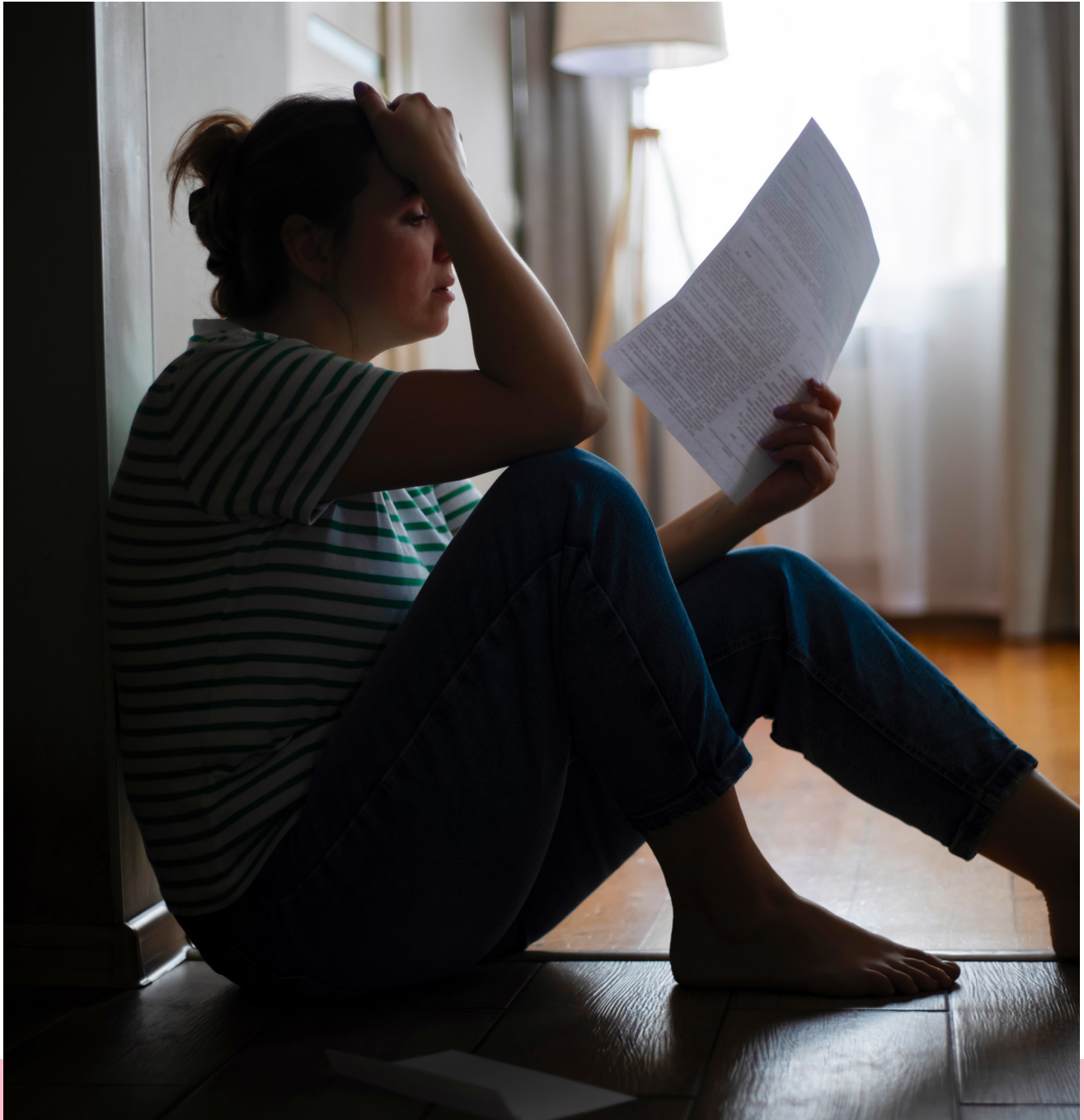




The lived experience of eviction: Evidence from New South Wales and Queensland

Joelle Moore (UQ)

Dr Yiran Li, Prof Alan Morris (UTS)

Dr Chris Martin, Dr Andrew Clarke (UNSW)

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1. Inside this report

This report shares the stories of tenants from New South Wales and Queensland, focusing on the social, relational, and structural factors that shape how eviction is experienced. We begin by explaining why evictions matter, what our research entailed, how we define eviction, and who we spoke with about the experience of eviction (Sections 2 and 3).

Next we present the findings of the research. In Section 4, we discuss how the evictions played out for tenants, e.g. how tenants came to understand that their landlord wanted them to leave and the reasons they gave. We also present tenants' accounts of formal, informal, and retaliatory evictions, i.e. in response to actions they had taken to assert their rights or raise concerns.

Section 5 discusses how tenants resist or delay eviction, whether by negotiating, seeking advice, or getting support from friends, family, or community groups. We also look at disputes and legal action, including battles over bond and tribunal cases, and share the personal stories behind them (Section 6).

Section 7 considers the consequences of eviction and its aftermath – where people end up living, the heightened risk of homelessness, and the emotional, physical, and financial toll it takes. Across all these experiences the relationship between tenants, landlords, and/or property managers shapes every stage of the eviction process – influencing the triggers, the way notices are given, and whether tenants feel heard and respected or made to feel they had little choice but to leave.

Joelle Moore

(University of Queensland)



Dr Yiran Li

(University of New South Wales)



Prof Alan Morris

(University of Technology Sydney)



Dr Chris Martin

(University of New South Wales)



Dr Andrew Clarke

(University of New South Wales)



2. Why evictions matter

Eviction – the loss of a rental home because of action taken by its owner – is not just a legal process, but a deeply human one. A secure home is more than just shelter – it is the foundation of stability, identity, and everyday life. Losing your home involuntarily is therefore a profound disruption, yet eviction remains a surprisingly common experience for renters in Australia.

