

# COVID-19 Rent Relief – landlords and agents



The Tasmanian Government has established the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund to provide rent relief payments of up to \$2,000 to support Tasmanians experiencing rental hardship due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The scheme started Monday 25 May 2020 and is available until **30 June 2021**.

A COVID-19 Landlord Support fund has also been established to provide financial support to landlords who are experiencing financial hardship due to tenants being behind in rent. This scheme started on 7 September 2020 and has been extended until 30 June 2021. See COVID-19 Landlord Support Fund factsheet.

## What is the COVID-19 Rent Relief payment?

The COVID-19 Rent Relief payment is paid directly to landlords or their agents who have entered into an approved temporary rent reduction agreement with their tenant to keep them securely housed in their principal place of residence.

The payment is made directly to the landlord or agent to contribute to the tenant's modified rental payments, under their temporary rental reduction agreement.

The relief payment value will be either:

- the total of four weeks rent, to a maximum of \$2000, or
- the amount a tenant and owner have agreed to as a rent reduction.

**IMPORTANT:** the value will be whichever is the lesser amount.

The Rent Relief Fund is available from 25 May 2020 until **30 June 2021**.

## Who is an eligible tenant?

A tenant is eligible for rent relief if:

- they are a tenant renting in the private rental market
- they have experienced and can demonstrate financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- their rent is more than 30 per cent of household income
- the household has less than \$5,000 in savings.

## Where can I find out more?

You can find out more from Housing Connect on 1800 800 588.

## How do you apply for the payment?

1. Speak with your tenant about whether they may be eligible and the terms of a potential rent reduction.
2. Together with your tenant, complete a Rent Relief Application Form. Forms are available from Housing Connect at [www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/rental-services](http://www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/rental-services) or by calling 1800 800 588. If your tenant is eligible but

you are unable to reach agreement about a rent reduction, your tenant may contact the Office of the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to discuss their options.

3. Your tenant will then contact the Department of Justice to confirm their eligibility for the scheme.
  - » Your tenant will need to provide income statements, payslips, bank statements recording 6 months' activity and Centrelink statements to the Department of Justice so they can assess their eligibility.
  - » Your tenant will also need to provide their tenancy agreement and Rent Relief Application Form.

If approved as eligible, the Department of Justice will process the application.

Once approved, both you and your tenant will be notified, the lump sum payment will be paid directly to you as landlord or your agent and the reduced rental period will commence for the tenant.

(Landlord or agent's bank account details will need to be provided on the Application Form).

### Example

Jane currently pays \$350 per week in rent for a private rental property she shares with her partner. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jane lost her regular shifts in a local retail outlet.

Jane contacted her landlord to discuss temporarily reducing her rent for the next few months to make things easier for her until her work picks up again. Together they follow a simple process to agree and implement a rent relief agreement that allows Jane's rent to be reduced by 25 per cent for the next 3 months:

- Together, they discuss the situation and complete a Rent Relief Application Form (from [www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/rental-services](http://www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/rental-services)) to confirm the agreed reduction in rent and time period it applies.
- Jane contacts the Department of Justice and provides them with a copy of this application and her income information confirming the financial impact of COVID-19. The Department of Justice then checks that Jane meets all other eligibility

requirements for the assistance, including her and her partner's bank statements to ensure the household does not have savings of more than \$5,000.

- If eligible, Department of Justice will approve or decline the application within nine business days. If approved they'll confirm the date the rent reductions starts and authorise payment of the grant to the landlord or agent.
- Jane starts paying the reduced rental amount once the agreement has been approved.

## Landlords or Agents – FAQs

### Does this mean I don't need to agree to a rent reduction with my tenant?

To be eligible for the payment there must be an agreement between the tenant and landlord / agent to reduce the rent.

You are not required to agree to a rent reduction, but landlords or agents are encouraged to negotiate in good faith with their tenants.

Rental relief payments are based on reduced rent arrangements negotiated between the tenant and landlord or agent and used as a credit for rental payments at this reduced amount.

### How do I check the progress of my tenant's application after I agree to a rent reduction?

You will be notified of the application outcome after your tenant has completed the eligibility assessment. Stay in contact with your tenant during this time to ensure they have everything they need for the application to proceed.

### If my tenant refuses to apply, do I still have to negotiate a rent reduction?

Landlords or agents are encouraged to negotiate in good faith regardless of tenant eligibility for Rent Relief.

### **How will I know if my tenant is eligible?**

You will be notified of the outcome after your tenant's application has been assessed. You can check with your tenant to make sure they have all the information needed for their application.

### **How long will it take to receive the payment?**

Payment transactions may take up to two business days after assessments have been completed.

### **Can I make my tenant apply?**

No. You cannot make your tenant apply. You can make the process easier by making sure your tenant has a copy of their tenancy agreement and the Rent Relief Application Form, and asking them to contact Department of Justice at [rda@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:rda@justice.tas.gov.au)

### **How can I stay updated?**

Advice is updated frequently as the COVID-19 situation evolves in Tasmania. Please refer to the following for the latest information:

- Tasmanian Government Coronavirus website [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au)
- Australian Government Department of Health [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- Tasmanian Public Health Hotline **1800 671 738**