

Note to Self

21st July 2014

Dear Owners and Investors,

Today is just about life as a property manager. No one ever told me that my life would be so interesting and I would meet so many different people. There are days where I laugh at the antics of our tenants, there are days that I cringe and shake my head and there are days that I cry.

To get the sappy stuff out of the way first, we will start with Mr A who has been living at one of our personal units in Whitfield. He is a genuinely nice guy and has always been a great tenant to deal with. A few years ago he called to say he had been diagnosed with Cancer of the bowel and would be getting treatment. Because he had been at our unit for some time, his rent was at the lower level and for years we have never lifted it. Things got really tough for him and I guided him off to a few of the charities to get assistance - they helped him out.

The assistance that they gave him was to cover rent and it was just over \$1000. For him it was a huge relief, and it is times like this that I realise that how tight people run with money. I never want to be in a position like this - and this is what continues to drive me. Ramon and I are very fortunate financially and just before Christmas we decided to drop his rent down by \$20 per week. This amount of money isn't going to change our lives, but we knew it would certainly change his.

Mr A has been battling for years now, and although he is positive, sadly I don't think he is going to beat this. This week he called me to say that he has been struggling financially and has decided to take up a friends offer and move in with her. She is a massive home and works away a lot so he will still have lots of privacy. I have assured him that if he wants to come back and rent with us again, he just tells me and we will find him a place. There are times that I know that we have made a difference in someone's life, but really wish we could do more for them - this is one of these times.

You all know about "I collect old people" well one of my flock got sick. Mr G has been with us for a long time now. He was in a bedsit at Palm Trees and he was a lovely soul. I have known he has been sick for a while, but a few months ago the Ambulance had to break down the door as he had collapsed inside. It seems that he had been that way for a few days, which is really sad. He is now in a Nursing Home - or waiting to go to one. He doesn't have a lot of family and the closest he has is his ex wife.

The original plan was that she would come in and sort out the house, dispose of what needed to and get the place cleaned up and then handed back. It is when the time comes to put the plan into action that people realise that is isn't that simple. Mr G had a lot of stuff in the unit, and given he would no longer be needing much of it - what do you do with all of it? I know we aren't like most other agents, and it is times like this that we try to make it as simple as possible.

Once all the personal things had been removed, and we were given the go ahead to clear out the unit the team went into action. I can actually take no credit for it as I didn't do any of the work myself. Bart the Wonder Handyman and his new trusty assistant Katie went in, cleared it all out and got it ready for the cleaner. At this point we had to make a decision on what to do with the unit - it really could be repainted and some of the inside updated. Fortunately someone came along and wanted to take it with it just being cleaned up and the rent would be the same.

For the owner, they delayed the repainting, got \$25 per week extra and for Mr G and his ex wife, it was all made stress free.

If you think that the Big Man in the Sky is going to let me reduce my "Old People Collection" think again. Just as one leaves, we have taken on another oldie to take his place. It is another Mr G and at 76 he is a feisty old guy. His hands look like they have been run over by a truck side on - I haven't seen such bad arthritis but he manages to do everything. He was looking for a ground floor two bedroom unit, and we had one come up that was perfect. He doesn't want to go to a Nursing Home with all those old people, he wants to still be independent. I hope I am as feisty when I get to his age.

We had a tenant some time ago that we rented a unit to. He was a guy in his early 70's and seemed like a really nice, normal guy. Over the years when we went to do maintenance we got to know him. He had been a sailor and had a boat in Indonesia - although I think his sailing days were over. One day I got a call from the Police - I never like it when the conversation starts with "Hello, this is Constable Blogs from Cairns Police Station" - you just know that it isn't going to be a good phone call.

They asked if I managed the property and if I knew a person by the name of Mr D. He had committed suicide in the unit - that in itself is awful, but this is where it gets really bizarre. He didn't want it to be a burden for any one and he had been planning it for months. He had arranged to pay all his bills in advance, leaving them all on the table with notes on them. He had written letters to the family and even one for me. In his diary he had chosen a day, and written D Day on it, but oddly enough it turned out to be the day of the Queensland State election so he decided to postpone it a week so he could vote. I know - I didn't follow the train of thought on this either.

On the new nominated day, he waited until the early hours of the morning then put a note on the neighbours door telling her to call me. He went on to explain that we would find him in the bathroom and that the key would be in the doors so they wouldn't have to break down the door.

Fortunately this neighbour decided not to call me but the Police and Ambulance instead - and I didn't have to deal with this directly. Mr D had no family here in Cairns and I had to go down to identify him - fortunately they let me do it via photos and I didn't actually have to go to the morgue. I have searched my "Idiots Guide to Property Managements" but I must have missed the chapter on going down to the Police Station to identify your tenant.