Although data about evictions in Australia are patchy (no state or territory regularly publishes eviction statistics) available evidence shows that around one in seven tenancies end because of a decision by the landlord to terminate it,¹ and more than 12,000 eviction applications are made by New South Wales private-sector landlords to that state's tribunal each year.²

Eviction is not just a legal process, but a deeply human one.

Research in Australia and overseas shows that eviction can also lead to financial hardship, poor mental and physical health, disrupted education for children, loss of community connections, and long-term housing instability (Desmond, 2016; Morris et al., 2025; Tenants' Union of NSW, 2024). Eviction is both a cause and a consequence of housing insecurity, and the impacts can be long-lasting.

The potential harms of eviction are intensified by the current strained housing market. Rising house prices mean that home ownership is out of reach for many. Meanwhile, social housing has shrunk to just 4% of all housing, making it almost impossible to access.

For around one in four Australians, renting privately is no longer a stepping stone – it is the only option. The past five years have seen extraordinary movements in rental conditions across Australia. Median asking rents for new tenancies are up almost 50% on their pre-2020 level, rent increases during tenancies have become much larger and more common, and rental vacancy rates remain very low, around 1.3% (Martin et al., 2025). More than three-quarters of homelessness support services report a “significant increase” in demand and that it is now “much harder” for people who are homeless to find accommodation (Pawson et al., 2024).

Until recently, all Australian states allowed tenants to be evicted without grounds. The result was widespread housing insecurity for private renters, living with the constant worry that they could lose their home (Morris et al., 2025). Over the past five years, four jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and the ACT) have abolished “no-grounds evictions”, while at the time of writing Western Australia and the Northern Territory allow landlords to give “no-grounds” notices at the end of the fixed term of a tenancy and any time during a periodic tenancy. Queensland and Tasmania allow “no-grounds” notices at the end of fixed terms only. However, even where no-grounds evictions have been abolished, the possibility of eviction remains because of unaffordable rent increases, and grounds for termination including sale of the property, renovations, a landlord's family moving, or a change of rental property status to short-term accommodation (e.g. Airbnb). Eviction has been called a “hidden housing problem” (Howell & Immergluck, 2021). Our research aims to bring to light how damaging it can be for renters – and to centre the fundamental importance of a secure home in our understanding of why evictions matter.

1 [Housing Mobility and Conditions, 2019-20 financial year](#) | Australian Bureau of Statistics

2 [NAT Evictions Map](#) | Tenants' Union



Image by [Ketut Subiyanto](#)

3. About the research

This report draws primarily on research conducted for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project *Eviction: How Private Renters Lose Their Homes and the Consequences*.³

3.1 Defining eviction in the context of residential tenancies laws

We define eviction as the loss of a person's rental home because of action taken by the landlord. This is a relatively broad definition. It includes *formal evictions*, in which a landlord initiates legal proceedings and the tenant either moves out or a tribunal makes an order to end the tenancy, which may be enforced through physical removal by authorised persons. It also includes *informal evictions* where a landlord takes other actions that effectively force a tenant to leave, such as failing to carry out necessary repairs, engaging in harassment or intimidation, or imposing an unaffordable rent increase.

In New South Wales, the law governing almost all tenancies is the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* (NSW) and in Queensland, it is the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Qld). In both states, most legal proceedings to terminate a tenancy are commenced by the landlord giving a notice to the tenant: in New South Wales, the legislation refers to this notice as a Termination Notice; in Queensland, it is a Notice to Leave. In this report, we refer to each as an "eviction notice". An eviction notice sets a date on which the landlord wants the tenant to move out. The law sets the amount of notice required, which varies by grounds and other circumstances.

In both states an eviction notice does not by itself end the tenancy – neither when it is given, nor on the date set in the notice. The tenancy

ends if the tenant vacates the premises, or if the state's tribunal – the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal – makes an order terminating the tenancy. The landlord may apply for a termination order if the tenant is still in the premises after the date stated in the eviction notice. In certain limited circumstances a landlord can apply directly to the tribunal for a termination order without first having given an eviction notice.

A termination order sets the date by which the tenant must vacate. If the tenant does not vacate by that date, the tribunal can make an order (a warrant for possession) authorising an officer (in New South Wales, an officer of the NSW Sheriff, and in Queensland, a police officer) to physically remove the tenant from the premises. In both states it is unlawful for any other person, including the landlord, to physically remove the tenant.

3.2 Interviews about experiences of eviction

We conducted 53 in-depth interviews with tenants in New South Wales and Queensland who had been evicted, were facing an impending eviction, or had been threatened with eviction.⁴ The study aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives and identify how eviction or the threat of eviction is experienced.

Tenants were recruited for the study through online renter forums and social media. We also partnered with key tenant advocacy organisations, the Tenants' Union of New South Wales and Tenants Queensland, who promoted the study in newsletters, online, and

3 ARC reference: DP230100566.

4 Ethics clearance for the study project was provided by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference: ETH23-8116). Because eviction can be distressing to talk about, we followed a strict safety protocol. This included checking in with participants during the interview, offering breaks, and providing information about support services.

via email to renters who had recently sought eviction advice. While using this approach to recruitment meant that many tenants we spoke to had negative experiences of renting, they brought diverse accounts and insights into how eviction is lived and understood.

3.3 Who took part

Between September 2023 and May 2024, we carried out 23 interviews with tenants in Sydney, seven in regional New South Wales, 16 interviews in Brisbane, and seven in regional Queensland.⁵ We also conducted 16 follow-up interviews in early 2025 - eight in Queensland and eight in New South Wales.⁶ The people we spoke to came from all walks of life, but many were in vulnerable situations.

