

# Our sector

## Tenancy support and stakeholder engagement

In 2020–21, the RTA undertook 38 stakeholder engagement activities to provide education and information on tenancy rights and responsibilities under the RTRA Act. We also supported the sector through amendments to the COVID-19 Regulations that came into effect in October 2020 and May 2021.

Due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, the RTA has relied more heavily on digital channels to continue our commitment to connect and engage with stakeholders and customers. A three-day face-to-face engagement program scheduled for March/April 2021 in Cairns was postponed due to travel restrictions associated with a three-day COVID-19 lockdown of Greater Brisbane. The program, which included meetings between the RTA Board and key regional stakeholders, information sessions for property managers and owners, and tailored training for staff from community housing and homelessness services, has been rescheduled for October 2021.



**2,402** listens across  
19 podcast episodes



Over **4,400** views  
for webinar recordings

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### Improving the customer experience

As part of the launch of the Tenancy Dispute Resolution Web Service and Change of Bond Contributors Web Service, the RTA developed quick guides and website content to guide first-time users through the new digital services. The RTA also relaunched the Talking Tenancies podcast in January 2021 with episodes featuring RTA experts airing fortnightly to provide practical tenancy information in a conversational and accessible format. The podcast received 2,402 listens across 19 episodes in 2020–21.

### Educational workshops and presentations

The RTA participated in and supported 13 online and face-to-face presentations and interactive workshops hosted by stakeholders in 2020–21. We targeted different stakeholder groups within the residential rental sector and delivered tenancy education to approximately 287 people.

Engagement activities included:

- delivering tailored introductory and advanced training for staff from community housing providers and specialist homelessness services in conjunction with Q Shelter
- presenting on the rights, roles and responsibilities of tenants and property owners in a Queensland Council of Social Services' webinar series on water charges
- recording a joint video with Queensland Shelter on the COVID-19 Regulations relating to tenancies impacted by domestic and family violence.

Four webinars were produced in collaboration with agency partners, including Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Electrical Safety Office and the Queensland Building and Construction Commission to provide information on smoke alarm laws, natural disasters, and electrical and pool safety for rental properties, respectively. Two webinars introduced new RTA Web Services while another two explored and clarified key questions regarding amendments to the COVID-19 Regulations. Other webinars addressed our customers' most frequent concerns and questions and provided practical tips, such as navigating the challenging rental market in 2021. Our webinar recordings received more than 4,400 views on the RTA Queensland YouTube channel.

## Supporting the sector through changes to the COVID-19 Regulations

The RTA published multiple updates to RTA forms for general tenancies and rooming accommodation. These forms assisted with customer compliance and education as amendments to the COVID-19 Regulations came into effect in 2020–21. Updated forms were available via the RTA website or by calling our Contact Centre.

Website content was also updated promptly to reflect changes to COVID-19 tenancy arrangements as introduced by the Queensland Government. The most recent amendments, effective from 1 May 2021 to 30 September 2021, are designed to support the Queensland residential rental sector transition back to normal tenancy arrangements and processes under the RTRA Act.



**38** stakeholder  
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## Recognising the importance of collaboration

The RTA facilitated two meetings of its Stakeholder Forum in 2020–21. The Forum met via videoconference in November 2020 and April 2021. The Stakeholder Forum provides an avenue for members, the RTA Executive Leadership Team and RTA Board members to raise and discuss strategic issues and trends affecting the residential rental sector. It allows the RTA to gain insights and further understand the interests and concerns of stakeholders, and advances stakeholders' understanding of the RTA's role and its strategic direction.

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)
- Supported Accommodation Providers Association (SAPA)
- Tenants Queensland (TQ).

The RTA received positive feedback on the Forum meetings in 2020–21, with an average overall member satisfaction rating of 82 per cent.

The RTA also established a Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) in January 2021 to engage with key stakeholders for operational advice and recommendations on customer communication and education. The SWG has representatives from many Stakeholder Forum member organisations and also includes the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN), Real Estate Excellence Academy and the Tenancy Skills Institute.

The SWG met monthly via videoconference in 2021 and has provided the RTA with practical advice on improving communication and education throughout the tenancy cycle. The cross-sector discussion and collaboration has allowed for different perspectives to be considered in developing and delivering proactive and effective key messages for the Queensland residential rental sector.

## Proposed rental law reforms

The Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (Tenants' Rights) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 (Bill) was introduced to the Queensland Parliament in May 2021 by Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane.

In June 2021, the Queensland Government introduced the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 to the Queensland Parliament with proposed reform areas including:

- ensuring all parties have appropriate approved reasons for all parties to end a tenancy
- prescribing Minimum Housing Standards
- options for people experiencing domestic and family violence to end a tenancy
- frameworks for all parties to negotiate renting with pets.

The RTA encouraged Queenslanders to have their say on the proposed changes across the two Bills through public submissions to the Community Support and Services Committee. 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.

# Compliance activities

In 2020–21, the RTA explored the compliance challenges in the sector and looked at ways we can better support customers in performing our regulatory function. In March 2021, we published our Compliance and Enforcement Strategy 2021–23. This strategy is aligned to the RTA's Strategic Plan and was informed by a comprehensive regulatory review. It aims to improve the rate of compliance with Queensland's residential tenancy laws, identify emerging issues in the sector, provide accessible compliance and enforcement information for all customers, and deliver 'best fit' customer services.

