

Note to Self

19th January 2012

Dear Owners and Investors,

There are weeks that go by and it is a pretty easy life being a property manager. Ramon and I had lunch with normal people and normal conversation TWICE last week. Not many things that are out of the ordinary. Then there are other weeks, where each and every day is a novel in itself. This week seems to be one of those weeks, and it is only Wednesday.

I know many of you enjoyed the Miss M story, and I can honestly say I thought she really was the cleaner for a long time. Today when I was speaking to her, she reminded me of that and laughed. She started her first "shift" tonight at 6pm! I know you must think I am so gullible! In her defence, she is a great tenant, pays the rent, keeps the place incredibly clean and never winds the neighbours up.

If you remember a while ago I had my heavy breathing caller, then I was getting the late night phone calls about how much my services are, well tonight I got another call. Apparently someone has been sending out text messages with 1800 FUN, a message and then MY MOBILE number. I got my first call from a guy in Toowoomba and couldn't stop laughing. Surely this has got to be happening to someone else in the world?

I have some classic tenant stories - all within the past two days. The first is a call from a young lad at a duplex. He does have a girlfriend, but both have failed in the house keeping department. It isn't dirty but clean is not a description I could even try to use. He called Monday afternoon about 5pm to say that he had not just one but two leaks. The first was outside in the laundry area, and the second in the middle of the floor of the bedroom. Ramon and I went straight over - no time to tidy up so we get to see it in the raw state. The first one was fairly easy. It must have been doing it for at least a few days as you could see the slimy build up on the concrete. It was a copper pipe that runs between the two walls of the duplex. It somehow developed a crack in the copper and was leaking. It was within the wall, so something Ramon and I couldn't fix.

The next one was interesting. We walked into through the kitchen and as soon as you saw the hall way, the bathroom door and the bedroom door you could see the layer of water. We aren't talking a small puddle, I am talking a layer over the entire surface of floor. I looked at the tenant and asked how long it had been leaking - he said he thought he noticed a bit of water on Friday night but thought he had dragged it out with him after a shower. Instead of calling us over the weekend, or even first thing Monday morning he put towels down - you could hardly see the tiled floor for soggy wet towels.

To try and trace the leak we first had to mop up the floor and try and see where the water was coming from. Ramon went about investigating where the pipe work comes into the building, taking the taps off the shower and trying to establish where we thought the leak was coming from. The back of the taps were dry, and as it was leaking constantly we came to the conclusion it had to be a leak in the pipes. Fortunately the shower backs onto the wall of the bedroom, so we could see the paint bubbles along the brick base next to the floor - this is directly below the shower taps. I continued to mop whilst Ramon continued to investigate - oh did I mention that when I asked the tenant for a mop he stared blankly back at me? Yes I am mopping up with the towels on the floor and wringing them into the bucket.

We worked out that roughly where we thought it would be and today Ramon met the plumber on site. Although we haven't traced it back fully, we should have it all fixed in by Thursday - then the fun with the insurance company starts. Hopefully it won't be actually in the slab, instead in the copper pipes in the wall.

I have to share a text message I received from a tenant yesterday. It is from a tenant that is slightly behind and I am always on her case about it.

I out fishing for three four weeks. Mum will put two weeks rent for me next week and then one every Tuesday till I get back. Very exciting job, I had to use this pay to stock up smokes and drinks and few other things for trip but that's only reason for delay - now because there is a :) at the end I guess that makes it alright.

If you think this is good, I have to share the one from one of our personal tenants. He is in a two bedroom, fully furnished, air conditioned, lovely unit that is 1.5 kilometres from the and he is paying \$210 per week.

"G'day Linda Happy New Year to you and your family. Do you have a better fridge than the one that is in my apartment by any chance? This one is not working right as when I do groceries and place them in, takes 24 hours to get them cooled which means a lot of my food is spoiling early. As you are probably aware the top level gets quite warm so I don't think the compressor is coping. Something bigger, better if you have it please. Also was told by Ergon Energy that I should be on a lower tariff being that I am on electric hot water. The electrician needs to fit a separate meter for that to happen. Can this be done? Or can I be put on gas those little tanks cost a fortune to run as they are constantly heating."

