



SECURING ACCOMMODATION

HINTS & TIPS

The housing market is full of competition and it can be difficult to find stable accommodation. We hope these hints and tips will assist you to navigate your way through the housing market.

1/ Sustain your current tenancy

If you are facing eviction or are unhappy with conditions at your current rental, there are still ways that you can try to sustain your current tenancy. This could include negotiating with your real estate or speaking with *QSTARS (1300 744 263)* for advice and advocacy. If you are struggling to afford your rental, you may be eligible for assistance through *Rent Connect (07 4036 5460)* or financial support and advocacy through the *My Money Program at SHAC (07 4080 7400)*.

2/ Sign up for a tenancy skills course

This two-day, free tenancy skills course can be completed online or at some community service providers (have a look online to see what is available). This will give you some advice on property maintenance, communication, finances, as well as your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. After completing the course, you will get a certificate which can be added to your rental applications (particularly if you don't have a rental history). To get started online or to find out where you can go, please see: <https://www.tenancyskills.com.au/online/>

3/ Make sure you have all the correct documentation

Having documentation ready in advance can help show real estates that you are prepared and ready to take on a tenancy.

- **COVER LETTER:** It is not compulsory, but it may help to provide a cover letter. The cover letter can be used to introduce yourself, demonstrate why you have chosen to apply for that property (things like location, convenience, family) and provide an opportunity for you to explain why you would make a good tenant. Have a look online for examples.
- **RENTAL HISTORY:** Rental histories can make or break a rental application. Make sure you have all the information of previous tenancies readily available. If it's your first-time renting, it could be useful to build your rental tenancy through references from short-term accommodation options, places you've boarded, or through the tenancy skills course.
- **PHOTO IDENTIFICATION:** It's important to have your 100 points of ID ready, and for it to be clear and easy to read. If you need assistance putting this together, there are many services that may be able to assist with photocopying (*SHAC, Rent Connect, The Homelessness Hub, Women's Centre, etc*).
- **REFERENCE LETTERS:** Evidence from past landlords, employers, or support workers in the form of character references may be a useful addition to your rental applications. They do not have to be long, but ensure they are positive, relevant and come from credible sources.

4/ Get a second opinion on your rental applications

Whether it's a support worker, family member or friend, it may be a good idea to get somebody else to read over your rental applications to see what can be changed, updated or fixed to ensure you are putting your best foot forward.

5/ Save time with online rental applications

When it comes to applications, every real estate is different, however, the quickest and easiest way to apply for rentals is online. *1form* is a quick and easy way to do this which allows you to apply for multiple properties without having to put in all of your details every time:

<https://1form.com/au/tenant/application/returning/goto/L2F1L3RlbmFudC9kYXNoYm9hcmQvaW5kZXg%3D>

6/ Check to see if you are listed on TICA

If you keep getting pushed back for private rentals and are unsure why, it could be possible that you are TICA listed. This can happen when you owe a large amount of money on a previous rental, or if previous tenancies were terminated for repeated breaches or objectionable behaviour. If you are TICA listed for one of these reasons, real estates can see this on the TICA database for three years.

To find out whether you are on TICA, you can ask a support service, such as *SHAC (07 4080 7400)*, *Maraway (07 4040 2035)* or the *Homelessness Hub (07 4046 8050)*, to help you complete a TICA search. If you are TICA listed, you can



contact the real estate to get more information on your listing. If you feel that the TICA listing is unfair, it may be worth contacting *QSTARS (1300 744 263)* or *Legal Aid (07 4252 6800)* about potentially removing the listing. The following link has some information on unlawful listings and how to remove them: <https://qstars.org.au/tenancies/tenancy-databases/>

7/ Pet applications

It can often be harder to find pet-friendly rentals, and this is often because the potential damage to properties, or that the property is unsuitable for pets. It's important to ensure: your pet is registered with the Council; vaccinations are up to date; and to make sure the rental you are applying for has adequate space for your pet to thrive. It may also help to get a pet reference letter (much like a character reference letter, but for your pet) from a previous neighbour that can help to verify your pet is friendly and suitable to any neighbourhood. You can find an example of a pet reference letter here: https://www.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/335004/PetApplicationExample.pdf

8/ What to do at the inspection

The way you present yourself plays a significant role in how a real estate considers you and your application.

- **Apply early!** It is best to get your application in before the inspection or on the day of the inspection. The sooner, the better. If you wait too long, real estates may accept another application before they get to see yours.
- Be friendly! This can help build a good relationship with the real estate which may put you ahead of the competition. They may even be able to suggest another property for you if you do not get into the one you're applying for.
- Be early/on time for inspections. Real estate agents do not like waiting around for people (they may get started without you). Being on time shows that you are reliable and organised.
- Present yourself well in person – wear clothes that are freshly washed and clean. If you do not have access to a washing machine, Orange Sky has free washing available (<https://locations.orangesky.org.au/>).
- Present yourself well on social media. Just as employers do online searches of potential employees, so do real estate agents search potential tenants online. If the information on your social media accounts differs from what's included on your rental application (such as your place of employment) this can raise serious questions, so check your details are accurate, up to date, and appropriate (highlighting your good qualities).

9/ Follow up with the real estate agent

If you've applied for a rental and haven't heard anything for forty-eight hours, try sending a friendly follow up message to the agent. Let them know you're very interested in the property and that you're happy to provide any additional information or references they might need. They could be deciding between you and one other candidate, and if they receive a pleasant message from you, it may be enough to put you ahead of the competition.

10/ Prepare for once you get approved for a rental

The best time to prepare for a rental tenancy is NOW:

- Start saving money now – you will need it for two weeks rent in advance, bond, removalist costs, furniture and white goods, etc. You can also apply for a bond loan and/or a rental grant with the *Department* (<https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/renting/rent-assistance/bond-loan/bond-loan-rental-grant-guide>) or a NILS loan for furniture at *SHAC (07 4080 7400)*.
- From here, it's up to you to try and maintain the tenancy. This means you should pay your rent on time, keep the property clean and maintain a good relationship with your real estate. This will help you to keep the tenancy for as long as possible. This will also help to show future real estates that you are a good tenant and will give you a good reference for the next time you need to find a property.

11/ Ask for help from current support services

If you have any current support workers or case workers, ask them for some advice or see if there is anything that they can do to support your housing needs (such as assisting you with applications, writing support letters, acting as a reference).

12/ Enquire with Department of Housing

You can contact the *Cairns Housing Service Centre (07 4036 5460)* to discuss your eligibility, housing needs and the application process. For more information, please see: <https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/public-community-housing/eligibility-applying-for-housing/applying-for-housing/apply-for-housing>