- **Benefits:** at least 16 participants were in receipt of government payments.
- **Disability and care:** 22 participants had a disability or were the main carer for a family member with disability.
- **Household type:** 9 were single parents and 8 lived alone.

This diversity helped us see how eviction is experienced differently depending on income, family circumstances, health, and location.

At the heart of this report are the voices of tenants. Their stories give a rare, detailed picture of the eviction process in Australia – from the first signs of problems to the moment tenants are forced to vacate, and the challenges they face afterwards. These conversations went far beyond notice periods and paperwork. Tenants spoke about the emotional toll, the stress of living with intense uncertainty, their interactions with landlords

and property managers, and how the realities of Australia's tight rental market shaped their experiences. Each interview followed a flexible interview guide, covering:

- Housing history and current living situation
- Experiences of eviction or threat of eviction
- The process of being asked to leave
- Relationships with landlords and property managers
- Whether and how they sought help
- Decisions to resist or accept eviction
- The personal and family impacts of the experience

In the next four sections, we share some of the tenants' stories about being evicted. All the names used are pseudonyms.

⁵ Our interviews with NSW renters were conducted prior to the reform abolishing no-grounds evictions, which commenced 19 May 2025.

⁶ We also interviewed 35 landlords and property managers, and 19 other stakeholders, for example, Tenants' Union staff. They are not quoted in this report, which is focused on the voices of tenants.



Image by [Ketut Subiyanto](#)

4. How evictions played out

For most tenants their eviction unfolded gradually over weeks or months, rather than as a single sudden event. While the reasons for eviction varied – from repair disputes to property sales – the process shaped tenants’ experiences as much as the reasons themselves.

While some evictions followed formal pathways set out in legislation, others were abrupt, informal, or procedurally flawed. In cases where landlords used the formal process, tenants received a written Termination Notice or Notice to Leave, specifying the date they had to vacate and the grounds for eviction – such as the sale of the rental property, owner occupation, or major repairs – or no ground. On paper, these are legal, regulated processes, but in practice they often played out against a backdrop of strained landlord–tenant relationships, poor communication, and little or no room for negotiation.

Informal evictions took different forms, including tenants being pressured to leave through intimidation, repeated inspections, breaches of privacy or a steep rent increase that was unaffordable. Many tenants had already experienced sharp rent rises, well above wage growth or increases in government benefits.

4.1 Finding out about the eviction

The manner and timing in which tenants were informed they had to vacate varied from formal written notices to abrupt verbal demands, often shaping both the emotional impact and the housing options available to them – particularly when coinciding with health issues or holiday periods. Jessica, in Sydney, described receiving a call from the property manager whilst driving with her two children informing her they had to vacate the property in four weeks: “So my children heard that and

were so distressed.” The call was received on 2 January, when real estate offices are closed and rental listings are scarce.

“They said... you’ve been given notice and you’ve got four weeks to move out... my children heard that and were so distressed.”

Jessica, NSW

Likewise, Fiona, in regional New South Wales, received 30 days’ notice over Christmas, despite asking for an early warning: “I sent an email to the landlord via the real estate asking if you are not going to renew the lease can you let us know now so that we have appropriate time to look. That email was completely ignored.”

Tenants described how property managers often acted as “gatekeepers”. Selina, in Sydney, felt that her property manager was obstructing communication between herself and her landlord: “It would have been so much easier to just talk to the landlord. They wouldn’t let me. They used actual intimidation tactics against me.”

Where the sale of the property or renovation were the grounds for eviction, tenants spoke of being “strung along” for weeks or months, often with assurances that later proved false. For instance, Brenda, who rented with her husband and two children in rural Queensland for two and a half years, recalled how at the beginning of 2020, her landlord provided assurances that they would not sell: “He said, ‘Oh, you’ve got nothing to worry about. I’m not looking outside my property like everyone else is’. I go, ‘Well, that’s good reassurance’.” Yet less than six months later, Brenda opened her mailbox to find an eviction notice: “We need to end your lease because the owner’s looking at selling’. I’m like, he just told me he’s not selling.”

Across these accounts, the method and timing of notice delivery shaped not only tenants' logistical capacity to secure new housing, but also their sense of agency and dignity in the process. Informal or unlawful notices, abrupt verbal demands, and badly-timed communications increased stress and made resisting the notice difficult. These experiences illustrate how eviction is not solely about the loss of housing, but about the dynamics of power that determine how and on whose terms the eviction unfolds.

4.2 Grounds for evictions

Almost half of the renters we interviewed told us they had received a no-grounds eviction notice. While lawful at the time, the lack of explanation left many with a sense of injustice, frustration, and confusion, as Daniel described: "I mean look, as far as the worst eviction I [have] had, the one ... that was the most annoying and the most infuriating [was] because it was literally a no-grounds eviction."

When reasons were given for the tenancy termination, these evictions were no less disruptive. Tenants often questioned whether the reasons cited in the notice reflected reality. Across a range of stated grounds – including property sales, major repairs, landlord or family occupation, and alleged breaches – tenants expressed uncertainty about the necessity of the eviction and whether alternative outcomes might have been possible. For instance William described growing doubts about the landlord's stated reason for eviction – "to move back in" – after learning he had previously owned a large property agency: "When I pressed the agent on it – because I knew the landlord had at least ten properties, and much larger ones – I kept asking, 'Why this one?'"

