

Introduction for facilitators

Target group

NSW currently has the largest number and proportion of Aboriginal people in Australia, mostly living in urban and regional areas.

Significant gaps remain in incomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians across a number of key indicators, including employment, education, health and housing.

The 2011 Census showed:

- Higher rates of homelessness - Aboriginal people in NSW experience homelessness at a rate of 127 per 10,000 people in the non-Aboriginal population.
- Lower rates of home ownership - Around 39 percent of NSW's Aboriginal households are either buying their own home, compared to 70 percent of the total NSW population.
- Greater reliance on social housing - Nearly one third of NSW's Aboriginal households live in social housing, compared to six percent of non-Aboriginal households.

Aboriginal households in urban NSW also experience high rates of overcrowding and affordability stress which impact on Aboriginal people's ability to sustain their tenancy.

The purpose of this training package, *Rent it Keep it* is to equip Aboriginal participants to obtain and sustain a private rental property.

It is particularly designed for Aboriginal participants who have had little experience in the private rental market.

This package may be used for large groups, or as a resource for one on one training.

The package consists of 12 topics. You can present the whole package or "mix and match" topics to meet the needs of your particular target group. Some topics are designed to be used before a participant has secured accommodation in the private rental market. Others are relevant even after a tenancy has been established.

If you are going to use this training package as a resource for a particular client you can easily adapt the sessions for one-to-one work. Begin with your individual participant by asking them what they know about a particular session and what they'd like to know more about. Go through each session like this, engaging the participant first and then working through the material.

Expectations of facilitators

To facilitate *Rent it Keep it*, you need to:

- Select the particular topics from the package that suit the needs of your particular clients.
- Adapt material for the particular group you are working with. A variety of case scenarios and activities will be included, but not every group will be catered for. Some tips for how to adapt the material can be found on p. 6 of this section.
- Develop partnerships for presenting the material e.g. forming relationships with local real estate agencies, specialist housing services etc. Tips for how to do this are included in the Facilitator Guide.

Facilitators do not need to:

- Be a housing expert.
- Provide specialist tenancy advice.

Rent it Keep it has been written for the use of community based workers, who may not have specialty housing knowledge. Some background information is provided with each topic, but please refer to the organisations listed on pages 8-11 if participants need detailed or specialist assistance, or if you want to clarify any issue.

Format of package

The package consists of 12 topics, each designed to be covered in a one hour session.

Before you start

1. Realistic expectations
2. Money matters
3. Practical points
4. Rights and responsibilities

Getting started

5. Finding places to inspect
6. Deciding to apply
7. Starting a tenancy

Being a tenant

8. Repairs and cleaning
9. Managing expenses
10. Neighbours and visitors
11. Sharing accommodation
12. Finishing a tenancy

Each topic includes the following material

Facilitators Guide with the following sections:

- Session Outline (including timing for activities, list of resources needed, and clear step by step guide on how to present the material)
- Background Information to deal with questions that might arise in the session

Participant Worksheet (a double sided "take-home" sheet) for participants consisting of:

- Important Points (Key Messages)
- Practical activities/Checklists
- Contact details and references for further information

PowerPoint slides for use in session

Use of expanding file folder

Provide an expanding file folder to each participant undertaking the *Rent it Keep it* course.

The file enables participants to collect the Participant Worksheets in one location so they can be easily accessed as an on-going resource. It also provides a convenient place in which to store all the documentation involved in securing and maintaining a tenancy.

Because documentation can be so important to dealing with the challenges of rental, the use of the expanding file during the sessions models a way of gathering and storing essential documents. Many of the activities in sessions include reference to the expanding file.

If the *Rent it Keep it* course is being run over a period of time, provide a place for the expanding files to be stored between sessions. If participants take them away between sessions, some people may forget to bring them to the next session.



Running an introductory session

If *Rent it Keep it* is being run as a course over a period of time, an introductory session will be useful in establishing a good group process.

The following components should make up the introductory session.

1. Purpose of the course

Ensure the following points are covered:

- Skills in dealing with the private rental market are very valuable, as not everyone can own their own home or be housed in the public or community sector.
- Private rental provides flexibility allowing choice of location and ease of moving.
- This course will help participants understand the rights and responsibilities of a tenant in the private market and what these mean in practice.

