RENTING WITH HARCOURTS

Advice and information for tenants.

ISSUE 02
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Christmas wishes from Harcourts

As the year draws to a close, thank you for being part of our Harcourts renting community.

Summer looks different for everyone. You might be working through, spending time with friends or whānau, enjoying a few days away, or keeping things quiet at home. However you spend the season, we hope there is room for something you enjoy.

In this edition, we've brought together practical tips for summer at home, a few safety reminders and a simple Christmas treat you can make your own.



From all of us at Harcourts, we wish you a peaceful Christmas, a safe summer and a happy start to 2027.

Your feedback helps us improve

We want to know what renting with Harcourts is like for you. What's working well? Where could we do better? Your feedback helps us understand what matters to you and identify ways to improve our service.

If you receive an AskNicely survey, please take a moment to share your experience. Whether it's clear communication, helpful support or something you feel needs attention, we welcome your honest comments.

Specific feedback is especially useful. Let us know what went well or what could have made your experience better. If your property manager has made a difference, it's also a lovely opportunity to recognise their efforts.

Need something actioned?

Please continue to report maintenance, urgent concerns and tenancy questions directly to your property manager through your usual channels. Don't wait for a survey to let us know about something that needs attention.

Thank you for taking the time to have your say. Your feedback helps us keep improving the service we provide to you and our wider tenant community.

Ask Nicely

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Update from Tenancy Services

Bond services have moved online: what tenants need to know

Tenancy Services has changed the way tenancy bonds are managed, with bond transactions now completed online. For tenants, one of the biggest changes is how bond refunds and Change of Tenant requests work.

For a bond refund, your Harcourts property manager will talk with you about the refund and submit the request online. Tenancy Services will then contact you directly and ask you to confirm the details and respond online. You no longer need to complete and sign a paper bond refund form.

Change of Tenant requests work in a similar way. Once the request has been submitted, Tenancy Services contacts the tenants involved directly so they can respond and confirm their part of the transaction.

This means there are two things every tenant should do: keep your contact details with Tenancy Services up to date and know where to find your tenant number.

Keep your contact details up to date

If you change your email address, mobile number or postal address, make sure you update your details with Tenancy Services.

This is particularly important when you are getting ready to move out. If Tenancy Services can't reach you, you could miss a request that needs your response. That can delay the release of your bond refund or Change of Tenant.

You can now access your bond information and update your contact details online. To get started, you'll need your:

- Tenant number
- Last name
- Email address or mobile number.

If Tenancy Services can't verify you from those details, you may be asked for some additional information about your tenancy.

Once verified, you'll receive a link and one-time access code that lets you view your bond or change your contact details and preferred method of communication.

Access your bond information or update your contact details

Know your tenant number before you need it

Your tenant number is a unique identifier you'll need when using Tenancy Services' online bond services. It allows you to:

- View your bond information
- Update your contact details
- Respond to a bond refund request
- Respond to Change of Tenant requests.

Your tenant number is not the same as your bond number. Each tenant has their own tenant number, and the two numbers can't be used interchangeably. Your tenant number will change if you move to a different tenancy.

Tenant numbers are provided directly to tenants for privacy and security reasons. This means your Harcourts property manager can't look up or provide your tenant number for you.

Can't find your tenant number?

Many tenants will already have received their tenant number. Check your previous bond correspondence for yours.

Your tenant number may be listed on your bond confirmation from the start of your tenancy, or on recent correspondence about your bond. Tenancy Services sent emails to tenants with active bonds and an email address on file during August and September, from: no-reply@e.comms.tenancy.govt.nz.

Don't forget to check your junk or spam folder too.

If you still can't find it, you can contact Tenancy Services for support.

Moving out? Do these three things

If you're getting ready to leave your rental, a quick check now could prevent delays later:

- Check Tenancy Services has your current contact details, including an up-to-date email address, mobile number or postal address
- Find and save your tenant number somewhere easy to access
- Watch for messages from Tenancy Services and respond promptly if you're contacted about your bond.

Taking a few minutes now to make sure your details are current and your tenant number is handy will help make the process much smoother when it's time to update or refund your bond.

