

Finding housing and accommodation

Related articles:

- [Starting a new tenancy agreement](#)
- [Tips for inspecting a new rental property](#)

Finding a property

Affordable accommodation in Sydney is difficult to find. For most students their biggest cost is rent.

Questions to consider when choosing accommodation include: how much you can afford to spend on rent, what facilities you require, where you would like to live, and how much control you'd like to have over your accommodation.

The University produces an excellent [accommodation guide](#) that explains the different types of accommodation both on and off campus.

Tips for finding the right accommodation

1. [Be careful and watch out for scams!](#) Many students have lost money by agreeing to pay for fake rental listings posted online.
2. Check the University's [Off-Campus Housing Database](#).
3. Some useful Facebook groups include **Inner West Housemates** (Glebe, Newtown, Marrickville etc); **Inner East Housemates** (Surry Hills, Darlington, Redfern etc.); and **Queer Housing Sydney** (for LGBTQ+ friendly accommodation).
4. The Tenants' Union of NSW's [Rent Tracker Postcode tool](#) lists average rents for all postcodes in NSW.
5. It's a good idea to rent somewhere that has **access to public transport**. Buses are less reliable and slower than trains, so it's good to live near a train station.
6. **Express trains make it easier** to live further from campus. For example, Parramatta is about 25kms from Camperdown campus, but less than 25 minutes to Redfern Station by express train.

7. If you have a car, you'll need to **consider parking options**. Some properties don't include off-street parking, or have limited parking spots.
8. If you're a local student on a low income, and you're finding it difficult to pay bond for a private rental, you may be eligible for a NSW Government [Rentstart Bond Loan](#).

Scam alert! Be careful when looking for accommodation online

When you're looking for a place to live, you should never pay or sign anything until you've inspected the property or sent someone you know to inspect it for you.

Common accommodation scam

In a common scam, fake landlords advertise online, claiming to be renting out a room or an apartment. These ads typically have an address and lots of photos of a real place, which the fake landlord has stolen from a real ad.

The person pretending to be the landlord claims they can't show you the place because they're overseas or away. **They are usually happy to provide copies of their passport, as well as other official documents and tenancy agreements, to trick you into believing they are legitimate.** But the agreements are fake, and the copy of the passport, or other documents, have often been stolen from another person.

The fake landlord will tell you to transfer money to secure the accommodation, and they promise to send you the keys by courier. Once the money has been deposited the landlord is never heard from again and can't be located – **meaning you are not able to get your money back.**

Always inspect the property. Don't ever send identity documents and don't transfer money to anyone if you haven't seen the property for yourself or had someone you know inspect it for you.

Know your rights

It is important to know how to protect yourself when looking for housing. Here is a list of important things to keep in mind:

- **Don't pay any money, sign anything or send your personal documents to anyone** until you've inspected the property.
- You can't be asked to pay more than advertised. Real estate agents are legally prohibited from soliciting rent offers higher than the advertised price (this is known as **rent bidding**).
- **Keep copies of all documentation**, which should include a written agreement, a condition report, and receipts for any payments you make, such as a bond or security deposit, or rent.
- **Get the full legal name and residential (or business) address** of the person you're renting from (the property owner, their rental agent, or the leaseholder). The full legal name of the landlord and one method of contacting them needs to be provided on your Residential Tenancy Agreement, even if they rent their property through an agent.
- **Take photos or videos of everything** in the property when you are doing your condition report – make sure they are date-stamped.
- When issues arise, communicate with your landlord (or head-tenant) **in writing**. Emails and letters are best, but SMS or messaging are okay too – just make sure you keep a copy so you can print it off later if you need to.
- **Keep copies of all correspondence** with the person you are renting from.
- **The agent or landlord must offer you the option of lodging your bond online** with the NSW government service, [Rental Bonds Online](#) – this is the safest method for lodging your bond. If you choose not to use Rental Bonds Online, your landlord must deposit your bond with Fair Trading and not in their own bank account. If you don't receive confirmation that your bond has been lodged, [contact Fair Trading](#).
- **Read more about tenancy law:** [Starting a new tenancy agreement](#), [During your tenancy](#) and [Moving out](#).

Illegal subdivision and overcrowding

Because housing in Sydney is so expensive, some landlords offer accommodation in overcrowded dwellings that are illegally subdivided. This can look like:

- room sharing
- 'hot-bedding' (renting a bed for specific hours of each day while someone else rents the other hours)
- a partitioned section of a common area (for example, part of the living room)
- outbuildings such as garages, sheds, and caravans.

These kinds of arrangements are often insecure and can be hazardous for students. They are often in breach of building codes and are at risk of being shut down by council authorities. You should be very cautious when entering these kinds of arrangements. Confirm with the landlord how many people live in the property before you decide to move in. If you're unsure about your housing arrangement, [contact us for advice](#).

Are you facing eviction?

In NSW, landlords must have valid legal reasons to evict you. This applies to all residential tenancy agreements – both fixed term and periodic. Legally valid reasons for eviction include:

- significant renovations/repairs or demolition of the property, that require you to move out
- a change in the use of the property, in situations where the property will no longer be used as a rental
- the owner or relevant person from their family moving into the property
- the sale of the property.

You may still be evicted if you have committed a breach, such as non-payment of rent, or extraordinary grounds, including hardship to the landlord, death of a tenant, uninhabitability, etc.

If you are living in a boarding house, the landlord must only give you 'reasonable' notice, and does not need an order from NCAT to evict you.

Assistance

Our [Postgraduate Advocacy Service](#) can provide you with free advice and assistance with tenancy matters. [Contact us for help](#).

You can also contact your local [Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service](#) for free advice and assistance.

Emergency accommodation

If you have nowhere to stay you can contact [Link2Home](#) on **1800 152 152** for referrals to accommodation providers and other support services. This is a free 24-hour service provided by the NSW Government. If you need somewhere to stay because of domestic violence, you can call the **Link2Home domestic violence line: 1800 656 463**.

Sydney University students who require **emergency accommodation** may be able to stay at [STUCCO](#), a student-managed housing cooperative located in Newtown. [Contact us for a referral](#).

The University may be able to support students who are facing homelessness or unsafe living conditions. Please [contact us for help](#) from one of our caseworkers. If you meet the criteria, a caseworker can submit a Care Report to the University Student Wellbeing team for emergency housing advice and assistance.

Useful links

- [University of Sydney's Off-Campus Housing Database](#)
- [University of Sydney Accommodation guide](#) (includes colleges and other University-owned accommodation)
- [Tenants' Union of NSW](#)
- [Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services \(TAAS\)](#)
- [Transport for NSW Trip Planner](#) for public transport information
- Redfern Legal Centre's [Share Housing Survival Guide](#)
- [NSW Fair Trading](#) (Rental Bond Board and Rental Bonds Online)
- [Rentstart Bond Loan](#)
- [STUCCO](#) – affordable student housing for domestic Usyd students.

Disclaimer

This information is current as at June 2025 and where it includes legal information is intended as a guide to the law as it applies to people who live in or are affected by the law as it applies in NSW. It does not constitute legal advice.

Written by SUPRA Postgraduate Advocacy Service June 2025.