We also released a new digital tool and resource – the Investigations Request Kit – to accompany the publication of this strategy. The 24/7 availability of this kit via the RTA website makes it more convenient for customers to report alleged breaches of Queensland tenancy laws for investigation. It also empowers customers to address and resolve their tenancy concerns by guiding them through a short series of simple questions to recommend targeted support and resources.

The RTA carries out compliance and enforcement functions based on the following principles.

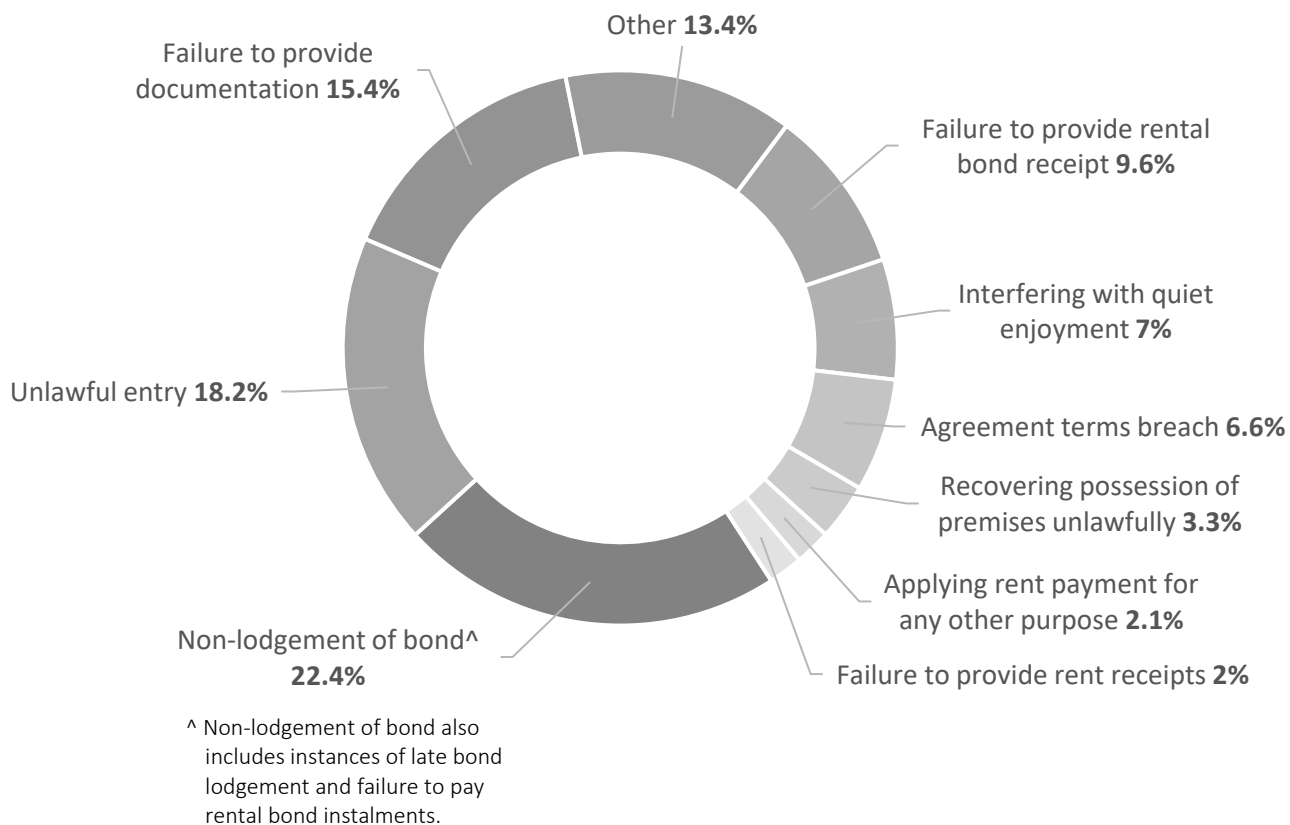
- **Transparency:** conducts investigations in an open and transparent manner in line with procedural fairness and the model litigant principles.
- **Consistency:** uses a measured system of checks and balances when assessing and investigating cases to ensure consistency in processes and outcomes.
- **Proportionality:** establishes outcomes based equitably on the sufficiency of evidence with consideration to compliance objectives and the public interest.
- **Timeliness:** conducts all investigations and reviews in a timely and appropriate manner.

With a challenging rental market and a reduction in offences reported in 2020–21 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the RTA focused on proactive compliance monitoring. Our intelligence-driven compliance monitoring activities targeted agencies and aimed to engage with agency owners and senior staff in a meaningful way, delivering tailored education packages to address repeat offending behaviours and drive future compliance. This approach resulted in a significant reduction in offences reported against each agency and empowered the agency owners and staff to improve their understanding of and compliance with the RTRA Act.

In 2020–21, the RTA finalised 567 investigations containing 1,136 alleged offences of the RTRA Act, which resulted in:

- providing education on 346 offences
- issuing cautions for 206 offences
- finding insufficient evidence for 433 offences
- requiring no further action on 151 offences – this includes instances where no offences were identified, the investigation request was outside statutory timeframes, or the matter was referred to the RTA’s dispute resolution service.

**Types of alleged offences investigated\***



Other offences include, but are not limited to:

- s87(2): Rent in advance - not requiring rent from tenant in a period that rent has been paid
- s514(1): Giving false or misleading documents to the RTA
- s203: Lessor or lessor's agent must not show tenant's possession in advertisements
- s367: Purporting to terminate agreement in authorised way

\* Methodology changed for this graph in 2020–21 to more accurately reflect the number of alleged offences investigated.