There are so many tenants that come and go and trying to remember their names isn't always easy. Just like Seinfeld, we think it is easier to give them associated names. For the unit above we have two names - Crazy Cat lady who lives at the back unit and Dead Man's unit - I know a bit morbid but if I say this Ramon knows exactly where it is.

We had a guy from Africa rent one of our units, and to be honest if I had any other choice he wouldn't have got the unit. I always felt uncomfortable around him - no logical reason why, I just did. Interestingly enough, every person in our office that dealt with him felt the same. For obvious reasons, his name is Crazy Eyes. If you say that in the office, immediately everyone in the office knows exactly who we are talking about.

We then have the unit that was just renovated by Bart the Wonder Handyman and his trusty new offsider Katie.

Stacey and I went to go and see how they were travelling with the upgrading and painting and noticed the door was closed - me being me I called out loudly before going in - this is now called the naked painting unit - no, they weren't actually painting naked but you never can be sure!

Now and forever that is what this unit is going to be called no matter which tenant lives there.

What I do like about the complexes we have lots of units in is that the tenants all look out for each other - something you wouldn't expect in some of these places.

On Sunday afternoon I got a call from Ms M to say that she was worried about Mr J. She saw him throwing out lots of clothes, and now can't get a hold of him. Sounded a bit weird, and as I wasn't around she was going to keep trying to get a hold of him at his unit - as she is just two doors away. Later that afternoon she called to say there was a leak from the unit above, and it was dripping straight onto his clothes. He is one of my newer "I collect Old People" and he didn't want to bother me.

Bart our Wonder Handyman now has it on his list and it will all be fixed for him in the next day. It is a nice feeling to know that I do have a good bunch of people in the complexes and that they do look out for each other. They also are my dobbers and help me know exactly what is happening at the complex!

Many people sometimes question the way we charge fees, and think we charge them more. It is the extra things that we do that not many of you get to hear about that is one of the differences between us and the others. There are a few things that I hate about property management in regards to maintenance. The top three have to be remote controls for garages, remotes for air conditioners and third place will have to be a toss-up between dishwasher and pools. Ok, so there are actually four things!

There is very little I can do about the dishwashers when they play up as these are all electronic - and normally when they go, they go and you have to replace them. I have found a fantastic pool person - so all I now need to say is "Don't explain it to me, because I won't understand - just tell me what I need to do to make it right". With garage remotes, I have been busy with my new best friend "Mr eBay" and now the office has spare remotes for just about every brand of garage remote.

We picked up a new property that has a security gate. When the property was settled, the keys came over, but no remotes! It also has a system where if you manage to get in whilst the gate is open, you may be sorry! Unlike other systems, it doesn't open as you drive up to it, nor does it have a manual button to push to open it. Just ask Bart the Wonder Handyman how good this is when you get stuck inside!!!

We did manage to find another working remote from another unit, and after much cussing and pushing of buttons Ramon did manage to pair it up. I don't want to tell him that I need him to pair up another three of them - I do like to have spares at the office just in case one goes missing. I did hear of another manager getting a remote for this same complex and the cost to the owner was \$110. I love Mr eBay, we got one for \$5 for this complex and Ramon - although cussing was involved - did pair it up for us for nothing.

With the air conditioner remotes, we have a box full of different universal remotes. Any time one is playing up, out comes the box and we pair it up. A "genuine" remote will cost anywhere between \$40 - 100, but my new best friend Mr Ebay sends them to us for \$3 each - including batteries!

To finish it off, I will tell you about our Saturday night. Most other property managers are at home, putting their feet up and having a glass of wine. In the morning I got a call from one of our tenants to say that they were broken into in the early hours of the morning. They had the Police there and they were taking finger prints etc. They came in the back door and took her hand bag which had her wallet, both mobile phones and the house keys. She didn't feel comfortable knowing they had the keys and could return any time.

This couple has been with us for a while now, and they are lovely. He had a heart attack about a year ago and it has been pretty tough for them financially. Again the lovely people at the charities helped them out, and they are back on track now.

I could tell them that it really wasn't my problem and they could call a locksmith to change the locks - at their cost as it wasn't our issue really. You can't really see that happening can you? We are in the process of changing the locks to all the properties. I have spare lock sets at the office, so Ramon and I collected a set from the office. We didn't have a set big enough to change all the locks, but we did get one set for each entrances so they were secure.

This gives us a chance to see the tenants and how they look after the property - when they aren't really expecting an inspection! If my house looked that neat and tidy - after the Police had been through, and after they had been broken into - I would be very happy!

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

Linda Tuck