

Note to Self

9th July 2012

Dear Owners and Investors,

It has been a while between these Note to Self, life has been a bit chaotic for the past few weeks. Last time I wrote, I told you there was a change happening in the rental market and it seems this is here to stay. It has been a very long time since we have consistently changed over tenants on the same day - AND achieved a few more dollars in rent.

This is a good thing for us as land lords, but not such a good thing for the tenants. It is interesting speaking to some of them and they all acknowledge that they have had it good for some time and they have expected the rent increases. I think what they haven't understood is that this is the first increase with more to come in the next six months if things keep going the way they are. Back in May I sent out the letters to the tenants to say that the rents were going up and giving them two months notice. These all start to kick in now, and it will be nice for us to all get some extra income in.

I have been banging the insurance drums as loud as I can. We made it to the Cairns Post and I spoke on the John McKenzie Radio program. I am also sending out emails to any one that I can think of to keep this issue in the media.

http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2012/06/29/226095_local-news.html

Now onto the joys of being a property manager. I know I have crossed the line from it just being a job and sadly for me there is no going back. These aren't just names on a lease, they are real people with real issues that want to be treated well. We have always done this and will always continue to do this. Our tenants know that they can call any time if they have an issue - and now they know that - THEY DO!! It is not unusual for me to get phone calls on Sunday from tenants with things they just didn't get time to remind me of during the week. To be honest I don't mind as I would rather know about problems, get them done and then know everything is alright in the unit.

We recently took over a unit for a client. I shake my head at the way some of the property managers do things - or just don't more to the point. This unit is on the third level, and the unit directly below complained that water was leaking through the ceiling. They had someone go out and did a lot of things in hope that it would fix the issue. When we took over, we were told that the leak was still occurring and if we could get it fixed.

The first thing we organised was that we had Bart go to both units at the same time. This way we could work out where the water was leaking into the unit and then works backwards from there. It seems that the rear toilet seal on unit we know manage had been leaking for a very long time. Essentially each time you flush, clean water drips out from the big rear seal and onto the floor. It had been leaking for that long it had worked its way through the grout and then the concrete slab and into the unit below. We could tell this because this is exactly where the water was coming out from in the down stairs unit and there is no other water fixture close by. This is all fixed and another thing off our list.

One of the biggest complaints that tenants in general have is that when they have an issue it takes weeks, months and sometimes even then it isn't resolved. We don't like this as it then sits on my list and annoys me so I like to get things done as soon as we can. I am so thankful that I have a great team that work with us, and Bart from Ezyfix Maintenance makes my life so easy.

He has come such a long way from where he was a few years ago and now can fix just about anything I throw at him. I got a text from a tenant at 8.30am on Saturday morning to say that when he got home the night before there was a water patch on the ceiling in the toilet and then water running down the wall making a puddle on the floor. Since we had no rain for a while it made sense that it was a water pipe. I called Bart and he went out to have a look the same morning. There was a small hole in the copper pipe that does run through the ceiling. He had all the tools and parts needed in the car and by lunch time I was sending a text to the tenant to say when he gets home it will all be done for him. Even better the cost of it was less than the afterhours call out fee of a plumber.

I am starting to see some of the invoices that other contractors charge, and it is mind boggling. I am very conscious of cost and the need to get things done. I will never be charging you \$900 to replace the washing line!

My poor dear Miss P is still in hospital. She went to see the retirement village and has agreed to move there. Now when I say she has agreed to move there - that is about all she has done.

We had Tasha (yes the lady that Ron from Sheridan Street and can't remember her real name) go through everything in the unit to pack it. I told her to be ruthless and only put in the boxes the things that she absolutely needs. It is a one bedroom unit, but it is very, very small so she can't have everything she has now. There is no real need for her to have four drawers full of bin liners at her new place. All the extras we have left at the old unit, and when she comes home I will take her over and go through it all and try to convince her to let me get rid of it all. Fortunately for me she can't really remember what she used to have before so she won't miss all those bin liners.