Tenancy Services

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Using AI for a Tenancy Tribunal application? Check before you submit

AI can help organise your thoughts and explain unfamiliar terms. But a confident answer is not necessarily a correct one. Especially when it comes to tenancy law.

If you're thinking about applying to the Tenancy Tribunal, reading its decision in a similar case can help you work out what evidence to gather and what outcome you might reasonably ask for.

However, AI can invent cases, misinterpret real decisions, and suggest compensation amounts that are unrealistic. One reported New Zealand case involved a $40,000 claim and more than 300 pages in the submission. The tenant received $80. Read the report.

Ask better questions, and check the answers

Give the AI accurate facts, relevant dates, and explain that your question concerns a New Zealand residential tenancy. Ask it to identify weaknesses in your claim as well as possible arguments in your favour.

A useful prompt is:

"I'm considering applying to the Tenancy Tribunal about a New Zealand residential tenancy dispute. Here's what happened: [briefly describe the issue, key dates and what you want resolved]. Explain which sections of the Residential Tenancies Act may apply, what evidence I would need and what could weaken my case. If you can verify a Tenancy Tribunal decision in a similar case, explain what the Tribunal decided, what evidence mattered and how that case might help me work out what outcome to ask for. Give me the application number, decision date and a link to the original decision so I can check it myself. If you can't verify a reference, say so."



Even a careful prompt cannot guarantee accuracy. Case numbers and links can be fabricated too. Open the original sources yourself and check that they support what the AI says.

Look up actual decisions

Search published Tenancy Tribunal orders at forms.justice.govt.nz/search/TT/. Use an application number or keywords describing your issue, such as "bond refund" or "repairs". Read the reasons for the decision and compare the facts and evidence with your own situation. Some orders or identifying details may not be publicly available.

Previous Tribunal orders provide useful examples but do not bind other adjudicators. Relevant legal rulings from the District Court and higher courts can provide binding precedent; a similar case does not guarantee the same award.

Keep your application factual and focused

Explain what happened, provide supporting evidence, and show how you calculated the amount requested. A large figure suggested by AI is not evidence of entitlement.

The Tenancy Tribunal has published a practice paper on using AI to help people understand the risks and their responsibilities when preparing material for the Tribunal. It makes clear that **you remain responsible for everything you submit, including checking that AI-generated information is accurate**. Incorrect or misleading material can damage your case and, in serious circumstances, lead to dismissal or costs. **If asked by the Tribunal, you must disclose your use of AI**.

If you think you have a claim, speak with your Harcourts property manager first. Explain your concerns and the outcome you're seeking so you can try to reach an agreement together. If you're still unsure or can't resolve the issue, seek advice from Tenancy Services, Citizens Advice Bureau or Community Law before submitting a Tribunal application.

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Little leak? Minor maintenance? Let us know

A damp patch on the carpet, a drip under the sink or an appliance that's not working properly. It can be tempting to leave small problems for later. But letting your property manager know early can help prevent bigger problems.



As a tenant, you need to report damage or repairs as soon as possible after noticing them, even if you didn't cause the problem. You don't need to know what's wrong before getting in touch. Simply tell us what you've noticed, where it is and when it started.

Small problems can grow

In one Tenancy Tribunal case, a slow leak from a fridge water line damaged carpets and the inside of a wall. The tenants hadn't caused the leak, but the Tribunal found they hadn't reported it promptly, allowing the damage to worsen. They were ordered to contribute $2,000 towards the loss.

We don't want you to end up paying for damage that could have been prevented by letting us know sooner. Reporting a problem doesn't mean you're responsible for the repair, but you may be responsible for additional damage caused by a delay in reporting it.

A quick message helps

Use your usual maintenance reporting process and include a photo if you can. Don't wait until your next routine inspection. For urgent issues, such as an active leak or flooding, call your property manager or follow the after-hours maintenance process you've been given.

Not sure whether something needs attention? Please ask. We'd much rather hear about a small concern early so we can work out the next step, and help keep your home comfortable and well cared for.

Before the holiday rush: a quick home check

You don't want to discover your oven isn't working on Christmas Day! Take a little time now to check that your appliances are working properly and look out for any maintenance issues around your home.