For around a third of tenants the stated reason for eviction at the end of a tenancy was the landlord's decision to sell the property.⁷ While some of these tenants described how they were initially reassured that their tenancy would be renewed, these assurances often dissolved,

⁷ In Queensland and New South Wales tenants cannot be evicted on sale grounds during the fixed term of a tenancy.

with their landlords choosing to "sell vacant" rather than keeping the tenants in place. Zoe and her husband were told by their landlord that he planned to sell their rental in Greater Sydney without "the encumbrance of a tenancy", and Abi's landlord in Brisbane informed her it would just be "easier to sell empty." Amma, also in Brisbane, was living alone when her landlord decided to sell. She reported that she received repeated texts and offers of money to leave before her lease ended, as the landlord had already promised the new owners she would be out by a set date. She stayed until the end of the lease, resisting what she described as his "coercive tactics", insisting her own needs came before the landlord's convenience.

“The landlord has decided he doesn't really want to be a landlord anymore... he wants to sell without the encumbrance of a tenancy being attached.

Zoe, NSW

Other tenants reported being told they had to leave because the property needed major repairs. Several tenants questioned whether the stated works were genuine or necessary. Ann, from regional New South Wales, recounted how she was told a previous rental property was uninhabitable due to plumbing problems and that she had to vacate, but it was back on the market within weeks.

Emily, a single mother living in Western Sydney, reported serious repair issues in her rental, including water damage and excessive mould in her son's bedroom. Despite repeated requests, the property manager's only response was to bleach the walls. When she pressed further for repairs, she was issued an eviction notice within a week, with the property manager claiming the property was "unliveable". Emily reported that shortly after she vacated the property, it was put up for sale without any repairs carried out.⁸

⁸ Following rental law changes in New South Wales in May 2025 a landlord is now required to begin work within two months of the property being vacated for 'significant renovations or repairs'.

Another common ground cited by tenants for eviction involved landlords (or their close family members) moving into the property.⁹ For some tenants, this came as a shock after years of stable tenancy. Georgia had rented a rural cottage in regional New South Wales from long-standing acquaintances for nearly 14 years when the landlord told her without any warning that his family needed the property. Initially assured she wouldn't be rushed, Georgia was shocked to receive a text four days later giving her only three weeks' notice. She later confirmed with the Tenants' Union that the notice period should be 90 days. The stated reason remained "for family use", but she suspected a desire to increase the rent was the real driver: "I think they wanted me out to double the rent and put someone else in." Georgia explained that the eviction process was marked by intimidation, short notice, and unauthorised entries into her home, all while she was caring for her seriously ill daughter and searching for housing.

“ I got a text message saying I had to leave, they wanted my house for family and I had to get out.

Georgia, NSW

Nine tenants described being evicted following the issue of a tenancy breach notice. These notices were often associated in tenants' accounts with miscommunication, difficult personal circumstances, or disputes with neighbours or landlords. Tenants indicated that the breach process could often feel less like a pathway to resolution and more like a fast track to losing their home, as Ben's account illustrates: "I had my pot plants that he forced me to take off my stairs, so I put them downstairs along the footpath area, but I got rid of everything, just got rid of everything, and he still breached me for items in his house. I'm like, I don't even know what items he's breaching me for anymore."

⁹ In Queensland and New South Wales this is a valid reason to end a tenancy, but cannot be used to terminate a fixed-term tenancy early.

Under current Queensland and New South Wales law, a tenant cannot be forced out of a fixed-term lease just because a breach notice is issued. The landlord must go to the tribunal, prove the breach is serious and unresolved, and obtain an order to end the tenancy early.

4.3 Retaliatory evictions

More than a third of tenants (19 in total) believed their eviction to be retaliatory. Requests for essential maintenance were the most common trigger. Almost a quarter of participants (13 cases) reported that eviction notices followed shortly after they had asked for repairs or challenged maintenance delays. Belinda and her partner made repeated repair requests. When their landlord issued them with a rent increase notice, they pushed back citing the premises' dangerous wiring, chronic flooding, and mould: "they kept saying, 'We want to put the rent up'. I'm like, 'No, this house is not up to code. I'm not willing to pay extra if nothing is getting fixed on the place'." Soon after opposing a rent increase due to the poor condition of the property, they received an eviction notice with no explanation.

Jan, in regional Queensland, commented that she and her ex-partner avoided asking for any repairs or improvements for fear it would prompt a rent rise. Instead they tried to undertake the repairs themselves or "put up with it."

“ We were very hesitant to ask the landlord to fix anything because we didn't want him to put the rent up.

Jan, QLD

Likewise, Joshua, in Sydney, noted: "I don't pipe up about maintenance issues... If you pipe up you get shafted... They either raise the rent or just tell you it's no-grounds and you're done."

These findings suggest that badly maintained properties are not only a problem for tenants' safety and amenity, but also their

security of tenure. The risk of retaliation or rent increases deter tenants from asserting their rights with respect to maintenance. At the same time substandard conditions may present the landlord with plausible grounds for an eviction notice.

Five tenants who challenged rent increases reported receiving an eviction notice soon after. Daniel, on a periodic tenancy¹⁰ in Sydney, shared how he resisted an above-market rent increase that was not permitted because his rent had already been increased within the past 12 months. The owners responded by issuing a 30-day eviction notice just before Christmas, which he believed was directly in response to him asserting his rights.

Michael, in Brisbane, requested a rent review after receiving notice that his rent would be increased by \$170 a week. He recalled receiving no response until, after several follow-ups, he received a no grounds eviction notice, which he perceived as retaliation for challenging the rent increase.

Tenants can apply to the tribunal and argue that the landlord's action is retaliatory. Where the tribunal is satisfied that the proceedings were initiated in response to the tenant exercising their rights, it may decline to make a termination order. However, few participants reported using the tribunal, citing the difficulty of presenting their case, the stress involved, and fear of jeopardising future rental prospects.

Ben, who also lives in Brisbane and receives a Disability Support Pension, described how repeated rent increases created ongoing uncertainty: "The real estate [agent] knows they can put up the rent to whatever they want... If the rent keeps going up, I'm going to have to move out." Ben's situation highlights how rising rents can generate eviction-like insecurity even in the absence of a formal eviction notice.

