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MELBOURNE RENTAL LIFE: A GUIDE EVERY TENANT SHOULD KNOW



Abstract

Renting in Melbourne can be exciting but also challenging, especially for those who are new to the city or living independently for the first time. Understanding how renting works, what your rights are, and what responsibilities you have can make your experience smoother and more enjoyable.

This guide brings together helpful information from reliable Victorian government sources and trusted media outlets. It covers the essentials of renting, property care, communication with landlords, and recent changes in Victoria's rental laws. The goal is to provide simple, practical advice that helps every Melbourne tenant stay informed and confident throughout their renting journey.



Getting Started

Before exploring the details of renting in Melbourne, it helps to know the basics. Every rental agreement in Victoria is protected under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic), which sets out the legal rights and responsibilities for both tenants and rental providers.

For clear and accurate information, start with trusted sources such as Consumer Affairs Victoria, Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria, and Study Melbourne. These platforms explain how to handle repairs, manage communication, and resolve disputes if they occur.

Melbourne's rental market is diverse and fast-moving, so being informed is the best way to avoid stress later. With the right knowledge, you can plan your rental period confidently and enjoy your time in one of Australia's most dynamic cities.

Introduction: Renting in Melbourne – The Basics

The things every renter and rental provider needs to know



Rental properties must meet the minimum standards

There are 14 categories of minimum standards for rental properties.

All rental properties must meet the standards for each category.

Rental providers (landlords) must make sure a property meets minimum standards on or before the day a renter moves in.

Find more details about the 14 categories of minimum standards below. You can also find the rental properties minimum standards checklist.

Note: There are special rules for minimum standards in rooming houses.

When do minimum standards apply?

The minimum standards, detailed in Schedule 4 of the Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021, apply if your rental agreement started:

on or after 29 March 2021, or

before 29 March 2021 and became a periodic agreement (month to month) on or after 29 March 2021.

When do minimum standards not apply?

They do not apply if your rental agreement became a periodic agreement (month to month) before 29 March 2021.

Starting and changing rental agreements



Rental agreements

A rental agreement used to be called a lease or a residential tenancy agreement. It is a contract between the renter (tenant) and rental provider (landlord). There are 3 types of rental agreements for residential properties such as houses, units and apartments.

There are different agreements for rooming houses, caravan parks, and site tenants in residential parks and villages.

What should be in a rental agreement (lease)



Rental agreements should include:

- the amount of rent and how it is to be paid
- how rent increases will be calculated
- the length and type of agreement
- the amount of bond
- other conditions and rules
- any special terms.

Read more about renters' rights when signing a rental agreement.

You must use the 'prescribed form' when entering into a written rental agreement. A prescribed form is defined by Victorian rental law.

You can include extra terms and conditions that are not in the form, as long as they are not prohibited by the law. You must not include terms which take away any of the rights and responsibilities provided for by the law.

There is no cooling-off period for a rental agreement, so you should make sure you understand it and accept the conditions before you sign one.

Find information on what a rental provider or agent must give the renter before moving in.

Renters giving notice of intention to vacate



Renters who want to move out can either talk to their rental provider (landlord) to reach an agreement, or give formal notice that they want to leave.

A notice of intention to vacate is a formal statement that the renter wants to end the rental agreement (lease).

There are only certain reasons renters can end a rental agreement early without breaking the agreement (breaking the lease) and having to pay compensation or lease break fees.

Reasons renters can give notice

Before possession

The rental agreement terminates immediately if:

- the renter has not entered into possession of the rented premises, and
- the renter has given a notice of termination to the rental provider because the rented premises do not meet rental minimum standards.

End of an agreement

Renters must give 28 days notice if they want to leave at the end of a rental agreement (lease).

Renters on fixed-term agreements, like a 12-month agreement, will automatically move to a month to month agreement if they do not give notice.

Early notice without breaking the agreement



There are some reasons a renter can leave before the end of the rental agreement without breaking the agreement and without having to pay costs.

These reasons, and how much notice must be given, are listed in the table on this page.

The renter must give written notice for any of these reasons.