So everything is all packed up, and Tasha has even put a suitcase together of nighties, under clothes, toiletries and sheets together so we can make it homely for when she gets there. Bart and Andrew then had the job of moving everything from one unit to the next - of course it has been raining all day long so there is bound to be some cussing going on. Even worse the walk from the car park to the unit is a distance and there were a lot of trips to be made.

She has a fridge, mattress, table and chairs and a dressing table - but she has no bed frame. I have swapped her bits with my bits in the store room and now she has a furnished unit that will actually fit into her new tiny unit. Fortunately for Miss P we are hoarders and have so much stuff in the store rooms.

Tasha as I type is unpacking the things for Miss P so that when I go to pick her up from the hospital all will be lovely at her new place. I am not sure where it is written in the Property Managers Guide Book that I have to go to the hospital pick her up, arrange to have the electricity and phone changed over, then get her mail redirected and anything else she needs. Hope the big man in the sky is watching and taking notes.

I am not sure how long it will be before she needs to go to a proper Nursing Home, I hope it isn't too soon.

For those of you that have been reading for a while, you will know Miss M the cleaner. She is back and I am making a prediction here - I will be writing in a month I told myself it would bite me. She is a lovely girl, and she is really trying but wow is she all over the place. She needed somewhere but the complication is that she has a dog. We had one of our Holden Street units come up, and it is perfect for her. She has taken it for now, but I just know it isn't going to work out long term - there are just too many things going on for it to work.

This morning I was shaking my head thinking I know I shouldn't but I have given her a go. I then get another call from a different tenant to say she is looking for just that thing. I have told her I will call her in a couple of weeks when it all turns to custard. I told her that it is \$250 per week - which is \$20 more than Miss M is currently paying which is \$30 more than the last tenant was paying, and this tenant was pretty happy with that. There could be a silver lining after all.

If you think I am a softie, then ask Ramon what he did on Friday. Ron from Sheridan Street has now saved up a bit of money. Between Meals on Wheels which means he doesn't have to shop for food as much, and the Government Carbon Tax money he has saved a bit. He can't smoke any more than he does – it's just not possible. He has decided that his current go go mobile (mobility scooter) just doesn't go fast enough so he wants a new one. Ramon had to drive Ron around all day on Friday shopping and test driving them. The one he wants is more than what he has, guess the bank of Tuck will have to come to the party. He always pays us back, so we don't mind.

I have to tell you that Ron is one of the lucky oldies. If it weren't for us, I would hate to think where he would be right now. When we inherited him, he was living in the top unit at Sheridan Street. At that stage he was 65, no family and no friends and no money. The unit was pretty awful inside, and no air conditioning. The front has glass louvers and when the sun comes in during the afternoon, it is baking hot in that unit.

You will love this - someone told him that if he put aluminium foil on the ceiling and windows then this would be like insulating the unit. When we bought it, it was like walking into a space ship. Seriously, all the glass louvers had been individually wrapped in foil, and the ceiling had layers of it - I have attached pictures for you. We asked him the logic of it and he explained it. We then asked if it had worked and the answer was NO. He was like a chicken cooking in the oven it was that hot in the unit. He now has a lovely unit down stairs with a yard for the dogs, and not a lot of worry about being made homeless. Rent increases - ha that would be a fine thing.

I am going to finish off not with a tenant story but a Cairns story. The wet season can be an awful time of year. It is hot and humid to the point where you sweat all the time. Everything goes mouldy and it rains constantly - then we have the excitement of cyclones. Ah but the dry season that is the reason that we live here. I know that many of you are right in the middle of winter - well so are we but just to a different degree. Our home is a pole home on the side of a mountain and we have French doors that are right the way around the verandah. Winter has come in, and during the day it is usually blue skies and you can wear short sleeves most days. On the odd occasion I have taken a cardigan with me it has been that cold.

When the sun goes down it does get a bit chilly, and you can put on slippers at night. We are big sooks here in the Tuck house hold and today we have faced a big decision. It has been raining all day and it has been quite cold all day long. We have a choice - do we put the fluffy flannelette sheets on and an extra blanket on the bed - or do I go around and close up all the doors and windows? I love the dry season in Cairns!

I do have so many topics I will be writing about in the next few months, I just need to find the time. I do hope that you are all happy and well in your world.

Linda