¹⁰ Periodic tenancy is a rental agreement with no fixed end date that continues on a rolling basis (for example, week to week or month to month) until notice is given by either the tenant or the landlord under tenancy law.



Image by Ron Lach

5. Resisting or delaying eviction

When confronted with eviction, tenants described a range of tactics aimed at holding on to their homes for as long as possible. These efforts were rarely about securing long-term security. More often, they were about buying time – time to understand their rights, to perhaps prepare for the tribunal, to find alternative housing in a tight rental market, or simply to cope with the upheaval. Some renters relied on formal advice services, others leaned on family, friends, or community networks, and many attempted to negotiate directly with their landlord or property manager. These accounts reveal both the resourcefulness and persistence of tenants in the face of limited options, but also the frustration of knowing their efforts will only postpone the inevitable.

5.1 Seeking advice

Many tenants spoke about turning to tenants' advice services and/or the state-based tenancy regulators for guidance when threatened with eviction. These services were often the first place renters went when they needed to understand their rights, work out how to respond to a notice, or prepare for a tribunal hearing. Tenants valued the reassurance of knowing someone could look over their documents and check whether an eviction was lawful.

Formal advice services were widely recognised as vital in helping renters resist or delay eviction.

Veronica, in Brisbane, said her case became “a lot stronger and clearer” once her documents were reviewed by the local tenants' service. Matthew, in regional New South Wales, described the support he received from the tenants' service when preparing for his

tribunal hearing as “incredibly helpful.” Already familiar with his rights, he mainly sought legal clarification and advice on strategy. He was given clear guidance on timelines, and how to frame his claims. He noted that tenants less prepared than him would benefit even more from these services.

At the same time, renters acknowledged that high demand and limited resources could sometimes make it difficult to access timely assistance. Matthew praised the staff as friendly and knowledgeable, though sometimes hard to reach, and Veronica noted that in her region, “It was very difficult for me to get assistance.”

These experiences reflect the pressures on services that are trying to meet enormous demand across a vast area with limited resources. Some international students and people recently arrived in Australia said they did not know that services assisting renters existed, highlighting the need for greater promotion of these services.

Tenants' experiences underline the essential advocacy role of the tenants' unions and other advice services in helping renters navigate and sometimes resist or delay eviction. Tenants' experiences underscore the importance of maintaining and expanding this support, so that every renter, regardless of background, knows where to turn and can access timely, expert advice when they need it.

5.2 Support from family, friends and others

When facing the threat of eviction, tenants also turned to their own networks of family, friends, neighbours, and community groups. These informal supports provided financial help, practical assistance, and emotional encouragement at a time when formal support was difficult to access, or the services were limited in what they could offer. Paul, in

Sydney, knew he could draw on his own social networks for emergency accommodation if needed, while others like Matthew received moving help from friends, which he framed as a basic act of solidarity: “That’s what the community should do.”.

“ I know a lot of very useful and helpful people... someone even offered me a place to rent when they heard about my situation.

Paul, NSW

For some families, schools became an important gateway to assistance, with social workers and family liaison staff connecting parents to housing services. Community organisations, charities, and churches were also mentioned as offering practical help such as moving costs, emergency housing, or food parcels, which reduced immediate pressures.

Online communities also acted as informal sources of advice and spaces of resistance, with tenants learning how to negotiate with landlords or to demand more time. At the same time, information shared through online forums warrants some caution, given it typically reflects the experiences and interpretations of other users rather than verified legal advice. Emily realised when she read posts online that “so many people had the same situation as me.” Patrick credited forums with helping him better understand tenancy issues, explaining that members “pointed out the difference between fixed and periodic leases” and that “there was a lot of sympathy too.”

Yet not all tenants had access to support. Alison, in Brisbane, for instance, explained, “My mum and dad have room in their house and they’ve got empty bedrooms, but they’re like no, because it’s inconvenient to them.” Others described not knowing what options were available to them. Lea, in Brisbane, admitted, “I didn’t even know what kind of support I could use... It just made it a whole lot scarier to try to reach out.”

“ I didn’t have anyone actually, you know, to speak to, I couldn’t – I was just in such distress... I just didn’t know which way to turn.

James, NSW

The unevenness of these experiences highlights both the strengths and the limits of informal support. Family, friends, neighbours, and online communities provide a vital lifeline for many tenants, offering financial, practical, and moral support during crisis, and they give tenants time to explore their options. Yet these supports depended on who the tenant knew, where they lived, or whether a community organisation happened to be accessible. While some were fortunate to draw on strong networks, others faced the eviction process largely alone. Strengthening formal systems and ensuring accessible, timely advice and advocacy is therefore essential, so that no renter has to depend on luck or goodwill to hold off losing their home.

5.3 Negotiation

Many tenants attempted to negotiate with landlords or property managers when threatened with eviction. Their experiences show that tenants’ bargaining power is usually limited. For most, negotiation was used only as a way to buy time, and in many cases their efforts to negotiate were ignored.

Alice, in regional New South Wales, described trying to reason with her landlord after severe mould damage, but the landlord responded by telling her to “get out.”

Adam, also in regional New South Wales, recounted going back and forth between the tribunal and his real estate agency, with little result: “I did [try], but got nowhere.”

“ I was told [by the Tribunal] to go back and negotiate again with the real estate agent. Which didn’t work.

Adam, NSW

Mick and Rita, in Brisbane, twice attempted to negotiate after a no-grounds eviction notice, first asking to stay on and later offering \$150 more a week. However, both endeavours to negotiate were unsuccessful. Sabrina, in Brisbane, offered to pay \$60 more a week to avoid moving, but her offer was declined and she was forced to move.