Breaking the agreement

If renters give notice for any other reason before the end of the rental agreement, they will be breaking the rental agreement. They may have to pay costs.

Agreement to leave without formal notice

A renter may ask a rental provider if they can leave without giving them a formal notice of intention to vacate. The rental provider does not have to agree. If they do, the agreement should be recorded in writing.

Your rights when renting



Understand your rights and obligations as a tenant

If you're planning to rent privately in Melbourne or elsewhere in Victoria, there are a few things you'll need to know when it comes to your rights and responsibilities.

Renters Guide

The Renters Guide will take you through every stage of renting a property. Created by Consumer Affairs Victoria, it provides trusted information. It's available online, to download, or visit the Study Melbourne Hub for a hard copy. Keep reading for more information about renting in Victoria.

Your renting rights

When living in Australia, you will enjoy the same basic rights and legal protections as anyone else in the country, including citizens.

This applies to renting as well. Your landlord or property manager must abide by the law and uphold your rights, such as by officially lodging your bond, giving adequate notice of inspections, and providing necessary repairs in a timely manner. It's also key to remember that your accommodation provider does not have the right or ability to challenge or cancel your visa.

Learn about your renting rights as an international student in Victoria



Will landlords rent to international students?

As an international student, you may be worried that landlords won't rent to you because you're on a temporary visa.

However, this generally isn't the case in Melbourne and Victoria at large. Most property managers and landlords will gladly rent to international students if their application fulfills the requirements (e.g. they have a positive rental record, proof of sufficient funds etc.).

When you rent a house or apartment in Victoria, you will typically have to sign a lease, which includes the terms and conditions of your agreement.

Alternatively, if you're moving into a room for rent in Melbourne in an existing sharehouse, you can either be added to the lease (called a 'co-tenancy') or rent through the main tenant (called 'subletting').

In either case, it's always important to read your lease or tenants' agreement carefully to make sure you understand what you're agreeing to.

Rental agreements vary based on dwelling type and arrangement but will typically include:

- Your rent amount and how it should be paid
- How rent increases will be calculated
- The length and type of agreement
- The bond amount
- Any other conditions or special terms

It's also important to remember that it is illegal to refuse to rent to another person because of who they are, such as due to their race, background, culture, age, ability, sexuality or gender.

Inspections and rental application processes

Attending rental inspections in Victoria is a great way to see a property in person before applying. It's a chance to make sure the place is clean, in good condition and has everything you'll need in your future home.

There are also minimum standards that every rental in Victoria must meet, so make sure you know these and keep them in mind as you inspect.

You can usually find inspection times posted on rental websites or by contacting the real estate agent.

Once you've found your perfect place, you'll need to complete a rental application, which is usually done online.

You'll probably be asked to provide some documents in your application, such as:

- ID (e.g. passport or birth certificate)
- Proof of employment or income (e.g. payslip or bank statement)
- Prior rental history
- Contact information for references

Note: You may not have all of these, especially if it's your first time living away from home. If you have any questions about your application, check with the real estate directly.

Rental bidding



Rental bidding or rent bidding is the process of encouraging prospective tenants to offer above the advertised price of a unit. Another common form of rental bidding is listing a price range for a unit to secure a tenant who offers the highest price within or above that range.

Rental bidding in Victoria is illegal. This means that it is illegal for real estate agents and/or property managers to solicit such offers from you.

Signing a lease

When you rent a house or apartment in Victoria, you will typically have to sign a lease, which includes the terms and conditions of your agreement.

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Paying a bond



When you move into a new place, you will be asked to pay a security deposit, which is called a 'bond'.

Your bond should be paid directly to your agent or landlord, who must then lodge it with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA). This money cannot be used by you, your agent or your landlord for the duration of your lease.

If you damage the home during your stay beyond normal wear and tear, your landlord can request some or all of your bond as compensation when you move out.

Who maintains gutters, gardens, and pools in a rental?



We chat with RDRV’s rental law expert, Deputy President Kylea Campana, about common outdoor maintenance and repair questions.

