

# RentRight SA

Data Snapshot *July - December 2022*



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SYC delivers **RentRight SA**, a free and independent housing advice and advocacy service that helps people sustain their tenancies<sup>1</sup>. RentRight SA hears directly from thousands of tenants<sup>2</sup> about their needs and concerns.

The information presented in this *Data Snapshot* provides insight into the South Australian rental market, offering a clearer understanding of the scope and scale of issues facing tenants to better inform responses.



<sup>1</sup> RentRight SA is funded by the Government of South Australia, SA Housing Authority.

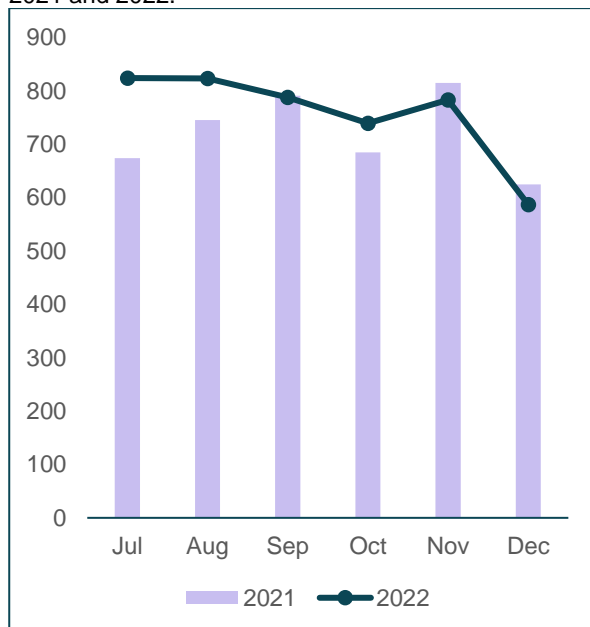
<sup>2</sup> A small proportion of enquiries are received from landlords, real estate agents, and concerned friends/family members.

## Call Volume

Between July 1 and December 31, 2022, there were a total of **5,116** enquiries received by RentRight SA. Of all enquiries received by RentRight SA, 88.8% were from tenants, 7.2% were from landlords and real estate agents, and 2.4% were from family members and friends<sup>3</sup>. In this Data Snapshot, we report on enquiries received from tenants only.

Figure 1 shows the volume of enquiries from tenants between July 1 and December 31, 2022, compared to the volume of enquiries from the same time period in 2021. Overall, RentRight SA received a larger volume of enquiries from tenants in July to December 2022 than during the same time period in 2021.

Figure 1: Total number of enquiries received from tenants between July 1 and December 31 in both 2021 and 2022.



### Practitioner Note

We experience peaks and troughs in enquiries that are driven by seasonal increases in demand for support at the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT), macro-economic factors such as affordability of housing, and Christmas shutdown periods.

The numbers will drop in months like December when there are fewer working days. More people are learning about us through our regular education and information sessions, but also because the rental crisis has increased the pressure on the housing system.

We are seeing the results of the rental crisis in the increasing volume of enquiries we receive about leases, increasing rents and sale of properties.

<sup>3</sup> 1.6% of enquiries were categorised as 'other'.



## Location

The majority (87.3%) of enquiries to RentRight SA came from tenants living in metropolitan areas and major cities. A smaller proportion of enquiries came from those living in regional and remote areas (11.6% and 1.1%, respectively)<sup>4</sup>.

## Demographic Profile

### Tenure type

The largest proportion of enquiries were received from tenants living in private rental (79.3%), followed by those living in public housing (7.7%) and community housing (6.3%). A small proportion of enquiries were received from tenants who were marginally housed<sup>5</sup> (4.2%), and 2.5% of enquiries were received from those living in a tenancy not covered by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) or whose tenure type was unknown.

### Age

The largest proportion of enquiries to RentRight SA came from tenants aged 30-39, and the smallest proportion of enquiries came from those aged over 65 (28.0% and 3.1%, respectively).

Table 1: Ages of tenants making enquiries to RentRight SA

Age	Proportion (%)
17-24	6.3
25-29	7.4
30-39	28.0
40-49	24.0
50-65	21.3
>65	3.1
Unknown	9.9

## Gender

A majority of enquiries were received from those identifying as female (67.0%), 32.3% identified as male, and 0.8% identified as other or preferred not to disclose their gender identity.



<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan, regional, and remote areas have been determined using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The index divides areas into five categories of remoteness: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote. For reporting purposes, ARIA categories have been grouped as follows: Major Cities=metropolitan areas and major cities; Inner Regional and Outer Regional=regional areas; Remote, and Very Remote=remote areas.

