

Residential tenancy complaints

Tenants, landlords and property managers

NSW Fair Trading provides a free complaint service for tenants, residents, landlords and property managers with tenancy-related matters or disputes.

How can Fair Trading assist with my matter?

The tenancy complaint service offered by Fair Trading is a voluntary process between any parties involved in a tenancy matter or dispute. An experienced Fair Trading officer will aim to finalise the matter through mutual agreement.

Fair Trading will bring parties together by teleconference or on site to finalise the matter.

The tenancy complaint process does not include:

- orders that require action or payment from either party
- a Fair Trading officer inspecting property to determine fault or attribute blame, which falls outside their role.

A video is available that demonstrates how the complaint service works: *Help with tenancy problems* contains examples of cases that were based on real complaint scenarios. It can be viewed on Fair Trading's YouTube channel.

What type of tenancy matters can Fair Trading assist with?

Fair Trading can assist with tenancy matters about:

- repairs and maintenance
- non-urgent health and safety issues
- alterations to premises
- access to premises or inspections
- non-compliance with tenancy agreement
- water saving devices and smoke alarms
- provision of correct notices
- ending a tenancy or breaking a lease
- condition reports

- rental increases
- rental arrears of less than 14 days.

What type of tenancy matters can't Fair Trading assist with?

Fair Trading cannot assist with tenancy matters about:

- public or social housing matters
- urgent health and safety issues
- an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) or violence related matters
- lockouts and evictions
- termination
- illegal activity
- serious damage to the property
- rental arrears in excess of 14 days
- rental bond matters.

For these matters, you may lodge a claim with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

The Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services provide assistance and advocacy to all tenants, particularly vulnerable or social housing tenants. Find your nearest Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service at www.tenants.org.au or call 8117 3700.

What should I do before seeking Fair Trading intervention?

Parties involved in the complaint should try to resolve the issues themselves before seeking Fair Trading intervention. These steps can help you find a resolution:

1. Discuss your concerns and explain the problem with the other party. Let the other party express their concerns and position.
2. Both of you should be ready to discuss issues related to the matter. This could include:
 - invoices
 - receipts
 - tenancy agreements
 - notices provided
 - condition reports

- quotes
 - correspondence.
3. Both of you should suggest ways to resolve the complaint and be willing to negotiate a mutually agreeable settlement.
 4. Call Fair Trading on 13 32 20 to discuss your problem.

If you are not able to resolve the matter yourself, you can lodge a tenancy complaint with Fair Trading to begin the complaint process.

When will the complaint process take place?

The time to finalise the complaint depends on parties' availability and the level of inquiries to be made by Fair Trading.

Generally Fair Trading endeavours to finalise a matter within 30 days of receiving the complaint.

What to expect from the complaint process

If Fair Trading is able to help both parties reach an agreeable settlement, we will finalise the complaint without any further intervention.

Where agreement cannot be reached, parties will be advised of the outcome and recommended to seek independent advice or lodge a claim with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

During the complaint process

Any parties involved need to be prepared to put their points forward and listen to what the other party has to say. Both parties will benefit when each is willing to negotiate and make suggestions to settle the matter.

What is the role of the Fair Trading Officer?

Fair Trading officers are qualified and skilled in handling complaints.

The Fair Trading officer will:

- provide impartial advice to the parties with the complaint
- allow all parties to put forward their points
- explain the relevant matters in the complaint
- confirm that all relevant matters have been discussed, and
- put forward suggestions as to the best way to finalise the complaint.

The Fair Trading officer will not:

- take sides or represent either party
- continue with the complaint handling process if the parties do not show willingness to reach an agreeable settlement, or
- offer any legal advice.

The tenancy complaint process is voluntary and its success depends on parties cooperating. Fair Trading cannot force either party to continue with the complaint process.

What happens if there is no resolution?

If the complaint is not finalised either party may lodge a claim with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

NCAT can request a report from Fair Trading on any complaint process conducted. This report is provided directly to NCAT.

The NCAT can make orders which are binding on the parties. These may include monetary payment, ending a tenancy agreement, or repair work to be completed. The maximum claim through NCAT is \$30,000.

Find out more at <http://www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/>

How can I access the tenancy complaint service?

If you are not able to resolve the matter yourself, you can lodge a tenancy complaint with Fair Trading to begin the complaint process.

For more information about Fair Trading's tenancy complaint service call 13 32 20.

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au
Fair Trading enquiries 13 32 20
TTY 1300 723 404
Language assistance 13 14 50

This fact sheet must not be relied on as legal advice. For more information about this topic, refer to the appropriate legislation.

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