For those of you that don't live in the Tropics you won't know this, but the frost free freezer don't like the temperature being turned up to full. This essentially freezes up the back and stops the cold air coming down from the freezer into the fridge. As I put a tenant into a new property, I explain how a frost free fridge works, demonstrating it like a I am one of those girls on The Price is Right or some other game show. Arms are waving about to emphasis the point. I finish with - leave the temperature in the middle and don't touch it - this one obviously didn't listen.

Next thing I will do is break up the costs he wants us to spend - remember he pays us \$210 per week, then we pay the mortgage, council rates, maintenance and insurance from this amount. A new fridge that is at least 300 litres will be around the \$600 mark. An electrician to run a brand new circuit and wiring from the front of the house where the meter box is with conduit either around the house or up into the roof space and down the other side of the building and then a new meter - I would guess at least another \$600. A new gas hot water heater, well I haven't priced one of them but let's just say \$600, then the gas guy to come out and put in new gas pipes from the upstairs unit, down the side, along the garden and across to the gas bottles let's say another \$500 - oh but it will be cheaper for the tenant to have hot water.

I told him to take the stuff out of the freezer, into an esky, turn the fridge off over night, turn the temperature down to middle and then leave it alone. If he really wanted a bigger fridge I would happily put this one into storage and he could buy one. As for the hot water system, if he really wanted to save money, he could turn off the circuit to the hot water system which is just at the bottom of the stairs and only turn it on when he needed hot water. Gas not an option, sorry.

I have to tell you what a long way I have come personally in the past ten years. One of my biggest down falls is I am terrified of confrontation. In the early days, I would beg Ramon to go and deal with the tenants - oh that meek and mild girl is a memory from a far away time.

I tell it as it is now, and I am sure that some of the tenants are scared of me! We recently helped a family find a tenant for one of their duplexes. It is fairly run down and not in the greatest of areas. It was coming up to Christmas and no matter what I did I just couldn't attract an applicant. This lady called and she is in her mid 50's and was essentially homeless. She had a dog and you all know I am a sucker for animals. On the condition that it was set up as an automatic payment from her Centrelink we put her in. Her references from the last place were good, the property is essentially bomb proof and nothing internally or externally has been done for at least 25 years - what harm can she do?

She moved in and about a month later I popped in. She had all her stuff in storage, as well as her daughter's and it was all in the duplex now. For a lady that was homeless I could not get over how much stuff she had. I mean TV reality hoarder sort of stuff. Within 5 minutes I have her sat down and telling her that I will be back in a month and if it isn't gone, she will be. I lectured her on how she didn't need all this stuff - how could she know what she has with all these boxes. At least it is all really neat and tidy. I called past again yesterday and it hadn't gone - another gentle reminder. Ten years ago, I would have been badgering Ramon to go and tell her - these days he is sitting in the car shaking his head at me telling them what for.

Oh but I have saved the best for last. This morning at 7.24am - remember I am not a morning girl in any way, and to get the following text was not a good way to start the morning
Good morning Linda. I'd like to let you know that the stairwell leading to our unit smells of human faeces and its absolutely foul. I can't leave the front door open for the smell. It'd be great if you could please send someone out ASAP.

I know you are thinking right now - surely she is making all this up. In my wildest dreams I honestly would never think of this. I had some one go over and yep, it was as per email and yep it smelt awful! When I asked if she knew who did it, I had to stop because I was laughing so much! Where on earth in the Property Managers Guide book did it say that I would have to be dealing with poop at 7.24 am in the morning? If had of read that fine print do you think I would have taken the job?

Hope all is well in your world and I have put a smile on your face.

Linda