Some tenants pursued negotiation through the formal conciliation process in New South Wales. Fiona's tenancy advice worker pushed back firmly against her landlord's demand for immediate possession, arguing that the claim of urgency was not supported because the landlord was renting elsewhere. Conciliation resulted in an agreement granting Fiona an additional three weeks to vacate. Her experience highlights the importance of skilled advocacy during negotiations.

Overall, tenants' experiences show that while negotiation was a common strategy to resist or delay eviction, and tenants gained time, rent reductions, or stronger bargaining positions with the support of advocates, many felt that even attempting to negotiate invited retaliation, or was simply ignored.



Image by [Rafael Ben-Ari yda](#)

6. Disputes and legal action

Tenants described disputes around property conditions, rent increases, return of bonds, or eviction notices, which sometimes escalated into formal proceedings, requiring tenants to engage with the tribunal or, in a small number of cases, face enforcement by sheriffs or police. While tenants approached these processes seeking fairness, compensation, or extra time to secure new housing, their experiences were often marked by stress, intimidation, and a strong perception that the system favoured landlords.

6.1 Bond battles

Tenants described disputes over rental bonds, marked by inflated or unfounded claims from landlords and property managers. Common grievances cited by participants included landlords and managers charging for professional cleaning despite poor property conditions on entry, claiming compensation for long-standing wear and tear (such as old carpets, blinds, or walls), or seeking payment for items never supplied or already covered by insurance. Tenants reported feeling pressured to surrender part or all of their bond to avoid prolonged conflict, even when they believed these claims were unjustified. Sarah described her experience: “He wanted thousands of dollars, claiming for things that were obviously fair wear and tear... [We] ended up only ... [getting] \$400 of our bond, just to get him to shut up and leave us alone.”

A few tenants spoke about resisting these bond disputes by documenting entry conditions, threatening or pursuing tribunal action, or seeking advice from tenancy services and online support groups. The process was often stressful, time-consuming, and emotionally draining, as Jessica explained: “I became so distressed, which is very unlike me. I’m a psychologist working in complex trauma... I’m very good at managing my feelings, but [it] just completely tipped me over the edge and I burst into tears.... I don’t think they thought

about what does it mean... to be told you haven’t done a good enough job and we’re going to hold the bond [while] you’ve also been booted from your home.”

6.2 Tribunal action

Of the 53 tenants interviewed, 20 had either attended a tribunal hearing or were about to attend one – mostly over poor property conditions and a refusal by the landlord to do necessary repairs, or retaliatory evictions. Some challenged rent increases they considered excessive. Of the 16 who had attended a hearing, 11 were initiated by tenants – seven in response to retaliatory eviction and/or rent increase disputes, and six in response to unsafe or substandard conditions and failure to repair. Of the remaining five, two tenants were breached for rent arrears, one tenant for property damage, and four were subject to landlord-initiated termination and possession proceedings after remaining in the property beyond the notice period due to an inability to secure alternative housing.

When landlords or real estate agencies initiated proceedings, it was usually to seek possession once a lease ended or to recover arrears. Though tenants saw the tribunal process as a chance to present their side or to buy more time to find alternative accommodation, they described the experience as adversarial and difficult to navigate, particularly when decisions reflected landlords’ legal entitlements rather than tenants’ circumstances.

Where landlords are operating within the law, the tribunal’s capacity to intervene is limited. This certainly contributed to the perception that the tribunal system prioritised the claims of landlords and their agents, with little scope for negotiation. Brenda, in regional Queensland, explained how the process felt “overwhelming, when you know the judge is always going to go for the real estate.”

Brad, in Sydney, recalled struggling to be heard during the hearing, which left him feeling in “a position of hopelessness.” Simon, also in Sydney, described the tribunal member as “dismissive”, stating that the member’s “entire position was that the landlords have every right to increase the value of their asset.” Tenants’ accounts highlight the gap between legal decision-making and how the tribunal process is experienced.

“ You’ve got to prepare, make sure you’ve got all your evidence, everything to back you up.

Brenda, QLD

Tenants were often unsure of what to expect during the tribunal hearing or how to prepare – with a recurring theme being lack of guidance. Rachel, in Sydney, admitted she felt “very, very nervous” and “forgot what [she] was supposed to do” because the process was unclear. Brad described the process as “prohibitive” – tenants had to be “pretty switched on” and even then, they needed “a bit of luck.” The presence of advocacy support made a significant difference, and tenants who received help and advice felt better able to compile evidence and present their case.

However, being prepared and armed with knowledge did not lessen how daunting the tribunal experience felt. Daniel had read extensively and understood the procedures. However, he acknowledged that despite his intensive preparation, the experience was extremely stressful. Chloe, in regional New South Wales, was also well-prepared, yet felt intimidated and excluded by the process, describing the experience as “terrifying.” Brad became emotional recalling how it felt very different writing his application compared to arguing his case in person.

Jessica chose not to go to tribunal, because she felt it was not worth the effort or risk. Having read the legislation and heard about tenants’ experiences of the tribunal, she concluded that the system seemed set up in favour of landlords, and was “not actually

particularly effective.” Her own “cost–benefit analysis” led her to believe that taking action would achieve little, and even if she won, she expected her lease would not be renewed. Paul admitted he avoided applying because “even as a law student I think it’s really hard.”

Of the 18 tenants who had been to the tribunal, 12 reported that the decision went against them. Four tenants secured short extensions of two to six weeks to find another property. The result, as many saw it, was less about justice and more about prolonging an inevitable move.

6.3 Legal enforcement

For six tenants, eviction disputes escalated beyond the tribunal into the hands of the police or the sheriffs, with outcomes described as “sudden” and “deeply distressing.”