<sup>5</sup> Marginal housing includes those living in residential parks, rooming houses, and short-term accommodation.

## Presenting Issues

Presenting issues are the major concerns that tenants present with when making enquiries of RentRight SA.

As shown in *Table 2*, the top three issues that tenants were concerned about were rights and responsibilities-related issues (40.4%), property maintenance-related issues (15.7%), and bond-related issues (13.8%).

*Table 2:* Presenting issues of enquiries to RentRight SA

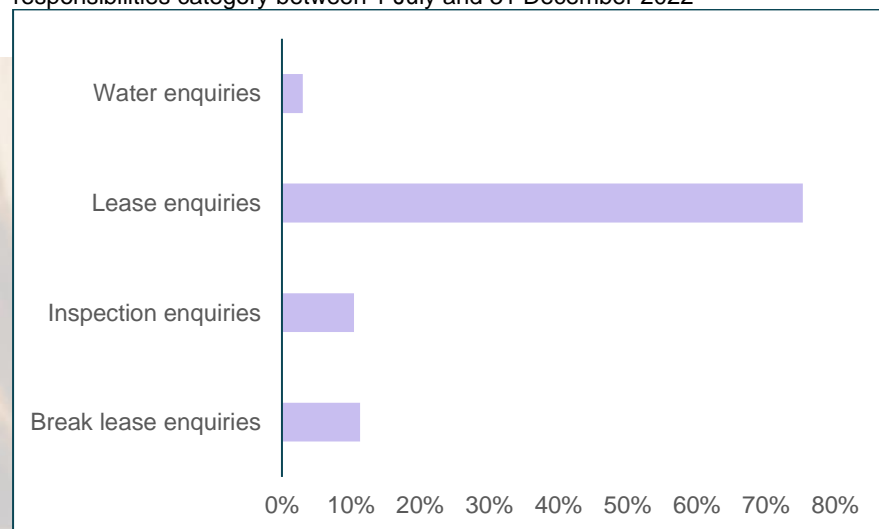
Issues	Definition	%
Accessing housing	Relates to enquiries from adults and young people trying to secure rental properties and facing challenges and barriers, including race and/or aged-based discrimination, lack of rental stock, increase in rent prices, increasing competition for available stock, and other micro- and macro-economic factors.	4.1
Rent-related issues	Relates to rent concerns, such as rent increases, bidding etc.	8.2
<b>Bond-related issues</b>	<b>Relates to bond enquiries, including bond assistance, refunds, information and disputes.</b>	<b>13.8</b>
Debt-related issues	Relates to rent, water and maintenance debt incurred by tenants	4.6
Specialist support-related issues	Relates to enquiries from those with primary concerns that require specialist support, such as independent living skills, budgeting, and domestic and family violence.	0.7
Other enquiries	Includes legal advice outside the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) scope and the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT).	2.4

Issues	Definition	%
Homelessness	Refers to those at imminent risk of homelessness.	5.6
Legal enquiries	Tenant blacklisting; appeals and reviews; abandoned/access to property.	1.8
<b>Property maintenance-related issues</b>	<b>Refers to maintenance requests and property conditions, including consequences of maintenance not undertaken or incomplete, disputes and delays regarding maintenance.</b>	<b>15.7</b>
Social housing-related issues	Relates to concerns, policies and procedures specific to social housing tenants, such as transfer/relocation, extra persons etc.	0.9
<b>Rights and responsibilities-related issues</b>	<b>Refers to clarification and advice regarding the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords about water bills, inspections, property access, lease agreement terms and conditions, break lease etc.</b>	<b>40.4</b>

Note. Only enquiries from tenants received between 1 July and 31 December 2022 are included in the figures that inform Table 2. A small proportion (1.8%) of enquiries did not have a primary presenting issue recorded. Primary presenting issues are exclusive enquiries. Enquiries can only have one primary presenting issue recorded.

Tenancy rights and responsibilities comprised 40.4% of all primary presenting issues. Of enquiries about rights and responsibilities, 75.3% related to lease enquiries, 11.3% related to break lease enquiries, 10.4% related to inspection enquiries, and 3.0% related to water enquiries (see *Figure 2*).

*Figure 2:* Proportions of enquiries from tenants that comprise the rights and responsibilities category between 1 July and 31 December 2022



When tenants make enquiries about leases, these usually relate to their rights and responsibilities. Tenants making lease enquiries might:

- Be unsure about lease signing processes
- Not fully understand clauses in leases
- Enquire about their responsibilities in relation to paying tradespeople, fixing property damage, and the timing of repair work
- Seek information about notice periods for inspections
- Enquire about timeframes for lease termination notices
- Enquire about rights regarding end of lease processes, e.g. what happens if they can't find another property after the end of lease date, or what happens with the final inspection, can they be present etc.

