Our sector

Tenancy support and stakeholder engagement

In 2019–20, the RTA undertook 57 stakeholder engagement activities to provide education and information on tenancy rights and responsibilities under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (RTRA Act) and, from 24 April 2020, the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020*. We engaged with more than 4,470 tenants, property managers and property owners throughout the year and increased our focus on regional areas through the Regional Roadshow 2020, where we hosted events in Roma, Toowoomba and Townsville.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the second half of the year, the RTA used digital solutions and technology to continue our commitment to connect and engage with stakeholders.

Improving the customer experience

The introduction of new RTA Web Services was supported by four webinars developed to guide customers through the process of transacting with the RTA using the new digital platform. Over 1,000 active listeners tuned into these webinars, which provided a preview of the RTA Web Services products and highlighted key functionality and features. The webinars were also made available on the RTA website for customers to view in their own time.

The RTA expanded its range of digital resources with the launch of the Talking Tenancies podcast to explore the intricacies of how to rent in Queensland. Episodes aired weekly with experts from the RTA providing information and practical guidance in a relaxed and relatable way, attracting a total of 618 listens across seven episodes. We also refreshed our website for a more engaging user experience while enabling continuous support for our customers to self-service and access information online.

Renting in Queensland (RIQ)

In November 2019, the Department of Housing and Public Works released a Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (C-RIS) and reform roadmap as a response to the feedback and insights from the Open Doors to Renting Reform consultation in 2018–19. The C-RIS proposed reforms across five priority areas. The RTA also collated information from customer enquiries on key topics, including domestic and family violence, minor modifications and renting with pets, to help evaluate the level of interest and perspectives in these areas from the wider renting community.

Consultation on these reform proposals closed in January 2020 with the Government receiving 15,000 responses from the community. Further progress regarding the reform proposals have been deferred to focus on the COVID-19 response and recovery. The RTA will provide support for the implementation and delivery of service offerings, associated business processes, education and compliance activities resulting from reform of the RTRA Act.

Educational workshops and presentations

The RTA participated in 21 face-to-face presentations, interactive workshops and information stalls hosted by stakeholders in 2019–20. These engagement activities targeted different stakeholder groups within the residential rental sector and delivered tenancy education to approximately 1,385 people.

Activities included:

* information sessions or events for property managers and agents with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ), Australian Resident Accommodation Manager’s Association (ARAMA), the Real Estate Excellence Academy and other training organisations and agent franchises
* presentations to over 500 international TAFE students
* interactive workshops and information stalls for tenants and the greater community in collaboration with Tenants Queensland and NAIDOC
* information sessions with Caravan Parks Association of Queensland (CPAQ) and the Property Owners’ Association of Queensland (POAQ)

The RTA also delivered 16 webinars this year. Four of the webinars introduced RTA Web Services, and three of them explored the temporary changes outlined in the COVID-19 Regulations. Others provided practical guidance on resolving disputes, having difficult conversations, investigations, ending a tenancy, water charging and selling a rental property.

More than 2,220 people attended our live webinars, and our webinar recordings received over 6,800 views from the RTA website and the RTA Queensland YouTube channel.

In response to COVID-19 impacting on how face-to-face education is delivered across education providers, the RTA developed a video titled “Renting in Queensland – A guide for students” as an online resource to provide information to students on their tenancy rights and responsibilities as part of their induction.

RTA Regional Roadshow – February/March 2020

The RTA Regional Roadshow launched in February 2020 and provided in-person support and information on RTA services and tenancy matters. These information sessions included RTA staff presentations and questions from the audience, targeting property managers and property owners to improve their tenancy knowledge and encourage compliance with Queensland’s rental laws.

To kick off the roadshow, four information sessions were held in Brisbane North (Boondall and Keperra), followed by another four sessions in Toowoomba and Roma. In early March, we hosted four sessions in Brisbane South (Mt Gravatt and West End). A total of 620 property managers and property owners attended the twelve sessions. Attendees indicated an overall satisfaction of 82.4 per cent with more than 94.0 per cent of attendees rating the content of the presentations as excellent or good.

The RTA roadshow was scheduled to visit another twelve locations before the end of June, with sessions proposed in Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Logan, Brisbane East/Redlands, Brisbane West/Ipswich, Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Fraser Coast. These sessions were postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regional board meetings

The RTA held a series of stakeholder engagement events in Townsville on 26–28 August 2019 to demonstrate its commitment to supporting the rental sector following the devastating floods in February 2019. The event series aimed to increase awareness of the RTA’s services through face-to-face engagement and to inform and educate the community about their renting rights and responsibilities.

This event series included a regional meeting of the RTA Board, information sessions for property managers and property owners, a tenant information session and barbeque in collaboration with community groups, and a Board luncheon with stakeholders. The four activities provided an opportunity for the RTA to engage directly with 189 stakeholders.

The roadshow hosted in Roma in February 2020 was complemented by another regional meeting of the RTA Board, who took this opportunity to meet with 16 stakeholders from the area and surrounds. Both regional Board meetings and event series helped the RTA build stronger relationships and hear insights on local tenancy issues to inform future priorities and improvements in RTA services.

Recognising the importance of collaboration

The RTA facilitated three meetings of its Stakeholder Forum in 2019–20. Forum members met face-to-face in September and December 2019, and attended a videoconference in June 2020. The Stakeholder Forum provides an avenue for members to raise and discuss issues and trends affecting the residential rental sector and allows the RTA to gain insights and to further understand the interests and concerns of stakeholders. It also provides stakeholders an opportunity to collaborate and have input into RTA initiatives, while furthering their understanding of the RTA’s role, its strategic directions and operations.

Members of the RTA Stakeholder Forum include:

* Asia-Pacific Student Accommodation Association (APSAA)
* Australian Resident Accommodation Managers Association (ARAMA)
* Caravan Parks Association of Queensland (CPAQ)
* LawRight
* Property Owners’ Association of Queensland (POAQ)
* Queensland Shelter (Q Shelter)
* Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)
* Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)
* Student Accommodation Association (SAA)
* Support Accommodation Providers Association (SAPA)
* Tenants Queensland (TQ).

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Our compliance activities

The RTA Investigations Unit helps to ensure renting works for everyone through enforcing compliance with the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (RTRA Act). RTA investigators actively engage with parties involved in an investigation to provide education and reduce the likelihood of repeated breaches and offences.

The RTA may consider issuing a penalty infringement notice (PIN) or proceeding to prosecution when:

* significant detriment has been caused
* there is ongoing and systemic non-compliance
* conduct involves deceit, dishonesty or was unconscionable
* it is in the public interest.

The investigative process is separate and independent to the dispute resolution process and any matter related to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT). Investigated matters are criminal offences that are prosecuted through the Magistrates Court to either a plea of guilty or a summary trial in which the rules of evidence apply.

The Investigations Unit regularly collaborates with the Department of Housing and Public Works and the Office of Fair Trading to undertake compliance action throughout the sector.

In 2019–20, the Investigations Unit:

* finalised 1,050 investigations into non-compliance with the RTRA Act
* issued 10 Penalty Infringement Notices
* finalised 6 prosecutions with 5 of those resulting in a guilty plea
* educated 342 individual respondents regarding their rights and obligations under the RTRA Act.

Types of offences investigated in 2019–20

Other offences include, but are not limited to:

s202: Lessor or lessor’s agent must not use photo or image showing tenant’s possessions in advertisement

s183: Quiet enjoyment

s514: Give false or misleading documentation to the RTA

s353(2): Way of recovering possession of premises