When a warrant for possession is executed, the police or sheriff may take possession immediately. In some cases, tenants are allowed limited time to collect essential items such as medication, documents, or clothing, although this is not guaranteed and varies by circumstances. Any remaining belongings are typically managed under the goods-left-behind provisions, with responsibility for storage or disposal falling to the landlord in accordance with the law. In Fiona’s case, the lack of notice created intense pressure, triggering panic and forcing her to act quickly to avoid sudden removal and loss of belongings.

“ You get no warning at all from the Sheriff’s office of when the warrant is going to be executed....

Fiona, NSW

Kate and her housemate, who are both disabled, experienced a traumatic eviction after their fixed-term lease in Brisbane was not renewed. Despite their best efforts to secure alternative housing, they had to apply to the tribunal for an extension. They were granted an additional six weeks. At the end of that extension they received notice that

police would attend on or after a certain date to remove them and their belongings. Facing eviction with nowhere to go, Kate and her housemate sought solidarity by organising a blockade through community networks. Although this action delayed their eviction and provided crucial emotional support, it did not prevent the eventual loss of their home. Following the eviction they moved their belongings into costly storage and spent time living in a motel before moving several hours away to stay with family. Kate described feeling exhausted, angry, and traumatised, while her housemate was diagnosed with situational depression and anxiety linked to the eviction. Even months later, they remained separated from their possessions, struggling to secure stable housing and to recover from what Kate described as a life-altering ordeal: “It 100 per cent is a very traumatic event for me. I would go so far as to say that my landlord has ruined my life.”



Image by [Meruyert Gonullu](#)

7. Impacts of eviction and its aftermath

Eviction is rarely a discrete or isolated event. Rather, it is a disruptive process with wide-ranging consequences for households. For the tenants who were evicted, the consequences extended well beyond the loss of a tenancy. It disrupted work and daily life, aggravated physical and mental health, and eroded already limited savings. Housing outcomes following eviction were generally negative, with people often having to move to smaller, poorer-quality, or temporary dwellings, and in some cases moving away from cities or withdrawing from private renting. What emerges is a picture of eviction as a profound rupture – one that multiplies hardship and deepens housing insecurity long after the initial notice is served.

7.1 Financial loss

Eviction frequently triggers a cascading cash-flow crisis. Tenants faced immediate financial outlays, disruptions to life and work, and ongoing expenses that eroded savings and pushed many into debt. Upfront relocation costs are often the first big hit. As Zoe commented, “You also need to come up with six weeks’ worth of rent – four weeks for the bond and two weeks in advance... plus a couple of thousand dollars for removalists”, a sum most people don’t “have lying around.” Adam described the overall moving cost as “a huge chunk, probably about \$5,000”, out of his limited savings. For Daniel, the basic costs alone – “\$1,800 for a removalist... and about \$3,000 for rent in advance and the bond – left me indebted up to the eyeballs.” To make the move, some tenants experienced a period of overlapping housing costs. Chloe used up all her savings and got into debt after paying double rent for a week, describing how she felt she had no choice, “or the landlord would go with someone else.”

Costs do not stop once the removal truck unloads the goods. Many tenants incur settling-in and replacement costs. Simon

“dropped thousands of dollars” making his new rental functional, explaining how the desk wouldn’t fit, the fridge space was wrong, and there were no laundry facilities, so he had to purchase a washing machine.

Eviction also disrupts work and businesses. Daniel, a small-business owner, linked repeated moves to having to “close my business, losing revenue.” Time spent on notices, inspections, and tribunal hearings compounded his losses. He explained how the process “crippled [me] for weeks... pulling together the bond... while unpaid off work to sort tribunal matters.”

7.2 Mental and physical health

Eviction can trigger significant stress and anxiety, and can exacerbate existing mental and physical health conditions. Serious mental health struggles were common, from needing medication for anxiety to experiencing suicidal thoughts. These responses were driven by forced urgency, loss of control, housing instability, and the fear of being homeless.

After being issued with an eviction notice, Fiona, a long-term renter, was frantically trying to arrange storage and preparing to sell hundreds of plants: “I ended up having to take a Valium... no sleep... I couldn’t eat properly, I’ve lost weight... just constant stress and worrying.”

Tina, in regional Queensland, explained that having moved a lot, she knows herself well enough now: “I’m going to melt down whenever I have to move house. Now, what I do is I reach out and I go to the doctor, and I get antidepressants to calm myself down.

“ I was shocked at the ongoing effect on my mental health... I still cycle back to being angry because I didn’t get a choice.

Grace, NSW

In extreme cases, evictees reported suicidal thoughts. Jan attributed her partner's suicide attempt to the cumulative stress of eviction, prolonged financial strain, and the imminent prospect of living in a tent after their rental was sold and no alternative housing could be found. Daniel commented that "the idea of suicide is perpetually in the front of my brain... We were already struggling... It [the move] left me indebted... stressing, a trauma response from how many times I've had to move."

“ My partner had a bit of a breakdown...he said there was no way he was going to live in a tent.

Jan, QLD

Children are also vulnerable to the mental harm brought about by sudden changes. When Jessica's two children overheard the news of their eviction notice, they became noticeably anxious, clingier, and unable to sleep. Brenda, who is also a single mother with two children (one of whom has severe autism), explained: "It [moving] has a huge impact... I have to try to remain calm in front of my kids... My son didn't understand... My daughter was overwhelmed and angry."

Moving can be physically debilitating as well. Brenda lives with chronic pain: "I have physical pain... arthritis and back problems. Knowing that I had to lift everything to move myself and no one to be there to help, it was a struggle." Similarly, Veronica, who has a long-term spinal injury from a car accident, commented, "For five years I had chronic pain... Moving house and doing physical things aggravates my injury."

The accounts demonstrate how the stress of eviction often worsens existing health problems and triggers severe mental health reactions. Eviction affects the whole family, with children also showing signs of emotional distress.