2. Self care note to participants

Explain that for some participants talking about renting in private rental market may raise strong feelings, perhaps by “pressing buttons” to do with their past experience and raising anxiety about entering into that market again.

It is important to explain to participants that in this training it is not necessary for them to tell the large group information about themselves that is personal or upsetting. If a participant feels that their personal issues are being brought up during the training, and they want to discuss them, invite them to talk to the trainer in a break.

3. Icebreakers

Icebreakers provide a way for participants to relax and get to know other participants. They allow trust to develop which encourages participation in the other learning activities in the session.

Below are some examples of Icebreakers.

The Continuum

Purpose: This exercise enables the trainer to get an idea of the knowledge in the room and how best to facilitate potential contributions to the larger group.

Process: Ask participants to form a line in the middle of the room. Pretend the line in the middle of the room goes from 0 to 10. Zero represents “no knowledge about the private rental market” and 10, at the other end of the room, is “knowing everything about renting including all the legalities”.

Ask the participants to say their name, one thing they know about the private rental market and the thing they most want to get out of today.

Write up on some butchers paper what people want to learn.

The Chatline

Purpose: Give participants an opportunity to learn something about each other, what they want to get out of training and to set up some rules for the learning environment.

Process:

- Tell participants they are going to do a chatline, like “speed dating” to get to know one another.
- Ask participants to form two lines facing each other. The idea of this is that one line moves but the other line stays still. This gives participants an opportunity to meet at least half of the group.
- Ask participants to discuss the first topic with their partner. This should be for only a couple of minutes.
- Ask the first person on line 1 to move to the other end of the line. The rest of the line moves down so that participants have a new partner.
- Ask participants to now discuss question 2, and so on through the list of chatline questions.

Chatline topics

1. Your name and the last movie you saw
2. Your name and something you are really passionate about
3. Your name and something you've always wanted to do
4. Your name and what do you want to get out of the *Rent it Keep it* course
5. Your name and ideal job
6. Your name and what you most like about yourself
7. Your name and why you think your landlord is going to like about having you as a tenant

Debrief chatline

Ask people how they felt about talking favourably about themselves. Remind people that one of the things they have to do when getting into a rental property is to sell themselves.

Find out what people wanted to get out of the *Rent it Keep it* course.

Statue Game

Purpose: This is a fun activity to get energy back into a group.

Process: One person is sent out of the room and the rest of the group have to pose as a scene as statues. It could be a BBQ, a birthday party at the Opera House, a volleyball game at the beach or whatever scene people come up with. The person has to guess what the scene is.

Ball Toss Game

Purpose: This is a semi-review and wake-up exercise that can cover a number of topic sessions from the training package. It can also be used at the end of the entire program to help summarise what people have learned.

Process: Everyone stand up and form a circle. It does not have to be perfect, but they should all be facing in, looking at each other. Toss a nerf ball or bean bag to a person and have them tell what they thought the most important learning was for them. They then toss the ball to someone and that person explains what they thought was the most important learning for them. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball at least once.

4. Group agreement

Group agreements are an important way to provide a framework for what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in the group.

It can be time consuming to develop a group agreement from scratch through a group process, so it can be helpful to start with some suggested ideas written on a piece of butchers paper. Discuss the points with the group and adjust if necessary to reflect the participants' expectations.

Example of a Group Agreement

- *Mobile phones on silent or off.*
- *Come back from breaks on time.*
- *Show support for each other and remember that there's no such thing as a silly question.*
- *Participation from everyone is encouraged, but not compulsory.*
- *Take your time when doing group activities and stay on task.*
- *Respect confidentiality and not talk outside the group about personal things people share.*
- *Listen to others.*

5. Self catering

Preparing and sharing a meal together can be an opportunity for group members to learn skills in food preparation that will assist when they are in their own accommodation. Group sessions can be scheduled around day or evening meal times. Plan simple, economical meals and supply copies of recipes.

Groupwork tips

Debriefing on sensitive topics

People will come to training with a wide variety of views, attitudes and personal experiences. People act and respond in different ways that you or the group may not expect. Please try to address this in your group agreement at the beginning of the course.

Sometimes a participant may share very personal information, and such disclosures should be handled sensitively.

