

Note to Self

16th April 2013

There are days that I just shake my head at the things tenants do. It is Saturday morning at 10.15am and I get a message saying "Can someone come and look at my back door it won't lock". In my mind that is pretty important, so I ask Bart if he is in the area and fortunately he is.

He can do it in the next few hours - which is just fantastic, tenant happy and I have one more thing crossed off my list. I send a message back to the tenant to say that Bart should be there some time in the next few hours to sort the problem out. This is the message I get back "Not today, gone fishing." What can I say???

I forget just how much happens each and every day - so I thought I would keep notes on what has happened just in the past two days.

I have a tenant that is always behind, not really badly, but always behind in his rent. It sometimes slides out, but a simple text message and it is paid up. I have to say he never calls me, but this morning there is his number on my phone. The first thing he tells me is that he has organised for a payment to come out on Friday and that should pay him up. I tell him no problem and that when the banking is done I will send him a ledger - all the while I am thinking this just isn't right.

He has been with us for years and never once has he called me about paying the rent, it is always by text message. The cogs are turning and I am waiting for the "oh while I have you on the phone" when it happens. It doesn't happen straight off, there is a bit of dancing about with small talk and then "Is there a problem with the TV reception? I can only get one channel and I have tried everything." This complex has six in it, and there is just one TV aerial on the roof. It has a booster to send a strong signal to all the units. This is wired up to the common power which does the pool and the lights. I am going to take a guess and say that something has tripped out the safety switch - could be a gecko, could be anything.

I love the fact that they would have been in darkness last night with no common lights on, the pool is probably on its way to going green and none of these would have triggered the phone call - BUT having no television makes them call me. It got better that afternoon, not only did I get a further two calls from this tenant about the reception but another three in the building.

We are busy getting the duplex ready for the new tenant. This is the one I wrote about the other day on the highway where the tenant left with all his clothes and junk behind. Ramon and I went there Monday to check on the progress - I had it painted by the "Bogan" which I will explain later. The property is set right at the back of the block and at the front is a hedge that really is very feral. Yes, another thing to go onto the never ending list of things to do.

Out the corner of my eye I saw a lady walking past the front on the pavement - I don't know why but I thought that she was a homeless lady. I thought nothing more of it, when a head pops back around the corner of the hedges and is watching me - that is when I triggered that this isn't a homeless lady this is our new tenant! In an ideal world we would go the extra in the renovations, and put up a nice big fence at the front for extra privacy and security, we would put new floor coverings in - we may even get extra rent for the property. We have dragged it up from where it was and now it is a really nice little unit inside - basic but nice. If we get 6 - 12 months out of Ms R as our tenant it will buy us some time until the market turns.

I get a call from a tenant in another duplex, this one I can honestly say I haven't come across before. She told me that the other morning she woke up to find a tiny bat in the kitchen sink.

She thought nothing of it, took it outside and then let it go. The next day she woke up and found another in the kitchen area - now starting to get a bit worried. The third morning she woke up and found one on her bed - now that would freak me out. It seems they are roosting in the roof space and the only way I can figure they are coming in is through a tiny hole where the ceiling fan comes through. We will head up there and try to seal it as best we can - we may not be able to stop them from being in the roof space, but we can do our best to keep them from coming inside.

We are just in the upgrade phase for two bedsit units at City Park. Both of them have come vacant and we are taking the opportunity to repaint, put in new lights and fans, new curtains and just present it a little better. Ramon and I were there going through the units to get them ready for painting by the Bogan. Whilst I was there I could hear noise coming from a unit above, and I can't help myself I have to go out and have a look. I could see which unit it was from, but couldn't really tell what was going on. It was noisy but not drinking party noisy, just lots of excited people noisy. I called the property manger that has the unit right next door and asked her to call her tenant. If there are any problems who better to dob than the next door neighbour?