When something breaks or needs attention in a rental property, it’s not always clear who needs to fix it. Is it a minor job the renter can reasonably handle? Or is it a bigger job that the rental provider needs to sort out?

What does the law say?

Victoria’s Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic) lays out the details of repair and maintenance responsibilities, which is summarised in this guide from Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Essentially:

- The renter is responsible for keeping the place reasonably clean and reporting any repair and maintenance issues
- The rental provider is responsible for keeping the property in good repair

But what counts as “good repair” or “reasonably clean”? And how do these rules play out with gutters full of leaves, overgrown lawns, or a pool turning green?

Defining what is reasonable (and what is not)

Campana says repair and maintenance issues are the rental provider's job. However, a renter has a responsibility to keep the premises reasonably clean. That's where mowing the lawns, a little bit of weeding, and those sorts of things fall into play.

The condition of the garden at the start of the rental agreement matters. For example, if the backyard was overgrown when the renter moved in, they shouldn't be expected to clean it up to get their bond back.

Our Deputy President's advice to rental providers

Campana recommends that rental providers conduct annual maintenance checks to help meet their responsibility to keep gutters clear and working. She also observes there's often an increase in gutter disputes when trees start losing their leaves in autumn.

"Once a year, just before the spring rains or just after autumn, come around and do a maintenance check," she says. "Remove all the leaves from the gutter. Do this regularly, instead of waiting for the renter to actually make a request."

Who's responsible for the pool in a rental property?



Renter's responsibility

Renters are responsible for general cleaning tasks, such as:

- Regularly skimming leaves from the pool surface
- Cleaning the pool filter basket
- Checking the chlorine levels
- Covering the pool when it's not in use

The renter must also notify the rental provider in writing of any faults with the pool or spa fences, doors, or gates.

Rental provider's responsibility



Major upkeep, maintenance and repair tasks to make sure the pool and pool fence are functional and meet safety standards, such as:

Repairing pool pumps, filters, and heaters

- Regular water testing
- Checking pool and spa doors and gates work properly

Tips to avoid maintenance disputes in your rental property

- Take photos of the garden, pool, and any damage at the start and end of a rental agreement
- If you're renting a place and notice something needs fixing, report it as soon as you can
- Renters should not attempt major repairs – report them instead

- Rental providers should budget for seasonal and preventative maintenance – it protects the property and avoids future disputes
- Include any regular maintenance in the rental agreement

How to draught-proof your home

It's the weekend task that will keep you warm all winter. Although your home may be well-insulated and heated, in the cooler months, cold air can leak in and out through gaps around windows, doors, vents, skirting and other areas of your home. Draught sealing these pesky openings will make sure your home is comfortable all season long, plus it will keep out rain water, dust, noise and insects. The best news is – draught proofing is an easy task to conquer in a weekend.

How to draught-proof home

How do you find out exactly where the draughts are coming from? The simplest way to pinpoint the source of a draught is to burn a stick of incense in the vicinity of the problem, then closely watch where the smoke drifts. Once you've found the gap, here's what you can do next.



How to draught-proof a door

Unwanted draughts most often enter the house through the gap under the front or back door of your home. The simplest way to stop a draught from a door is to place a rolled-up old bath

towel along the bottom of the door or block the draught with a door snake, like this one. Or a draught stop, like this one.

But for a more permanent solution that moves with the door when it swings open and closed, install a plastic or metal door seal with a wiper. This will not only eliminate cold air coming in (and hot warm escaping), it will prevent creepy crawlies, dust particles and noise entering the house.

You'll find draughts may enter your home around the edges of doors too, but this can easily be solved with self-adhesive weather stripping. Weather stripping (also sold as draught excluder), typically comes in a variety of lengths and widths to suit a variety of doors.



How to stop a draught through windows

The same spongy, self-adhesive weather stripping used around doors can also be applied between the sash and frame of your windows. Any gaps that may appear around the edges of your windows can be sealed with caulk (a waterproof sealant and filler).