If you notice a problem, report it in the usual way as early as possible. Tradespeople get busy in the lead-up to Christmas, and some close over the holidays, so arranging repairs may take longer than usual. Don't wait until your next routine inspection to let us know.

Include as much information as possible: what's happened and when you first noticed it. A clear photo can help, provided you can take it safely. Let us know if the issue is getting worse, and leave repairs to the appropriate tradesperson.

Before the holidays, understand your property manager's Christmas maintenance instructions and keep them somewhere easy to find, so you know who to contact and how to report an urgent problem outside normal office hours.



A quick check now can help you enjoy a more comfortable holiday season.

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Festive touches using what you have, & the safe removal of 3M hooks

A little creativity can make your home feel festive without buying more decorations. Bring out favourites from previous years, fill a bowl with colourful baubles, or arrange decorations on a freestanding shelf. A table centrepiece using items you already own adds a seasonal touch without attaching anything to walls.



Take care when removing adhesive hooks

3M Command™ hooks and similar adhesive products may seem ideal for decorations, but removing them carelessly can lift paint and leave an unsightly patch.

When taking decorations down, follow the instructions for your particular hook. For Command™ stretch-release strips, gently support the base and slowly stretch the tab straight down, keeping it close to the wall. Avoid pulling it towards you or forcing the hook off.

If the tab breaks, **a hairdryer can help soften the adhesive**. Gently warm the hook's base, then carefully work dental floss behind it to separate the adhesive foam from the wall. Use gentle warmth and take your time.

If paint begins lifting or the hook remains stuck, stop and contact your property manager before continuing. A little patience can help protect your walls long after the decorations are packed away.

Thinking about a portable pool? Check first

A portable pool can seem like a simple summer purchase, but it comes with safety responsibilities as well as a place to cool off.

Before buying or setting one up, talk to your property manager and check the requirements with your local council. Portable pools can need compliant safety barriers, and the location and any changes to the property need careful consideration, and may also require written consent from your landlord.

If your home already has a pool, keep gates closed and keep anything children could climb away from the barrier. Let your property manager know immediately if a gate, latch or fence is damaged or not working properly.



Stay with young children when they are in or around water. **Empty a small paddling pool after use and put it away so it cannot collect water again.**

Whatever the size of the pool, make safety part of the plan from the start.

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Summer cooking: keep fire safety on the menu

Long evenings and outdoor meals are summer favourites. Before firing up the barbecue, take a few minutes to check your setup.



Keep barbecue gas bottles outside

Keep barbecue LPG bottles outdoors, upright and secured in a well-ventilated position away from heat, doors, windows and drains. Don't bring them inside for storage or use a barbecue indoors, including in a garage.

Living in an apartment? Check with your property manager or building manager before bringing a gas bottle onto the property or using a gas barbecue on a balcony. Body corporate rules may prohibit both. Never assume an open balcony makes it safe.

Give your barbecue some space

Position it on a stable surface, clear of anything that could catch fire, and follow the manufacturer's clearances. Clean away grease, check hoses and connections, supervise cooking and keep children and pets back. Turn off the gas at the bottle afterwards.

Gas and charcoal barbecues have different fire-safety requirements. Charcoal barbecues should not be used on apartment balconies, decks or beneath roof overhangs. Check www.checkitsalright.nz before lighting up, as local conditions and restrictions can change.

Charge safely this summer

Phones, power banks, e-bikes and scooters need care too. Use the manufacturer-approved charger on a hard, flat surface away from flammable items and escape routes. **Charge while you're awake and nearby, and unplug when finished. Never charge on beds or sofas, or use swollen, damaged or unusually hot batteries.**

Do not interfere with your smoke alarms, keep exits clear and make sure everyone knows how to get out. If fire breaks out, get out, stay out and call 111.

Heading away? Your holiday home checklist

Before you head off, work through this checklist to help keep your home secure while you're enjoying a break.

☐ **Arrange a trusted visitor.** Ask a friend, family member or neighbour to keep an eye on your home, clear the mailbox and bring in deliveries. Leave your contact details so they can reach you.