As I am watching the noisy unit, I spot a couple in the car park. They are a nice, well presented couple and they start to walk up this stair well. I found it odd that they had a big box that was covered by a blanket and he was very careful carrying it. I am watching where they go when they go to the top floor - but they aren't the noisy people but the ones next door. Just as they are opening the door I hear it - the wings of a bird flapping in the box. I call back the property manager to say when she talks to them, tell them that it is fine to have a bird - not much gets past me! Later that afternoon a car pulls up into the car park of the noisy unit. Out comes a monster of a man - he was huge. I thought about it and then thought - why not Ramon is inside to protect me!!! He actually was a lovely man and it was his kids that were getting excited. I don't think they will be a problem but now I know who is there and what issues there can be.

We then head over to Grafton Street which is one of our units. The Indian taxi drivers have just left and I should have known what to expect - but when you walk in you just shake your head. They sent a message to say it was clean and ready to check - not sure in which world they thought it was clean. You have no idea on the grease on the walls, and the general dirtiness of the place. We had already made the decision to repaint, put new floor tiles and even a new kitchen in so I had to just over look all of this.

Well any spare time that I thought we would have to go on a cruise has just evaporated into thin air. Unlike the besser block units that we have in Manunda - the list of what to do is endless. There is not just removing the carpets, but then all the doors need to be replaced, the shower is leaking so we have to cut and chase the pipes to find the leak, then there is removing the kitchen and then moving the hot water system outside - oh the list is endless. I know it will be worth it as we should get at least \$50 per week extra, and if the market is good it could even be \$70 per week extra. Better than that if we do it properly we should not have to do anything to it for another 5 - 10 years.

I leave Ramon at our City Park unit to pull the split system out that doesn't work and head over to Bunnings. We have a formula for the paintwork - we paint ever single unit in exactly the same colour. White for the ceilings, Star Bright by Bristol for the walls in semi gloss and white gloss doors and skirting boards.

It has worked well for us, and it means if we have to touch up we always have paint on hand. It also means that we don't have hundreds of tins of paint at the back - and try to remember what colour is for what unit.

There is a guy at the paint counter, and I must fluster him - that is my excuse. The other day we were buying paint and he mistint the wall paint to Star Bright by Bristol which has much more yellow in it. I swooped up really cheap and will use that as a base coat for the places I have to paint lots of coats. On Monday I headed back for more paint, and there was another mistint but it was a closer shade so I grabbed that at \$20 for 10 litres!!! You know that you spend far too much time in Bunning when you get stopped for a chat by half a dozen of the staff!

To finish off I will tell you about my late night call from a tenant – no, the heavy breather has left and I haven't had any of those other phone calls for ages. It was 11.10pm and the tenant ring goes off - thankfully for the tenants I am part bat so I don't mind if they call late at night. It is our 74 year old Iranian Grandmother and she is in a flap.

The power went out to her property and she can't get it back on. The house right next door which is one of ours as well has lights on and she doesn't know what to do. Mr M lives next door and he has come to help her out. Between Mr M and I we check the meter box, the main switch, then find the fuse box - which I remember is hidden in the walk in robe of the second room, but most property managers won't know that at 11.10pm. We try everything, and even turning off the power to next door to make sure I have the switches all in the right place - the older switches are the opposite for on. Nothing we do gets the power back onto the unit.

There is no way I am going to call out MDE or OSE (Modern Day Electrician or Old School Electrician) at this time of night, so I tell them that I will send an email and text to ask that they attend very first thing in the morning. I am at the computer about to hit the send button when the phone rings again, it is all back on. I am going to guess that one house is on one phase and the other house is on the other phase - and Ergon had an issue with just one of the phases and this is why one had power and the other didn't. Email cancelled and I couldn't help myself but say to Mr M "Gee you must have a great property manager that not only answers the call at 11.10pm but helps to work it all out".

I know that I don't have to do these things, but these are our tenants and they are the ones that pay the rent each and every week. We as investors need these people to be able to pay the mortgage each month, without them we wouldn't be able to hold the properties. For the tenants this is their home, many have no idea of what to do when an issue occurs and for them to have the knowledge they can call someone to help sort it out makes them stay where they are. We have just "lost" a management for a house, and when I rang to tell the current tenant of this and the procedure that will follow, the very first thing she said to me is "do you have any other rentals as I want to stay with you". It makes me feel good that not only do we provide a nice place to lots of people, who in turn pay the mortgages but the tenants let us know they are happy.

I hope you are all happy and well in your world.

Linda