

# Our sector

## Tenancy support and stakeholder engagement

In 2021–22, the RTA delivered or participated in over 70 stakeholder engagement activities to provide education and information on tenancy rights and responsibilities under the RTRA Act to over 2,800 people.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to provide an increase in face-to-face engagement activities compared to the previous financial year. The RTA maintained the delivery of education services throughout the year with a strong focus on improving quality and expanding the resources available on our digital channels.

The RTA Board also held two regional meetings during this financial year, the first in Cairns in October 2021 and the second in Mount Isa in May 2022. The Board and Chief Executive Officer met with regional sector representatives in both cities to gain an understanding of local issues and to provide information about the RTA and our services.

### Improving the customer's digital experience

As part of continued improvements to the RTA website, we undertook a review of the website's content and structure. New website content was developed and the website structure was updated to align with the tenancy lifecycle. To support the launch of the Bulk Bond Lodgement Web Service, we developed quick guides and website content to guide first-time users through the new digital service. In May 2022, we also provided targeted information sessions about the new Web Service to identified customers who lodge multiple bonds in bulk.

The RTA continued to release episodes of our Talking Tenancies podcast, which features our experts providing practical tenancy information in a conversational and accessible format. The podcast is released fortnightly, and there were 25 new podcast episodes published in 2021–22. We now have 44 podcast episodes published on the RTA website, which received 4,415 listens this financial year.

During the 2021–22 financial year, the RTA published 39 news stories on the website covering a range of topics including legislation changes, navigating a tight rental market, and providing information for different stages of the tenancy cycle. Many of these stories were included in the RTA's monthly electronic newsletter, which goes out to approximately 3,700 subscribers. The RTA also responded to over 35 media requests, to help educate the sector on rental legislation.

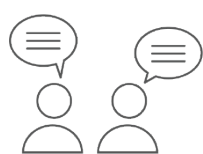
The RTA also undertook a campaign focused on students, in light of the increased return of international students to student and private accommodation. This campaign included the creation of new website content and factsheets, which were promoted through Google and Spotify advertising. The campaign received over 81,000 impressions through Spotify reach, Google impressions, and views of all other online resources.

### Educational workshops and presentations

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the RTA delivered face-to-face information sessions in Cairns and on the Gold Coast. In Cairns, over 140 property owners and property managers attended two sessions in October 2021, while over 365 managers and owners attended four sessions on the Gold Coast in June 2022. The RTA maintained its commitment to customers across Queensland with virtual information sessions focused on Ipswich, Redlands, Gladstone, and Mount Isa throughout the year.

The RTA produced 12 in-house webinars in the 2021–22 financial year, including two in collaboration with agency and industry partners. We produced webinars with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to promote new smoke alarm laws which commenced in January 2022, and with the Tenancy Skills Institute about their free Skillsets for Successful Tenancies course. Our webinars targeted different stakeholder groups within the residential rental sector and delivered tenancy education to approximately 515 people.

Two webinars were about the new rental reforms, while other webinars addressed frequent questions from customers and important topics such as DFV, resolving disputes, accuracy of data, and the introduction of Bulk Bond Lodgement Web Services. Overall, our webinar recordings received more than 3,594 views on the RTA Queensland YouTube channel.



**59** stakeholder engagement activities



**11** targeted presentations with stakeholders

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The RTA worked closely with stakeholders in 2021–22 to deliver specialised education sessions to our stakeholders. These included two information sessions for staff from Tenants Queensland/QSTARS and their networks about RTA Web Services. A presentation on the RTA compliance and enforcement function was also delivered to staff from Tenants Queensland, QSTARS, LawRight and their community partners.

The RTA also participated in and supported 11 online and face-to-face presentations and interactive workshops hosted by stakeholders in 2021–22. These included:

- tailoring introductory and advanced training for staff from community housing providers and specialist homelessness services, in conjunction with Q Shelter
- providing a guest speaker for a webinar in December 2021 with the Australian Resident Accommodation Managers' Association about changes to the legislation
- delivering a presentation to approximately 240 property managers at the Real Estate Institute of Queensland Property Management Conference in March 2022
- presenting at regular face-to-face meetings of the Property Owners' Association Queensland
- presenting a live Facebook webinar to students from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) which attracted over 900 live and recorded views
- delivering information sessions about DFV protections to staff from the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, and attendees at Housing and Homelessness Forums in Bundaberg and the Fraser Coast.



