property
renovated	improved; that is, the owner has done work to the property and installed new facilities

rent	1) an amount of money paid periodically under a contract for accommodation 2) to either provide or live in premises under a contract for accommodation
residential park	an area of land or park for caravans and relocatable homes
semi-detached	a house that shares a wall with the next house
squatter	a person who lives in premises without the consent of the owner or occupier
strata scheme	a scheme that allows a number of people to own units or lots in one larger building or property, and share responsibility for <u>common property</u>
sub-tenant	a tenant who has a residential tenancy agreement to rent a part or all of the premises with another tenant (called a <u>head-tenant</u>) rather than the owner of the premises
tenant	a person who pays to occupy premises or a part of premises for accommodation, to the exclusion of the landlord
terrace house	one house in a row of similar or attached houses, usually older houses
townhouse	one house in a series or group of similar houses, usually in a <u>strata scheme</u>
unit	premises that share a building with a number of other premises, usually in a <u>strata scheme</u> or all owned by one person; also called a <u>flat</u> ; an <u>apartment</u>
utilities	services such as electricity, water, gas and telephone connections

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN ADVERTISEMENTS FOR ACCOMMODATION

2sty	two storey
A/C	
air con	air conditioning
amens	amenities
apart	apartment
avail	
avl	available
b/in	built-in wardrobes
balc	balcony
bathrm	bathroom
bdg	building
br	bedrooms
broadminded	
b'minded	gay (homosexual) or gay-friendly
c'space	car space (parking)
c'yard	court yard
cl	
cls	close to

cpl	couple
dbl	double
d.washer	dishwasher
ens	ensuite
excel cond	excellent condition
exp	expenses
f/f	fully furnished
facils	facilities
fem	female
fl'boards	polished floor boards
hse	house
igp	in-ground pool
kit	kitchen
ldry	laundry
lge	large
LUG	lock up garage

lux	luxury
M/F	male or female (no preference)
med	medium
mod cons	modern conveniences, especially appliances
N/S	non-smoker
nr	near
nth facing	north facing (towards the sun)
o'looking	overlooking
off st pkg OSP	off street parking
ono	or nearest offer (price or rent open to negotiation)
opp	opposite
outside WC	outside toilet
pcm	per calendar month
pp	per person

prof	professional worker
pw	per week
quiet loc	quiet location
refurb	refurbished
renov	renovated (new facilities)
resp	responsible (reliable and trustworthy)
rm	room
sec.	security building
semi	semi-detached
sep lnge/din	separate lounge and dining rooms
sgle	single
sh shr	share
sml	small
t'hse	townhouse
tce terr	terrace
trans	public transport

u	unit
veg	vegetarian
walk trans	walking distance from public transport
yo	years old (age)



**Southern Sydney
Tenants' Advice & Advocacy Service**

**A project of
Canterbury Bankstown
Migrant Resource Centre Inc.**

Level 2, 59 Evaline Street, Campsie NSW 2194