How to draught-proof vents

Typically spotted in older brick homes, fixed ceiling and wall vents are essential in rooms that have un-flued gas heating or an open fire, and in hot and steamy areas (such as your bathroom, kitchen and laundry) to allow satisfactory ventilation.

In other rooms, they're just draughty holes! If they're not essential in your home, you can look for (or make) vent covers, replace the old vents with closable versions or remove the vent and plaster the area.



Other draughty zones

Other common spots to look for air leaks around your home include the junctions between two building materials, such as where your skirting meets the wall, and where plumbing pipes and electricity cables leave the house.



The most effective way to fill these small openings is by using off-the-shelf gap filler, while larger gaps are best blocked up with expanding polyurethane spray foam.

How To Schedule Your Bond Cleaning At The Right Time?

The challenges of vacating a rental home are inevitable. From sorting and packing personal belongings and repairing damages to deep cleaning the property, tenants often feel overwhelmed by juggling multiple chores simultaneously.

As the move out date approaches, preparing the rental property for the final inspection to retrieve full bond money becomes essential. That's where a professional end of lease cleaning Melbourne service comes in. Since landlords and property managers conduct thorough property inspections and follow strict cleaning standards, ensure you leave the task to professionals for a streamlined and stress free experience. They will return the property in a reasonably clean state as it was at the starting of a tenancy.

However, with hectic routines, it becomes challenging to schedule the professional service at the right time. It not only determines the property is thoroughly cleaned (all nooks and crannies) but also helps prevent rental disputes. It also allows tenants to address necessary repairs and meet landlord expectations for a seamless process. So, here is a comprehensive guide on scheduling your bond cleaning service at the right time. Ensure you check the property

condition report, cleaning clauses and other aspects mentioned in your tenancy agreement before the final move out.

Let's Get Started!

1. Thoroughly Review Your Tenancy Agreement

First things first! Take time out of your busy schedule to check the signed copy of your rental agreement. It outlines the pre determined cleaning requirements as well as conditions for a hassle free bond refund.

By meticulously reviewing cleaning obligations, you ensure that all spots and rooms are covered, preventing missed details that could lead to conflicts. This allows you to calculate the time needed to achieve a sparkling abode. Also, check the move-out date and time so that you can book the professionals at the right time, i.e., before the rental property inspection.

Note: Refer to the Property Condition Report to help decide what needs to be cleaned as a tenant, as you are not liable for pre-existing damages.

2. Don't Delay: Book the Service in Advance



This is one of the most crucial aspects when hiring the best end of lease cleaning Melbourne services for your bond retrieval. As the demand for professional cleaners in the city has increased, it is recommended to schedule the service at least a week or two before your move out date. It provides flexibility and prevents last minute chaos.

Important to Note: Highly professional cleaners often get booked quickly during summers and public holidays. So, book your preferred company at least three weeks before moving out during a peak season.

3. Schedule After Packing Your Belongings



Tenants often overlook this when preparing for the final rental inspection. Professionally trained cleaners always prefer an empty room or property to access nooks and crannies efficiently. This also streamlines even the most complicated cleaning process regardless of the property's size and condition.

Ensure you create a proper plan and pack your belongings into boxes. Also, remove furniture, big appliances and other distractions before the bond cleaning service. This enables professionals to clean every nook and cranny effortlessly. They take care of everything that you might forget to clean when doing it yourself.

4. Align with the Final Property Inspection Date

Landlords and property managers schedule the final property inspection before the final move out date. It is conducted to evaluate the current condition of the property. This also means missing important spots or dirt behind could lead to bond deductions.

Thus, consider scheduling the professional service a few days before your final inspection. This minimises the likelihood of collecting dirt and debris on already cleaned areas, keeping your property spotless. They know the correct order to clean the house, ensuring effective and efficient results.

5. Plan For Extra Time to Guarantee a Meticulous Service



Rushing the cleaning process means leaving dirt traces behind. Last minute bookings lead to imperfect results and miscommunication. It is important to remember that a professional end of lease cleaning Melbourne is intricate, requiring more time and energy depending on the size and condition of the property. So, booking at the final hour on the inspection day can lead to bond deductions.