There has been a substantial increase in lease-related rent specific enquiries. In these scenarios, a tenant may have reached the end of a fixed term lease and they are facing a rent increase. In many cases, tenants are unable to stay because the increase is unaffordable, and they call RentRight SA to enquire about their rights and responsibilities.

### Practitioner Note

## Actions

As shown in Table 3, 97.5% of tenants were provided with advice/education, 69.0% were referred to legal processes and services, and 61.2% were referred to speak to their landlord, land agent, or housing provider.

Table 3: Actions and referrals provided to tenant enquiries

Actions	Definition	%
Advice/Education provided	Refers to advice and information provided by RentRight SA, including forms, policies etc.	97.5
Support provided	Refers to additional support provided by RentRight SA, including group work, file work, and one to one appointments.	6.7
Referral to specialist support services	Includes referral to specialist support services, including mental health, domestic and family violence, health and youth specific services	1.2
Referral to financial support services	Includes referral to financial support services, including financial capability/counselling services and Government concession supports.	1.3
Referral to emergency assistance services	Includes referral to homelessness and emergency brokerage services.	4.2
Referral to legal processes and services	Includes referral to legal processes and services, including Consumer and Business Services (CBS), South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT), and legal support.	69.0

Actions	Definition	%
Referral to Government authorities	Includes referral to Government bodies, including the SA Housing Authority, the Housing Minister, the Housing Safety Authority etc.	6.1
Referral to landlord/agent	When tenants are referred to speak to their landlord, agent or housing provider.	61.2

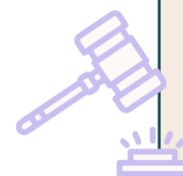
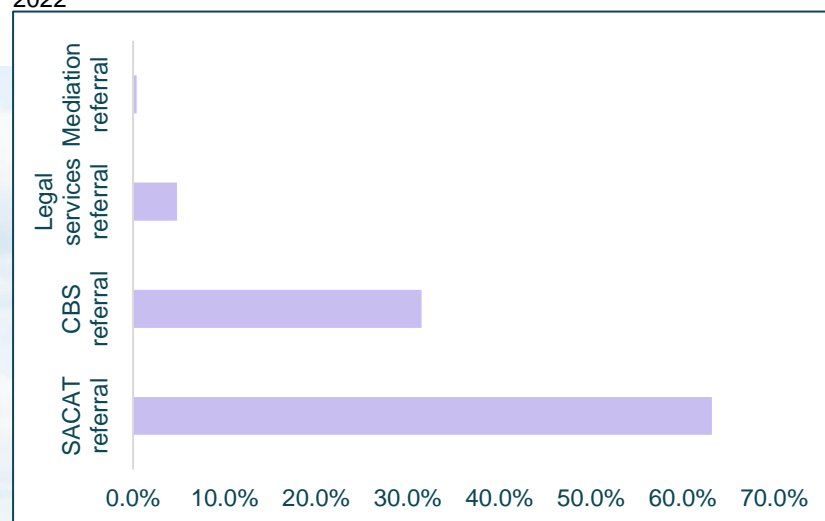
Note. Only enquiries from tenants received between 1 July and 31 December 2022 are included in the figures that inform Table 3. Enquiries from tenants to RentRight SA will often result in multiple actions, therefore, proportions do not add up to 100%.





Referral to legal processes and services comprised 69.0% of actions and referrals following tenant enquiry. Of the legal processes and services referrals, 63.2% were referrals to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT), 31.5% were referrals to Consumer and Business Services (CBS), 4.8% were referrals to general legal services, and 0.4% were referrals to mediation services (see *Figure 3*).

*Figure 3:* Proportions of actions and referrals that comprise the referral to legal processes and services category between 1 July and 31 December 2022



Following an enquiry to RentRight SA, we will provide tenants with a range of options based on their presenting issue/s and other relevant information they share with us. A common referral is to legal processes and services.

In practice, referral to legal processes and services is diverse. For example, tenants may enquire about issues that are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), such as neighbour disputes around fencing, compensation, civil law etc. In these cases, we will provide the contact details of the Legal Services Commission, Community Legal Centres, Councils, or JusticeNet for information or advice.

We refer tenants seeking information about the status of their bond and bond lodgements and refunds to Consumer and Business Services (CBS). Tenants are commonly referred to South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) if they have a dispute with their land agent that relates to the RTA. In these cases, we always encourage tenants to have a conversation with their land agent to try to resolve the dispute in the first instance. However, if this has not been successful, then tenants are able to make an application to SACAT.

### Practitioner Note