Suggestions for dealing with disclosures

- Listen. Don't interrupt.
- If a person is disclosing information that you do not feel is appropriate for others to hear (eg it is confidential, highly personal or incriminating) it is appropriate to close the conversation. Tell the participant that you do not think it is appropriate to discuss the matter in the group setting, but that you want to continue talking the matter over with them in the next break.
- Give positive feedback. For example, "That's not an easy thing to talk about. I appreciate your courage in sharing it".
- Be non-judgemental. Try not to show specific emotions such as shock at what is said.
- This is their story, not yours. Empathise but don't focus on things that happen to you.
- Don't counsel the person. Refer them to appropriate people if they want counselling.
- Don't make promises or commitments you can't keep.
- If you are running a role play/interactive case scenario create safety for your participants by explaining what will be happening, and what will be shared from the experience. Participants should have the right not to participate in an activity.

Tips for dealing with difficult group dynamics

Mixed groups

If your group is made up of participants from a wide range of backgrounds and varying experience in the rental market, ensure:

- Group agreement emphasises the importance of respecting the contributions made by others, even if they are less experienced.
- Participants understand that all questions are welcome, and that those more experienced than others may be able to assist in answering them.
- People with more experience do not dominate in the small group work. If this is happening, organise the groups according to experience. This means that participants have a chance to work through material at their own pace.

The quiet participant

- Make sure that everyone has a chance to contribute by occasionally going around the circle for responses. Make sure that people have a right to "pass" if they don't want to verbally contribute.
- Occasionally break people into pairs rather than in small groups to allow a quiet person to speak in a less exposed setting.
- In a break, check with the quiet person to make sure they are finding the group useful.

The dominating participant

- 1 Clearly state that it is important to hear from everyone in the group and ask people who have already spoken to hold back their contributions so others have a chance.
- 2 Speak to the dominating person in the break. Affirm their contribution, but explain that they have been contributing more than others. Let them know that it is helpful for everyone to have a chance to speak first on a topic.
- 3 Set a time limit for each person's contribution or a limit of the number of times each person can speak in each discussion session.

Customising case scenarios

It can be helpful for participants to discuss scenarios featuring characters who are like them in age, race or circumstances.

For example, this is the story of Stanley from Session 9.

Stanley's story

Stanley is a 20 year old Aboriginal man who in the last 12 months has got his own rental property. Everything was going really well. He was paying his rent on time and keeping the place clean and well maintained.

However, recently his Uncle passed away and he had to go home for the funeral. During his extended stay his family needed support with the funeral and family related cost so Stanley chipped in. Stanley is now 3 weeks behind in his rent.

This story could be retold as Kareela's story or Jim's story.

Kareela's story (for use with a group of female Aboriginal participants)

Kareela has got her own rental flat in the last 12 months. Everything was going really well. She was paying her rent on time and keeping the place clean and well maintained.

However, she went home to her mob for a week. Her auntie needed some help to pay some urgent bills, and Kareela also missed out on some casual work while she was away. Kareela is now 3 weeks behind in her rent.

Jim's story (for use with a group of recently released prisoners)

Jim is a 40 year old man who got released 18 months ago. In the last 12 months he has got his own rental property. Everything was going really well. He was paying his rent on time and keeping the place clean and well maintained.

However, he recently caught up with old friends and went to the races where he dropped a lot of money. Jim is now 3 weeks behind in his rent.

Resources

Samples of these resources are at the back of this section of the *Rent it Keep it* material.

Attendance Certificate

Attendance certificates are of value for various reasons. Firstly, the participant is acknowledged for completing *Rent it Keep it*. Also, participants can use this certificate when they apply for a rental property to demonstrate that they have made an effort to learn about renting.

Self Assessment Sheet

This enables participants to assess their own readiness to rent in the private market. It can be used at any time, but can be used at the end of the *Rent it Keep it* course.

Evaluation Forms

The following evaluation form has been provided.

- **Participant Evaluation Form.**
Use this form so you can get feedback to make sure the sessions are useful for participants.

Poster

Promote your *Rent it Keep it* course by placing posters in locations where potential participants will see them. Also provide copies for organisations who may refer participants.

For further information

Rent it Keep it has been written for the use of community based workers, who may not have specialty housing knowledge. Some background information is provided with each topic, but please refer to the following organisations if participants need detailed or specialist assistance, or if you want to clarify any issue.