**4,344** listens across 44 podcast episodes



**4,109** views across 12 webinar recordings

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## Supporting the sector through changes to the COVID-19 Regulations and the 2022 floods

Throughout 2021–22, the RTA updated its website and forms for general tenancies and rooming accommodation to reflect the gradual roll back of emergency COVID-19 Regulations. We regularly updated our website and created news stories to update customers about these changes, which were published on our website and in our electronic newsletter. The final COVID-19 provisions, which provided tenants and residents with protections around rent arrears caused by COVID-19, expired on 1 May 2022.

In 2022, Queensland was affected by severe and widespread flooding. To support the rental sector through this period, we updated our natural disasters webpage, created new factsheets for tenants and residents and property managers and owners affected by the floods, and published news stories on our website.

## Recognising the importance of collaboration

The RTA facilitated three meetings of its Stakeholder Forum in 2021–22. The Forum met by videoconference in November 2021 and February 2022, and in a hybrid of in-person and online attendance in June 2022. The Stakeholder Forum provides an avenue for members, the RTA Executive Leadership Team, and representatives from the RTA Board to raise and discuss strategic issues and trends affecting the residential rental sector. It allows the RTA to gain insights and to further understand the interests and concerns of stakeholders and increases 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 2021–22, with an average overall member satisfaction rating of 79 per cent.

The Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) was established in early 2021 to provide the RTA with operational advice and recommendations around customer communication and education. The group met monthly via videoconference throughout 2021–22. The SWG has representatives from all Stakeholder Forum member organisations, as well as the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN), Real Estate Excellence Academy and the Tenancy Skills Institute. This 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.

The SWG has continued to provide the RTA with practical advice on improving communication and education throughout the tenancy cycle. With the support of the SWG, the RTA produced new factsheets in October 2021 to assist tenants, residents, property managers and owners to consider factors associated with taking photos in a rental property, released a series of short videos aimed at making rental essentials quick and easy to digest in May 2022 and ensured stakeholder feedback was incorporated into flow charts on the new domestic and family violence protections.

# Regulatory and compliance activities

In 2021–22, we continued to align our services to the *RTA Compliance and Enforcement Strategy 2021–23* and the Queensland Audit’s Office’s insights on good regulatory practices. We commenced new compliance activities designed to be intelligence led, transparent and to measurably improve sector compliance with the RTRA Act.

In June 2022, we launched our Proactive Compliance Program. This pilot program used data to identify agencies with a high non-compliance rate of lodging bonds within ten days of receiving bond payments from a tenant. This program was chosen based on historic RTA investigation trends, to proactively target the ongoing industry compliance issue of late bond lodgements.

Our Compliance and Enforcement team proactively engaged agencies with high levels of non-compliance around bond lodgement timeframes, offering them individually tailored and interactive education sessions that:

- outlined the agency’s legislative obligations
- identified common challenges and trends that often lead to non-compliance
- showcased RTA services, like the Bulk Bond Lodgement Web Service
- provided practical solutions to help the agency meet their obligations.

The agencies which participated have since begun embedding changes and improvements in their bond lodgement processes. The Compliance and Enforcement team will continue to monitor these agencies to measure the success of the program, and the RTA will publicise its shared learnings from the program to increase broader industry voluntary compliance with the RTRA Act.

To further support compliance rates, the RTA collaborated with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to amend the *Agents Financial Administration Regulation 2014*. This amendment ensures that all agencies can use modern payments, such as BPAY, to pay for bonds from a trust account.

In December 2021, the RTA also launched a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OFT. The MOU provides clarity around which organisation will investigate offences by licensed agents, if they are in breach of legislation administered by both the OFT and the RTA. Under the MOU, the RTA will direct complainants requesting an investigation to the OFT regarding:

- late or non-lodgement of rental bonds by licensed agents and/or
- using rent money for another purpose (e.g. paying for a water bill).

