

Rental scams

How to spot a scam

Scams often involve deceitful claims, false promises, or manipulative tactics designed to exploit renters. Be cautious of the following red flags:

- Scams are more common on platforms where real estate agents don't advertise, such as Facebook, Gumtree, Fairy Floss Real Estate, and Flatmates.com.au.
- The landlord is overseas or keeps giving excuses about why you can't view the property in person.
- Someone who asks for a payment as quickly as possible - such as your bond or the first month's rent.
- Deals that seem 'too good to be true' often are - especially when they involve unusually low rent or incredible amenities.
- Scammers who create a sense of urgency to exploit your 'fear of missing out', or FOMO.



Tips for renters

- Never pay in cash and avoid paying via a money transfer service such as Western Union. Pay via bank transfers to an Australian bank account.
- Verify the agent's or landlord's identity. Ask for a credible ID such as a driver's licence, keeping in mind that many scammers use fakes. Carefully check the licence against yours or a friend's.
- If you have any doubts, do a title search for the property (costs around \$10) on Landata.
- Rent through a licensed real estate agent where possible.
- Do not give your passwords or original documents to anyone.



If you are scammed

- Act fast: report the scam to the police - and the bank if you have transferred money.
- Seek legal advice immediately such as from:
 - Tenants Victoria - tenantsvic.org.au
 - A community legal centre - fclc.org.au
- Find out more information and report scams on the Australian Government's Scamwatch website - scamwatch.gov.au



Avoid common scams

Fake property ads

- Verify that the property exists by personally inspecting it and doing a title search via Landata at www.landata.online.



Real property ads with fake contact details

- Cross-check the contact details with other websites and the real estate agency's website.



Scammer pretends to be the owner

- Confirm who owns the property with a title search on Landata.
- If the owner uses a licensed real estate agent, deal with the agent. Check if the agent is licensed on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website: consumer.vic.gov.au/licensing-and-registration/estate-agents/public-register



The photos in the ad are not quite right

- If the photos are low quality, appear to be taken from other websites or generated by artificial intelligence, conduct a 'reverse image search'. This can be done using an online tool, such as Google Image search. It reveals information including where the photo was taken and where it appears online.
- Look out for details in photos that don't match the location of the ad, such as US-style sockets in a Melbourne rental.



Early request for personal documents

- Do not share personal documents before verifying you are dealing with a licensed real estate agent, or if you are dealing directly with the landlord, verifying their identity, such as a driver's licence, and that they own the property.



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This information is a guide and should not be used as a substitute for professional legal advice.