Housing NSW

Housing NSW is an agency of Family and Community Services. It provides a range of housing services, including private rental assistance. For further information visit www.housing.nsw.gov.au or phone the Housing NSW Contact Centre on 1300 HOUSING (1300 468 746) or email feedback@housing.nsw.gov.au.

NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO)

Head Office - Sydney/South Eastern Region

Level 6, 33 Argyle Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Phone: 02 8836 9444

Fax: 02 9635 3400

Email: ahoenquiries@facs.nsw.gov.au

Freecall: 1800 727 555

Northern Region

Level 1, Suite C

144-148 West High Street, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

Phone: 02 6691 7000

Fax: 02 6691 7099

Western Region

65-67 Church Street, Dubbo NSW 2830

Phone: 02 6841 9100

Fax: 02 6841 9199

Tenants' Union

The Tenants' Union of NSW (TU) is the state's peak non-government organisation for tenants. It represents the interests of all New South Wales tenants, including tenants of private rental housing, social housing tenants, boarders and lodgers, and residential park residents.

The TU is a community legal centre specialising in residential tenancies law.

For further information, see www.tenant.org.au.

Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services

Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services (TAAS) provide free, independent information, advice and advocacy to tenants throughout New South Wales.

There are 16 generalist services, four specialist services for Aboriginal tenants, one specialist service for older tenants and one specialist service for residential park residents.

Each is run by a local non-government organisation. They receive legal back-up, training and other resources from the Tenants' Union, and help inform the Tenants' Union's policy and law reform work.

Check out the website of the Tenants' Union, www.tenant.org.au to get details of the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services that operate in your area.

NSW Fair Trading

NSW Fair Trading is a state government agency responsible for safeguarding consumer rights and providing advice on fair and ethical practice regarding private rental.

For further information go to www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Aboriginal Enquiry Officer

Freecall: 1800 500 330

TTY

General enquiries 1300 723 404

Property, Real Estate and Business Licensing phone 02 9372 9058

Head Office

1 Fitzwilliam Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Phone: 9895 0111

Fax: 9895 0222

General enquiries

Phone: 133 220 (8.30am to 5pm)

Other assistance available for *Rent it Keep it* participants

Rent it Keep it can be used for a wide range of target groups. Some specific groups have access to specialised assistance.

People who have been placed in the care of the Minister of Family and Community Services (FACS)

“After care” is a term used to describe a variety of services and supports that may be available to young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years after they formally leave out-of-home care. It can include referral and financial assistance for finding accommodation.

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) is a Commonwealth program which provides one-off financial assistance of up to \$1500. It is available to young people 15-25 who are leaving state-supported care or who have left care. For further information contact Community Services (formerly DoCS) at www.community.nsw.gov.au.

Create Foundation

An organisation that provides advocacy for people who are or have been in the care of Community Services: www.create.org.au

Helping ex prisoners

“Gimme Shelter” is a resource for getting ex-prisoners getting into the private rental market.

Community Restorative Centre

174 Broadway, Broadway NSW 2007

Phone: (02) 9288 8700

Fax: (02) 9211 6518

People fleeing Domestic Violence

The Domestic Violence Help Line

Phone: 1800 656 463 (24 hours)

TTY: 1800 671 442

Refugees

STARTTS NSW

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors.

Street address: 152-168, The Horsley Drive, Carramar NSW 2163

Postal address: PO Box 203, Fairfield NSW 2165

Phone: (02) 9794 1900

Email: startts@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

Young People

Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) NSW

YAPA has information on organisations that can assist young people with housing.

www.yapa.org.au/index.php

Youth Accommodation Association (YAA)

YAA is a peak body that seeks to end homelessness in NSW and Australia.

www.yaa.com.au

Older people

There is a Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services to assist older people with the private rental market. Contact details available on the Tenants' Union website www.tenants.org.au.

Homeless people

Homeless Persons Information Centre Sydney

The Homeless Persons Information Centre (HPIC) is a telephone information and referral service that refers those in the community who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to the services that may assist them. It provides professional assessments and referrals for clients seeking accommodation and support services within NSW.

Freecall: 1800 234 566 or phone: (02) 9265 9081

Homeless Person Information for Country areas

Freecall: 1800 234 566