7.3 Housing outcomes

Eviction often pushed the tenants in our study away from their social networks and support systems, and into unsuitable rental housing – frequently accepted under time pressure or sight-unseen, as was the case for Ellen: "It wasn't quite where I wanted or what I wanted, but it was the first one that accepted me, so I grabbed it because there's hardly anything around and multiple people looking and it's expensive." Likewise, Simon explained he "ended up finding a sub-optimal place... not as good as what I could have gotten before, and I had more of a rush to move out because I couldn't overlap the leases."

“ I ended up finding a sub-optimal place... not as good as what I could have gotten before, and I had more of a rush to move out because I couldn't overlap the leases.

Simon, NSW

Jessica, along with her two children, found there were numerous problems with their new rental property: "On the surface you can't tell... but the oven didn't work, the dishwasher didn't work, air-con didn't work... no locks on windows, no keys for some doors... These are essential things."

Some households found themselves in insecure and improvised living arrangements following eviction. Belinda described the only viable option after she and her family struggled to find an affordable rental following their eviction notice: "We can't get a loan... My mum's maybe taking equity [i.e. a home equity-release loan] to buy a donga... In the meantime, we'll be putting the mattress on the floor in the lounge room... It's gone from finding a house to sleeping on a floor."

Chris and Luke described being placed in short-term accommodation arranged by a charity that they found uninhabitable: "[it] was full of lice, bed bugs, cockroaches... I put a blanket down and they still managed to bite

him all over his legs and arms... We didn't even stay there for a night. We were better off being homeless. I'm like, 'No thank you. Take it back... I would rather sleep in the car'."

Relocating can be especially difficult for families with children, cutting their ties to schools, friends, and care networks. Sarah described the challenges of uprooting her three children: "When you have children... you're so petrified, because they've got school, community, friendships, sport... [Also] if I move away from [my] Mum, I'm losing that childcare support ... You can't just up and move them every year."

Emily, who has three children with autism, secured new accommodation near their school, but not without trade-offs: "Luckily we're able to stay relatively close to the kids' schools, but any kind of upheaval is difficult... The kids have to share a room now; they didn't have to do that before."

Brenda is a mother of two (one with disability) and feared being forced out of her local area, away from her son's specialist school and family support. She described the challenge this presented: "My daughter doesn't want to leave school because she's settled, like my son... Just knowing all of that can be ended so fast [is shocking]." The constant threat of eviction meant she was reluctant to request repairs, worrying she would be seen as "a difficult and annoying tenant" and told to leave, and she admitted she had faced the prospect of living in a car. Her story and others illustrate how eviction can push families not only away from schools and support networks, but also to the very edge of homelessness. Each move leaves households more vulnerable and makes it harder to bounce back, as Maria reflected: "The dominant effect is that once you get the one eviction, it never stops."

7.4 Retreating from the city - or from renting altogether

Eviction and untenable rents prompted some renters to rethink city life. Decisions were framed around affordability, security, and social connections. Some of the tenants we interviewed planned to move to regional areas, back to the family home, or to opt out of renting altogether. Chloe described having to "move away [from a city in NSW] because I couldn't get accommodation that I could afford", which resulted in her moving back in with her parents in a regional area.

Social networks and work ties functioned as temporary anchors, slowing but not resolving the pressure to leave. For example, Paul stated, "It would be tempting to move elsewhere, but no friends, work... where does that leave you?"

Others explicitly described what they saw as an emerging social and demographic division. Joshua, a postgraduate student in Sydney, observed: "[High rents] will piss some people off to the extent that they leave cities like Sydney... A good number of my friends have already left." George had a similar view: "It's a massive demographic issue... The city

“ Sydney could become a city without grandchildren 'cos all of my generation will just leave.

Joshua, NSW

[Sydney] has become the ghetto of the rich." Jessica had already acted: "We've just bought a piece of land up on the north coast... Now it's just like, get us out of this awful [situation] and get a house."

These accounts show how eviction and high rents caused some participants to rethink longer-term plans, with ongoing insecurity and rising costs leading tenants to view relocation or alternatives to renting as a rational response to what they perceived as growing urban exclusion

8. Conclusion

This study shows that eviction is never just about losing a tenancy. It can be a long, messy process that unfolds over time – from the first notice, through the stress and confusion of the proceedings, to the upheaval of moving and the instability that follows. The tribunal and legal processes, far from offering relief, are often experienced as confusing, intimidating, and alienating. Tenants feel powerless relative to landlords and property managers, and describe being silenced, sidelined, or punished for asserting their rights.

For the tenants we spoke to, eviction often set off a chain of disruption – health struggles, financial shocks, and the breakdown of stability across housing, schooling, work, and community life. Those already living with limited resources and/or caring responsibilities are hardest hit. Families with children and people with disability described agonising choices between keeping vital connections to schools and support, or being forced to move to more affordable areas.

Eviction can be a long, messy process that unfolds over time.

The aftermath of eviction was rarely positive. Most households ended up in smaller, poorer-quality accommodation. A few were rendered homeless and were forced to sleep in their car or on a friend's couch. Each move drained savings, worsened health, and made recovery harder. Tenants explained how eviction compounded the difficulties they were already facing. Their stories show that eviction creates ripples beyond each tenant, reshaping families, communities, and where people belong.

Seen in this way, eviction is both a symptom and a driver of Australia's housing crisis. It reflects the shortage of affordable homes and weak protections for renters. It also produces lasting harm – intensifying hardship, fraying communities, and undermining wellbeing. Reducing its prevalence will require more than a crisis response. It means fairer rental laws, stronger tenant protections, and serious investment in secure, affordable housing. Without such change, eviction will remain a destructive cycle that strips households of stability and hope

Eviction creates ripples beyond each tenant, reshaping families, communities, and where people belong.

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