

Consumer Affairs Victoria

# International student kit

---

This kit contains:

- Summary of contents
- Sample social media posts
- Short article
- Long article
- YouTube video link

## Summary of contents

---

Consumer Affairs Victoria has developed this kit to help universities, education providers and related bodies provide information to international students about their renting rights and responsibilities.

We are all working together for the shared goal of providing international students with a positive experience during their stay in Victoria.

The kit contains:

- **social media posts and images** – for posting on your Facebook and Twitter channels
- **short article** – which you can publish in your newsletter or website
- **long article** – which you can publish in your newsletter or website
- **YouTube video link** – for embedding on your website or sharing on social media

The email we sent contains:

- **an A3 poster** – which you can distribute on campus or electronically



## Sample social media posts

---

### Facebook

International students have renting rights too. Avoid losing money by understanding your renting rights and responsibilities at [consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents)

Discover the app that may save you a renting nightmare. The free RentRight app includes useful email templates on issues such as repairs, information on your rights and responsibilities and a handy budget calculator. Download the RentRight app at [consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright)

### Twitter

New to Victoria? Looking for somewhere to stay? Find out what you need to know about renting at [consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents)

Got a smart phone? Download the free RentRight app for information on your renting rights and responsibilities [consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright)

## Short article for online or newsletter use

### What all international students need to know before renting in Victoria

Tens of thousands of excited students will walk through the international terminal at Melbourne Airport this summer. Eager and nervous, they make up the 175,000 strong group of international students calling Victoria home as they complete their studies.

Before seeing a kangaroo and hugging a koala, students will try to settle in their new home town, opening a bank account, setting up a new mobile number, enrolling in studies, and perhaps most importantly - finding a great local cafe.

Relocating to a new city will naturally include tracking down a place to stay, somewhere close to their place of study with convenient transport links. With many options available, students have a variety of different accommodation types on offer to suit individual needs and budgets.

Renting in a brand new city can have its challenges. One international student reported not understanding the rental laws, resulting in his first landlord keeping the bond, which the student was entitled to have returned to him. Another said they paid for accommodation upfront online, which turned out to look a lot different in real life than it did online.

Reports of landlords taking advantage of international students are not common, however it is important that international students know that

they have rights, and are aware of how to exercise them.

Consumer Affairs Victoria, the state's authority that provides information to consumers on renting, has a few handy tips to newly arrived students looking for accommodation:

- Yes, you are an international student – but you have the same renting rights as all Victorians
- You have travelled to Victoria to study, so why not learn more about your renting rights and responsibilities at [consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents](http://consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents)
- Got a smart phone? Check out the free RentRight app at [consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright](http://consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright) for more information and help to avoid renting problems

Understanding of renting rights and responsibilities are key to ensuring a smooth transition to life in Victoria and finding a suitable place to live.

Once the accommodation is arranged, it is time to study hard, meet some friends, explore new surroundings and finally find that cute koala to hug.



## Longer article for online or newsletter use

### The experience no international student plans for before coming to Australia

"It all happened so fast. We were both leaving our jobs, organising ourselves ... and we got married, too. I can't remember if we even thought about renting before we left," recalls Camila.

The 32-year-old is talking about her move from Colombia to Melbourne in 2014. She and husband Ricardo, 35, decided to travel to Australia to pursue English language and culinary studies, respectively.

But their first experience of Australia was soured when they found themselves ripped off by the unscrupulous operator of an illegal rooming house.

Being tied up with everyday tasks before they left Colombia, the couple eagerly accepted an offer from Ricardo's cousin to stay at her place when they arrived in Melbourne.

Arriving in Melbourne, they spent their first night with Ricardo's cousin. "We had to go to a backpacker's hostel the next night. It was very uncomfortable for us," Camila explains. The couple urgently needed a proper place to stay.

A tip from a local friend alerted them to a Facebook page set up for the Colombian community which advertised rooms for rent.

A post caught their attention, advertising a room for a couple in a fully furnished, spacious house, complete with two bathrooms and amenities, for \$345 per week. The couple excitedly arranged to view the room.

"When we went to inspect the house we realised that it wasn't the prettiest, but we were willing to try it. We had never lived in a share house before so it was something different for us," Camila recalls.

The couple paid \$1,045 as bond as well as one week of rent in advance and moved in. "That's when we realised we weren't sharing with two other couples. Instead, we were sharing with nine other people."

The living room had been sectioned off into two bedrooms sandwiched between a makeshift dry wall.

"During the inspection none of the others had been around, so we had no idea."

"Pretty quickly we saw the dishwasher wasn't working, one of the bathrooms was completely out of order and the other bathroom had mould growing. During winter we begged the 'landlord' - more on this later - to fix the heater for weeks, because we were freezing! It took about a month before they did finally fix it."

Nights were spent in complete darkness as the burnt-out light globe in their room was too high for the couple to be able to change it without a ladder. Again, pleas for assistance went unanswered.

"We wanted to leave but the landlord said that if we did, there was no way we would receive our bond back. It meant we had no choice but to stay."

Soon after, a letter arrived in the mail informing all the tenants that they had to leave the property as it was being demolished. Instructions noted all tenants had to be out at least one month before the demolition date.

Worried, Camila and Ricardo called the landlord and told her about the letter. She coolly dismissed the letter's advice and explained they were entitled to stay in the house up until one day before it was due to be demolished.

"It's then that we started researching renting and realised we were actually living in an unlicensed rooming house without a proper lease. Our landlord was not actually the owner of the property, but had been renting the house from the owner and illegally subletting it to all eleven of us without the knowledge of the owner."

"We were entitled to have our bond back if we wanted to leave. Of course the bond hadn't been lodged with the Residential Tenancies Board Authority at the start of our tenancy - by law, this should have been the case. This is something we had no idea about because in Colombia they don't have bonds," Camila explains.

"We truly had this thought that this sort of dishonest behaviour did not happen in Australia. We now know that while most people do the right thing, there are still some that try to take advantage of international students who don't know the renting rules here."

On a quest to retrieve their bond, the couple sought assistance from a collective of organisations: the Salvation Army, Study Melbourne, the Tenants Union of Victoria and Consumer Affairs Victoria.

It was after they took the landlord to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal that they finally managed to get their bond back.

It seems really obvious now that one of the tenants should have spoken out against the landlord. Though Camila notes it wasn't as simple: "at the time we were scared that if we complained it would cause an issue with our visa."



Camila believes they could have avoided the stressful experience by doing their research on renting laws in Australia before they arrived.

“My advice to other international students is to read the information provided by the Tenants Union of Victoria and Consumer Affairs Victoria on your renting rights and responsibilities. Make sure you receive a bond receipt after your landlord lodges your bond, otherwise it may not have been done legally.”

### Quick Links

- For information on renting rights and responsibilities  
[consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents)
- The go-to app for renters, download the free RentRight app  
[consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright-app](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/rentright-app)
- For advice on resolving disputes with your landlord visit  
[tuv.org.au/advice](https://tuv.org.au/advice)

## YouTube video for embedding online or sharing on social

To provide international students with a snapshot of what renting looks like in Victoria, we have created a two minute video hosted on YouTube.

It's a great way to introduce students to their renting rights and responsibilities.

We suggest embedding the video on your website, or posting on your social media channels.

Access the video on <https://youtu.be/IVyiOhVi6ok>

