

Note to Self

2nd April 2011

Dear Owners and Investors,

Life as a property manager is never dull. I forget just how much can happen in a week. Here are some of the highlights from the past few weeks;-

I was just driving back to the office to pick up Ramon when I get a distressed phone call from one of our tenants. It was 7.30pm and it had been a very long day, but when he said the unit above was flooding out his unit, and he had called his parents out and they were evacuating him I thought it may be an idea to head on over. I picked up Ramon and expected to see a torrent of water gushing out of his unit. We walked in and immediately looked to the ceiling and was searching for the waterfall - it is only a 40 square metre unit so spotting the leak shouldn't be too difficult. I had to look at Ramon just in case I had missed something, my eyes are starting to go and I may be blonde, but I couldn't see anything. I nearly laughed when the tenant pointed to the air and there was a drip coming through. The unit above isn't one of ours, but luckily the tenant above was good enough to let us through.

I know that sometimes we put off fixing a dripping tap or other non urgent maintenance, but we get it done within a week of it being reported. This tenant had told her "franchise" property manager that the cold water tap to the vanity wasn't turning on or off - probably a stuck washer, or the grub nut had come undone (can't believe I know this stuff). That was about 8 months ago. To stop her children using the vanity with just the hot water, they had disconnected the u bend - why that would stop them using the hot water tap I am not sure. They had guests over, and I am guessing that someone turned on the tap and it gushed into the vanity unit. I suppose this has happened on many occasions in the past and it went straight through to the concrete floor (I bet the developer didn't tile under the vanity so it is bare concrete). There happens to be a hairline crack and it filtered through. Worse still when I called the other property manager she tried to say it was the tenants responsibility to fix the tap. The kitchen flick master is also leaking, so before you know it this owner is going to have to replace the kitchen and vanity units.

Today I got a call from the young African man who had roast rooster on Christmas Day - yes the one that was alive on his balcony on Christmas Eve. About six weeks ago, he had some guests over and they got a bit carried away one evening and by 9am the next morning the tenant complaint hotline was running hot. He couldn't believe I knew about it, down to how many and how long it went on for. He was so apologetic and assured me that nothing like this would happen again. Today, in his broken English he said that he needed to ask me for something very important and he would be very grateful if I would agree. He then went on to tell me that he had been given a bird by a friend and if he could keep it. I immediately went to my pigeon English - "No rooster, no chicken - cannot", he assured me it was a very small bird that lived in a cage and not to be eaten.

We were asked to go out to a property as the air conditioner thermostat wasn't working - that was the message sent to us. This isn't one that we look after directly, but it is on its way over to us. To help the owner keep costs down to a minimum, we contacted the tenant and I sent the boys around. She held the remote and was pointing it at the air conditioner, pressing buttons saying it doesn't work. They went over and pressed the on button on the front face of the air conditioner, and it came on fine, even cooling down quickly - the batteries in the remote had died!

The best one was a text I received from a new tenant. They have been in the property for about a month now. The text reads

"Hi Linda, I sent you an email earlier today and I was just wondering if you are able to read it. I am still at work so I can't talk, but if you can read it and reply to me. I will be at work until 4.30pm. If you don't get it until after 4.30pm can you please text me your reply."

I sent a message back to say I wouldn't get it until I got home which could be after 8pm but she could call any time.

"If you could just text me when you have read it and if we need to talk I will try to call you tonight"

Well, you can imagine the things that were going through my mind - they are breaking their lease, they have had a fire inside the house, they have had a fight and trashed the property, the dogs have eaten the kitchen cupboards - the list went on. I got home and I nearly fell off my chair laughing. Her work was doing the automatic payments from her wage and sending it through. There was a computer glitch and her rent had been held back but wouldn't be sent through until next week. There was much apologising and it would never happen again. I love tenants like this.

The last one is because I am still a softy at heart. We have a tenant that has been with us for about two years now. He is a single "older man" but basically a drama queen. He got himself into a mess and fell behind in his rent. He was in a one bedroom unit that was renting for \$165 so we agreed that he would pay off \$185 per week to catch up. This left him with very little so when I offered him one of our personal bedsit units at \$145 per week he jumped at the chance. Love it, the owner of the original unit got all his rent, and I started out with arrears!

He was doing really well, and had almost paid it all off when health problems hit him and he couldn't work. He was still on a Newstart Allowance, but had a medical certificate so he didn't have to do the obligation things. He was falling behind again so I asked him to give the people down at Oz Care a call. I have worked with them before to try and resolve issues with "at risk tenants". This means that they are going to become homeless very soon because they can't pay the rent. They in turn work with Centacare and if all the criteria are met, the tenant can be eligible for a one off "grant" that pays the arrears off. This grant doesn't have to be repaid.

This tenant called me on Friday night to thank me. Not only are the arrears going to be resolved, he has his payments now set up with Centrepay so he will always have his rent paid and in advance. Even better they managed to work with Centrelink and get him transferred over to a Disability Pension until the health issue is resolved. This payment is actually higher than the Newstart Allowance, so he will actually have some money for a change. He said he felt very guilty for the hand out, but I assured him that for the past thirty years he has been working and paying his tax so this is just a small payback. Makes you feel good when you do something nice for some one - even if it was just giving him a phone number of a contact!

Off to have a cocktail - have to drink all that duty free alcohol from our cruises. Did I mention that we have booked another one for November? When I grow up I want to be the Granny in the wheelchair on the cruise ship that has done 300 hundred cruises!

Hope you are all happy and well.

Linda