
THE CHANGING RENTAL MARKET

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Now that we are in the 2015-16 Financial Year, the phase-in period for changes to the Residential Tenancies Act has ended.

Two years ago the State Government changed the rules and regulations that apply to security measures for rental properties, and property owners then had two years to make those changes however time is now up.

In short, rental properties must have approved deadlocks or deadbolts on any ground floor, timber entry doors or a metal security screen door of Australian standards matched up with the entry door.

Rental properties must also have suitable locks and latches for any windows and a porch light near the front door that can be operated from inside the home. There are some general exceptions to this, but you get the idea.

Security in rental homes is one of the most sought after things when people are thinking about making an application, so it's wise for property owners not simply to meet the legal requirements but to take extra steps to ensure that tenants will feel safe and confident that their possessions will be well protected. This can also assist tenants in securing contents insurance.

Any property owners unsure about the new rules in place for security in rentals should contact their property managers or the Department of Consumer protection as a matter of priority. Penalties may apply to owners who have not taken the appropriate steps.

Certainly, now is not the time for property owners to be careless about the upkeep and presentation of their rental stock because the vacancy rate has jumped in recent months and tenants have a huge amount of choice.

In metropolitan Perth there is 50 per cent more rental stock on the market than is usual and the number of properties looking for tenants has passed 8,000. This means that the median rent too has started to soften, dropping by \$25 per week on the same time last year.

Rents in Perth peaked in mid-2013, but have dropped by around 10 per cent since then, wiping \$50 per week off the metropolitan median price. The sharp turn-around has been caused by the fall in our population growth rate and the large number of newly constructed dwellings coming onto the market.

In this environment it's critical for property owners to make every effort to ensure that their property is clean, well maintained and priced to meet the market. If these things are not properly attended to then most prospective tenants won't even bother looking.

Given that the soft rental market is set to continue for a while yet, it's in the interests of owners to attract, satisfy and secure long-term tenants to avoid any prolonged vacancy periods that may lie ahead.