Rather, allow professionals sufficient time to deep clean the premises according to the pre approved checklist. The cleaning inclusions are:

- Dusting ceiling fans, walls, shelves, cabinets, light fixtures and fittings
- Cleaning windows, blinds and curtains
- Picture frames and drawers
- Kitchen Appliances
- Range hood and countertops
- Sinks and faucets
- Drains and garbage disposal
- Bathroom fixtures and fittings
- Tiles
- Carpets and floors
- Baseboards
- Patio floors and garage walls

Ensure you give them enough time to deep clean every nook and cranny, and that's where scheduling the service at the right time matters the most. Some companies also offer free reclean in case of missed spots. So, ask questions related to the service before making the final decision.

6. Don't Book During Peak Time

It is good to avoid scheduling the professional bond cleaning service during the peak time of the year in Melbourne. You should never hire experts on weekends, end of the month and on public holidays. Instead, choose a weekday or less busy time. This gives you enough options to choose the most preferred company in your local area. Though, keep the final inspection date to avoid last minute chaos. Scheduling the service in less busy times can also help you save money.

Wrapping up

Scheduling a meticulous end of lease cleaning service at the right time is crucial to avoid last minute chaos, miscommunication and hard earned bond money. These tips will help determine when to book the service without feeling overwhelmed. This will help you stay organised throughout your move out journey.

No-fault evictions banned and break-lease fees capped under sweeping reforms in Victoria



No-fault evictions will be banned in Victoria and renters will not have to pay more than four weeks' rent for breaking their lease under a suite of reforms announced by Jacinta Allan.

The premier announced the measures on Wednesday, as well as a ban on landlords and real estate agents charging fees to process rent or conduct background checks.

It comes after Guardian Australia's Hot Property series revealed an increasing number of real estate agents were moving tenants' payments on to third-party "rent tech" platforms, which charge service fees.

In a statement, the Victorian government said while landlords are required under the law to offer a fee-free option, such as paying rent in cash at Australia Post, they were often "highly inconvenient" for tenants.

"That's why government will ban someone charging you a fee just for paying your rent – regardless of the payment method used. Whether you're paying digitally or in person, you should just be paying what you owe," it said.

The government will also prohibit rental providers, real estate agents or third-party apps from charging tenants for background checks.

A ban on no-fault or no-grounds evictions, which in Victoria allow a landlord to kick a tenant out at the end of a fixed-term lease without a reason, will also be announced.

Currently, tenants in Victoria can be given either 60 or 90 days' notice to vacate, depending on the length of their fixed-term lease, even if the landlord intends to keep renting out the property.

But under the reform, landlords will only be able to issue evictions notices for reasons such as damage, not paying rent or if the owner is moving back in.

The government said there will no longer be an incentive for landlords to evict tenants in order to subsequently raise the rent on the property.

Tenants Victoria's chief executive, Jennifer Beveridge, welcomed the ban, saying it put renters on a more equal footing with landlords.

"Renters have just grown used to accepting they may only be able to stay for a year, and then they have to move on and incur all of those additional costs that come with that," she said.

The government said it will introduce legislation to parliament by the end of the year to enact the ban, after a similar bill passed by the New South Wales parliament last week.

In addition to the eviction ban, Allan will announce the cost of breaking a rental agreement will be capped at one week's rent for each remaining month of the lease, up to a maximum of four weeks in total.



Legislation will also be introduced to mandate requirements for evidence of bond claims, with financial penalties for landlords who fail to comply.

Landlords will also no longer be able to terminate access to electronic keys or security devices – also known as fobs – unless they are terminating the rental agreement. If a tenant requests an additional electronic key or fob, landlords will also be unable to unreasonably deny it.

Allan said the work builds on more than 130 reforms that came into effect in 2021, as well as measures announced last year, including creating a portable bonds scheme and establishing a renting taskforce and a new system, Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria.

“Renters’ rights are all about respect – that’s the principle that we are trying to bring to the rental market ... and that’s why we are leading the nation on it,” she said.

