

Dear Owners and Investors,

It has been an incredibly long journey for the past 16 years ago. If you had of asked that young secretary walking down St Georges Terrace in Perth all those years ago where she would end up - I bet she wouldn't have said "Oh I'd love to be a Property Manager."

This has to be one of the most difficult industries to work in. We have to balance the wants and needs of the tenants because they are living there and paying the rent. With out the tenant you don't get the income to pay the mortgage.

We also have to balance the wants and needs of you as the investor - you are after all the one that has gone out on a limb financially to try to get ahead in life.

Then there are the wants and needs of the property itself. Most of the properties we look after are now over 25 years old - yes the kitchen cupboards have had 25 years of tenants using them, and not being as kind to them as an owner occupier would. The bathrooms are now 25 years old and need to be upgraded. Oh the list can go on.

Today is all about my love/hate relationship with what I get to do every day.

I love the fact that each day I have no idea what is going to happen. You can plan all you like but when that phone starts to ring, it can be anything from a blocked sewer line, to tripped power. I take for granted what happens each and every day, but every so often I look back at just the days events and some days even I go WOW that was a day.

I hate the fact that each day I have no idea what is going to happen. When stuff goes wrong, it is normally stuff that needs to be sorted out straight away. I hate it when my brain is going into over drive trying to work out how to get a leaking hot water tank accessed to find out if it is something simple like an element seal, or if it is a burst tank, as well as an air conditioner that has stopped working, and a leaking toilet and to get it all done quickly.

I love the fact that I have learnt so much along the way and can at least get stuff assessed with the tenants on the phone so I can eliminate some things, and get them stabilised until the contractors arrive. My elephant memory allows me to remember instantly where the main turn off valve is, the isolator for the hot water tank and the where the fuse box is located.

I hate the fact that most tenants don't really appreciate how well we look after them - until they leave and then they certainly appreciate us!

I love it when a tenant rings me to tell me that they have missed the bank, and their rent will be one day late - but they promise they will be at the bank in the morning.

I hate it when a tenant is late with their rent, and by a lot and they don't even try to work through it with us.

I hate it even more when they flat out lie to us about what they will pay, knowing they won't.

I love it when a tenant leaves and we manage to get the property rented within days.

I hate it when a tenant leaves and for no logical reason, the property sits there vacant for weeks.

I love it that I am a self confessed "control freak" and without this personality trait I just couldn't manage to get everything done the way it is supposed to be. Everything has to have a place, everything has to be done, everything has to be followed up, until it is finished it sits there in the back of my mind like a big sticky note - and boy do I have a lot of sticky notes back there.

I hate the fact I am as self confessed "control freak". It just doesn't allow me to find the off button - ah but that is where we at least manage to find the mute button whilst on a cruise ship - did I ever mention that Ramon and I just love to go on cruises?

I love it when we rent a property and we have managed to get a rent increase of \$10 per week.

I hate it when I have to do a rent review and have to contemplate the consequences of having to give Mr J in Palm Trees a rent increase. I know he is on an aged pension and scraping by, he has Cancer and that his doing his very best to still live independently.

I thing I love the most is the fact that I have such a great team that surrounds me. Without them all my job would be impossible.

Now for the best part - tenant stories. I was sitting at my desk one Saturday afternoon when a panicked Mr A rings me to say that water is coming in through the light fitting on the bathroom ceiling, as well as the kitchen light. The unit above had flooded their unit, and water was pouring over out their front door and cascading like a water fall from the balcony above. Normally I would get the tenant to go upstairs and bang on the door above to see if some one was home, but Mr A is one of my "I collect Oldies" and he is now in his mid 70's. He isn't able to get up the stairs. I phone around but no one else is in the area. He calls me back five minutes later even more panicked and I did get a bit cross with him, which I do regret but really what can I do over the phone? I get into the car and drive over with no real idea of what I can do. Fortunately by the time I got there the water had stopped, but you could see the water all over the balcony outside the unit above.

I bang on the door, not your polite Hello are you home, no a "open up this is the Police" sort of banging. I did it again as I could hear a noise from inside. A few minutes later a trashy excuse for a human being opens the door and I can see inside the unit. There are dishes piled in the sink, the place is feral and the entire unit is covered in water. I explain I am the Chairperson and need to now what happened. He tells me that he was having a shower and had the vanity running - why you would the vanity running whilst you are showering is beyond me. Oh and then something blocked the vanity and it started to over flow but he was in the shower - that is about a metre away - and didn't realise.

He was making no real attempt to mop up, so I will hate to think what damage is being done to the kitchen cupboards, the doors and frames. I actually don't feel bad as the owners are crappy and they have a crappier property manager. Karma works in mysterious ways. Now I had to deal with a panicked Mr A in our unit below.

I went inside and the unit had water on the floor in the bathroom and kitchen, but fortunately not too bad. I mopped up as best I could, but I know from past experience this is something that I need to get sorted out quickly or before I know it the entire unit will be covered in mould.

Although you couldn't see it, the water would be coming down through the slab and making the ceiling and walls moist. This combined with our humid climate is a breeding ground for mould. I also had to be sure that the light fittings were not compromised. Out in the car park I work my magic and have a cleaner lined up to wash down everything with bleach and the electrician to come and check the fittings. Its pretty amazing what I can organise with a phone on a Saturday afternoon.