☐ **Lock up properly.** Check all windows, external doors, garages and sheds. Set your alarm and avoid leaving spare keys under mats or plant pots.

☐ **Put tools and ladders away.** Secure hammers, spades, garden tools and other loose items. Don't give a burglar something they could use to break a window or gain entry.

☐ **Keep valuables out of sight.** Check what's visible through windows, including electronics, jewellery and car keys.

☐ **Leave sensor lights switched on.** Check they're working before you go. A lamp or radio on a timer can also help your home appear occupied.

☐ **Unplug chargers!** Disconnect phone and laptop chargers, power banks and other unnecessary electrical items. Don't leave e-bikes, scooters or rechargeable tools charging while you're away. Keep essential appliances and security equipment powered.

☐ **Check outside.** Secure outdoor furniture and loose items, put rubbish out and arrange lawn care if needed.

☐ **Keep travel plans private.** Save public holiday posts and photos until you're home.

☐ **Tell your property manager about an extended absence.** If you'll be away for a longer period, beyond a usual holiday, let them know and provide an emergency contact.

Enjoy your break, knowing you've given your home a little extra care before leaving.

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Rice Bubble Rocky Road Cheesecake Pudding

Looking for a show-stopping Christmas dessert? This festive treat combines crunchy Rice Bubbles, creamy raspberry cheesecake and a delicious rocky road base. Finished with white chocolate and colourful decorations, it's a fun twist on the traditional Christmas pudding.



Ingredients

- 105g (3 cups) Kellogg's Rice Bubbles
- 2 tbsp desiccated coconut
- 120g (2 cups) pink and white mini marshmallows
- 50g unsalted butter, chopped
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 500g cream cheese, at room temperature, chopped
- 110g (1/2 cup) caster sugar
- 50g pkt Ayam Coconut Milk Powder
- 300ml ctn thickened cream
- 125g fresh raspberries
- 150g Nestlé White Choc Melts, melted
- Jaffas lollies, to decorate
- Spearmint leaves lollies, to decorate

Rocky road

- 4 scotch finger biscuits, coarsely chopped
- 50g mini marshmallows
- 45g (1/4 cup) blanched hazelnuts, toasted
- 45g (1/4 cup) glacé cherries, chopped
- 3 pieces Turkish delight, chopped
- 250g milk chocolate, melted
- 1 tbsp coconut oil, melted

Method

Step 1

Grease and line a 22cm round 2.5L (10 cup) hemisphere cake pan, pudding mould or glass or ceramic bowl with plastic wrap, allowing the wrap to overhang the side.

Step 2

Place the Rice Bubbles and desiccated coconut in a heatproof bowl. Place the marshmallows, butter and cocoa in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 8-10 minutes or until melted and smooth.

Add to the Rice Bubbles mixture and mix well. Working quickly, spoon the mixture into the prepared pan. Use damp hands to press the mixture evenly over base and up the side of the pan. Stand the pan on a small bowl (if using a rounded dome pan) and place in the fridge for 15 minutes to chill.

Step 3

Use electric beaters to beat the cream cheese, sugar and coconut milk powder in a bowl until well combined and smooth. Add the cream and beat until thick and well combined. Gently fold through the raspberries. Spoon the cheesecake mixture into the pan and smooth the surface. Return to the fridge for 30 minutes to chill.

Step 4

To make the rocky road, combine the biscuits, marshmallows, hazelnuts, cherries and Turkish delight in a bowl. Combine the milk chocolate and coconut oil in a separate bowl, then add to the biscuit mixture and stir until well combined.

Step 5

Spoon the rocky road over the cheesecake layer and use the back of the spoon to level. Cover with the overhanging plastic wrap and return to the fridge for 6 hours or overnight to set.

Step 6

Turn the pudding onto a serving plate, discarding plastic wrap. Drizzle the melted white chocolate over the top, allowing it to drip down the side slightly. Decorate with Jaffas and spearmint leaves.

Tip: go to the bulk bins or pick 'n' mix section of the supermarket to buy just the amounts you need.

Recipe source: Taste.com.au – Rice Bubble Rocky Road Cheesecake Pudding

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