Victorian landlords threaten ‘mass exodus’ over proposed rental rules



Unhappy landlords in one Aussie state are raging over proposed changes to rental laws, with some going as far as threatening to sell their properties.

Landlord are up in arms over proposed changes to rental rules, with some even claiming the move could spark a “mass exodus” of investors.

Last week, the Victorian government proposed new minimum rental standards relating to energy efficiency across the state.

The proposed changes are in line with the government's commitment towards net zero emissions by 2045 and would ensure that tenants are provided with "comfortable and energy efficient living arrangements".

It would include things such as installing ceiling insulation where none exists, droughtproofing with weather seals on all external doors, four-star shower heads in all showers, new electric hot water systems and three-star efficiency cooling for systems in the main living area. If introduced, the changes would start coming into effect from October 2025. Appliances would not need to be upgraded until the existing ones reach the end of their lives. Insulation and draught-proofing would need to be upgraded at the start of a new lease.

Many landlords are less than impressed by the proposal, with property investors taking to multiple landlord groups to express their outrage. One homeowner called the plan "delusional", claiming it may save tenants money on energy bills but it would drive up rents.



Another person claimed the government was trying to "bankrupt" landlords and one warned the move would only make the rental crisis "worse" for tenants.

“Sadly and frustratingly another incredibly foolish, ill thought idea by Labor that will only increase rents, forcing more Mum & Dad investors out of property investing, creating an even greater problem for renters,” one added.

There were many who branded the proposal just “another blow for landlords”, with multiple people claiming this would see many selling their investment properties rather than having to comply with the new rules.

Another said that the Victorian government would see landlords continuing to sell their rentals if they kept introducing policies to “erode the freedom to do what you wish to your property”.

One person added: “Keep raising the costs to maintain rental properties and I can tell you myself and many more landlords will simply sell.” “Enough is enough, they’re not helping the housing crisis. Keep lifting all these standards for tenants and landlords keep raising rents, then when you see how some tenants keep the house and their standard of cleanliness it’s a bloody joke,” they continued.



In documents released on Monday, Commissioner for Better Regulation Cressida Wall confirmed there would likely be rent increases associated with the new policies.

“The departments acknowledge that it is likely that at least some of the costs will be passed on to tenants, and that recent cost-of-living pressures and interest rate rises may limit the amount of cost increases that rental providers and rooming house operators can absorb,” she said.

“The departments explain that rental supply may contract in the short term as providers undertake upgrades to comply with the new minimum standards.

“The departments also explain that these impacts will be limited by varying when compliance with each standard is required, and as some of the preferred options account for potential implementation risks (e.g. supply chain issues).”

The government estimates these proposed upgrades would save renters about \$567 a year off their energy bills.

The announcement comes after data released last year from tenancy advocacy organisation Better Renting exposed the extreme living conditions and freezing temperatures renters were enduring across the country over the winter months.



The research found that 72 per cent of rental properties across the nation recorded temperatures below 18C, the minimum recommended by the World Health Organisation.

For more than three hours per day, Australian rental properties recorded colder temperatures indoors than out.

Better Renting researched 59 renters across the country to track temperature and humidity from June to August, comparing outdoor temperatures to indoor conditions.

The organisation's deputy director Bernie Barrett said renters were "missing out" on safe and warm homes during the colder months.

"As our researchers have told us, renters are trapped in a powerless position where they can't speak up for themselves and ask for even the bare minimum because they are beholden to the whims of landlords and real estate who hold all the power to potentially make them homeless," he said.

"Rental homes in Australia are failing to meet minimum healthy temperatures, even during a warmer winter."

The proposed changes to Victoria's minimum rental standards are open for consultation from now until July 1, with a decision set to be made by October 2024.

Conclusion

Renting in Melbourne becomes much easier when you understand your rights, your responsibilities, and the support services available to you. With clear information and good preparation, tenants can handle common situations with confidence, from communicating with rental providers to managing everyday obligations.

This guide has drawn on trusted Victorian resources to help you make informed decisions throughout your renting journey. With the right knowledge and awareness, you can enjoy a smoother, more positive experience in Melbourne's rental market.

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