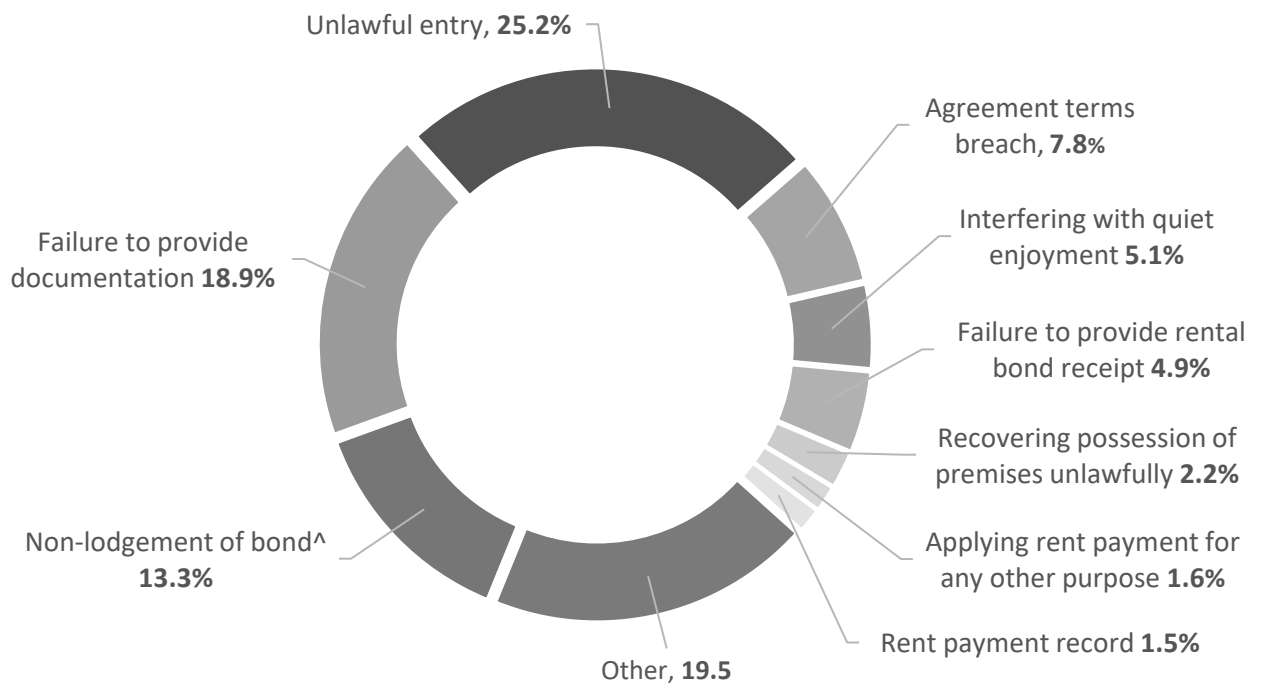
The exception is if an investigation request is around these offences but also includes other unrelated alleged breaches of the RTRA Act. In these cases, the RTA will handle the investigation.

In 2021–22, the RTA received 243 investigation requests. We also finalised 178 investigation cases and 63 non-investigation cases (where the investigation request could not be actioned as: no offences were identified; the case was outside statutory timeframes; or it was referred to the RTA’s dispute resolution service).

Some investigation cases involved multiple alleged offences and, in total, the RTA investigated 549 alleged offences of the RTRA Act. This resulted in:

- providing education around 277 offences
- issuing cautions for 115 offences
- finding insufficient evidence for 105 offences
- the complainant ceasing contact or withdrawing their request for 29 offences
- no further action for 23 offences – this were identified as non-investigation cases.

## Types of alleged offences investigated



<sup>^</sup> Non-lodgement of bond also includes instances of late bond lodgement and failure to pay rental bond instalments.

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
- s203: Lessor or lessor's agent must not show tenant's possession in advertisements
- s171: Supply of goods and services
- s459: Restriction on listing on tenancy database
- s514(1): Giving false or misleading documents to the RTA