I go back to let Mr A know who is coming and when. I have known for some time that Mr A is Transgender, although he still looks and dresses like a man, he wants to be a woman. He is a big burly looking man and I really can't picture him in a dress. As I am leaving, he calls me back to tell me again about the treatment he is having and his family concerns. I smile and reassure him, it's not problem for me. I take him as he is. Now in a normal job, where on earth would I cross paths with people like Mr A?

Staying with the "I collect Old People" theme, we have two elderly ladies that live in a complex in White Rock. One is Ms Cranky B and the other is Ms Have a Chat H, both have got to be pushing on to 80 years old. Also in that complex we have a Japanese lady called Ms S. She has a son and he is like a Grandchild to Ms Have a Chat H, she dotes on him and it is really nice to see. Ms Cranky B is what she is, but we do what we need to do make it a good place for her until she has to go to a nursing home.

Each time I see Ms Have a Chat H number pop up on my screen, I know even though it should take about 2 minutes, it will take about 30 minutes of my time to talk to her. That is OK as I get to hear all about her children, how old she is now and how she is doing. I also am guaranteed to be told how long it has been since her husband has passed away, and how long she has been living in the unit. Then I get to hear all about Ms S son and how he comes to visit her every day after school. Bart the Wonder Handyman and his trusty assistant Katie also know to make this the last stop and to allow extra time as they just aren't going to be able to go in and do the job and leave.

There are some tenants that as soon as I see their number pop up on my phone, the hairs on the back of my neck stand up, the top lip starts to curl and I am put into a bad mood straight way. I can't explain why but Ms S is one of these tenants. She is difficult, she makes the simplest thing so difficult and basically she pushes my buttons. I know this is going to sound just awful, but as soon as Ms Have a Chat H leaves, Ms S is getting her marching orders! I am not going to be the wicked property manager that has turfed out Ms Have a Chat H adopted Grandson, so I have to wait.

Over the past six months, although we have been managing to rent out the properties, it has been more difficult. My choice of potential tenants has lowered, but worse still is the quality of tenants. Some times we hit a patch where there is nothing but trashy applicants, so I find myself climbing back into the barrel and searching around the bottom for the best candidate. Some complexes, no matter how good the market, we are still going to get crappy tenants. There is one such complex we have a

few properties in - these units are "debt reducers" for the owners so it is our job to get the best possible tenants for them until the market picks up and the prices go up. Unfortunately the quality in this complex and the one next door is pretty low. We had been struggling with renting this one unit in the complex. I had organised to meet a potential tenant there on Saturday afternoon. It was for her partner and herself and both were working - great start.

I turn up and a few minutes later this beat up car arrives. Out pops Ms N and she is short, stocky and wearing a leery Hawaiian shirt. I have since worked out that leery Hawaiian shirts for Ms N is her signature dress style, just like mine is Barbie shoes. She walks over to me and puts her hand out to shake mine, smiles and then I can fully see she has no front teeth. Without batting an eyelid I smile back and shake her hand - oh I have been doing this for far too long. We walk upstairs and I show her around and she loves it. She has brought their ID as her partner had to go to work. Her partner is a she and let me tell you that no one in the complex is going to be messing with her!

At times when finding tenants are tough, we have a saying, which I can't take full credit for but some one reading this will now be smiling. Our criteria falls all the way down to

Are they breathing? Do they have a job? Do they have the money?

Oh dear, we now have had to change this to

Are they breathing? Do they have a job? Do they have the money? Front teeth are optional.

As you know to keep track of our tenants we give them a nick name, this way every one in the office immediately knows who we are talking about. These are the No teeth, Hawaiian shirt ladies. I have since followed up with them to see how they are settling in - they just love the place and will be staying for a while! Happy tenants, happy landlord and happy property manager.

For those that know me personally, you will know that one of my personality flaws is that I really am not good at confrontation. This is flaw that I still have, but some how my brain has been able to separate out things. It must be my Gemini personality that is taking over. If it is a personal issue or something that I feel some sort of moral obligation on, I sit and stress, then stew and work myself into a knot. The dread I get when I know that I need to put the rent up on one of my Oldies and the impact it will have on them is just awful and this is the part I truly hate of my job.

Some how the Gemini has managed to put to one side all the tenant issues and given me free rein to be confrontational when required. A while back I got a call on a Saturday morning from one of the tenants at Scotsdale to say that there was poop in the pool - see what I mean about not knowing what each day will bring. After laughing and shaking my head at what I get to deal with, I call the great team from Mermaid Pools. If it were any other contractor this would have been the first job for Monday morning, but they were out there in a few hours. I get the call from the Chris to say that the poop has gone, but really we should close down the pool and treat it. No arguments from me, so I

give them them go ahead. There is just one problem there is a couple in the pool that are drunk and won't get out, which means that Chris can't put the chemicals in and lock the gate for the weekend.

Who knows why, but I ask what they look like and ask some questions. Some where in the back of my elephant memory pieces start to come together and I say to Chris call out to the guy and say "Is your name Mr J?" to which I hear "yeah why?" I give Chris the message to repeat.

"I have Linda on the phone and she said if you don't get out of the pool now, she will get really cranky. She will get in the car and be here in five minutes. Believe me you don't want her to come down as it ain't going to be pretty."

Within minutes they leave, chemicals are in the pool and the Saturday pool poop event is closed. Got to love my job - got to hate my job!

I hope you have enjoyed the first Note to Self - Must Get a Life for 2016. Already started on the next newsletter which features the Lemon EOS. I hope you are all happy and well in your world.

Linda Tuck