

Bond Reform: Bond Release Process

This fact sheet is about:

- The important changes to the bond release process under the *Residential Tenancies Act* that came into effect on 28 March 2026.
- The new bond release process through Commission Determinations (Consumer Protection) – in most cases where there is a dispute over the bond, the Commissioner for Consumer Protection can decide on the bond release instead of parties applying to the Magistrates Court.

If you or the landlord have applied to the Magistrates Court for bond release, read our [Going to Court fact sheets](#) for more information about the process.

The key changes to the bond process are:

- Any party listed on the bond can apply for its release
- There are now claim categories for the landlord to complete on the bond release application form
- The process has clear timeframes for everyone to respond
- The Commissioner for Consumer Protection can decide in most cases if there is a dispute

Once the tenancy has terminated, and:

- you have handed the keys back to the landlord
- the landlord has conducted a final inspection
- you have provided a Property Condition Report (**PCR**)

Then any party can make a bond release application. It is best to wait until the final inspection and PCR completion before making the application, this should happen within 14 days after the tenancy has terminated.

The easiest way to get your bond back is if you can reach an agreement with the landlord, so it is good to see if you can negotiate any deduction from the bond before making the bond release application.

All bond money should be returned to you, unless you:

- a) owe money for outstanding rent or utilities
- b) are responsible for damage to the property
- c) are liable for other costs such as cleaning, carpet cleaning, changing locks, garden repair, are liable for losses due to a breach of agreement; or
- d) are liable for fumigation or repairing damage caused by a pet

See our [Bond Reform: Landlord Claims Explained](#) fact sheet for information on what the landlord may try to claim and what evidence is useful in bond disputes.

Application for Bond Release

Anyone listed on the bond can now make the application to release the bond.

Real Estate Agents must apply to release the bond through [BondsOnline](#) (unless there are special circumstances to use the paper form).

Landlords can use BondsOnline if they are registered, or they may use the paper form.

Currently, tenants can apply using the paper form.

BondsOnline is the quickest way to have the application processed, talk to your property manager or landlord to see if this is an option. See further information on the manual paper forms and how to lodge them [here](#).

Respond to the Notice

Once Bonds Administration receives a bond release applications, they will send a notice to the other parties listed on the bond and ask them to agree or dispute the application within 14 days.

If the paper form process is being used, then additional time will be allowed for service of this notice by post.

If all parties agree or approve the transaction, Bonds Administration will release the bond.

If all parties do not respond or cannot agree within 14 days, the application will be referred to the Determinations Branch for a decision. Parties can still come to an agreement at any time during the process and choose to withdraw their dispute.

Commissioner Determination Process

If the matter is referred to the Determinations Branch, the Commissioner will write to all parties and invite them to provide information and evidence about any claims from the bond within 10 days.

In your submissions, you should respond to the landlord's claims and provide evidence that shows why the landlord is not entitled to the amount claimed. See our [Bond Reform: Landlord Claims Explained](#) for more information on what claims the landlord may make and what evidence may be considered.

The 10-day timeframe may be extended under reasonable circumstances if you have a valid reason for needing an extension. You will need to contact the Determinations Branch to request additional time to respond.

The Commissioner will then decide based on the information and evidence provided. The decisions will be made in accordance with the Commissioner Guidelines [here](#).

The Commissioner will notify all parties and Bonds Administration of the decision and provide a written result. De-identified decisions and reasons will be published on the consumer protection website and austlii. Bonds Administration will pay out the bond within 7 days after receiving the notice.

Appealing a decision

Parties can appeal the decision to the Magistrates Court within 7 days. Appeals can be started by lodging a Form 12 with the Magistrates Court. See our [Going to Court fact sheets](#) for more information

Bonds Administration will wait the 7-day appeal period before releasing the bond. If no appeal is notified, Bonds Administration will release the bond after 7 days. Parties should notify Bonds Administration of the appeal, otherwise the bond will be paid out. See further information on the process and how to contact the Bonds Administration [here](#).

What if the Commissioner declines to make a decision

There are certain circumstances when the Commissioner may decline to make a decision on a bond. This may happen if the Commissioner:

- does not have enough information to decide
- does not have the contact details of one or more parties
- considers the amount in dispute is more than the bond
- is aware of other tenancy proceedings before the Magistrates Court for the same agreement
- Is aware that one of the parties resides in another state
- otherwise thinks it is appropriate to refer the matter to the Magistrates Court

You and the other parties will receive a notice from the Commissioner outlining that the decision will not be made (including reasons why) and advising that a party may apply to the Magistrates Court.

You or the other party will need to file an application with the Magistrates Court through the e-courts portal.

If there is another dispute before the Magistrates Court in relation to the tenancy agreement and the Court terminates the tenancy agreement, the Magistrate can also make an order on the bond at the same time. The Court can make this order if the parties ask for it or on their own accord.

Once the Court order is made, the Court must send the order to Bonds Administration so they can pay the bond in line with the Court order.

What if my bond was never lodged

A landlord who receives a security bond in relation to a tenancy agreement must lodge it with Bonds Administration within 14 days after they receive the bond.

If the landlord has not lodged the bond, you may wish to contact [Consumer Protection](#), as the landlord can be fined for failing to lodge the bond.

You can still apply to the Magistrates Court to get your bond back. You will likely need to apply on a [Form 12 Application for Court Order](#) for the bond to be paid directly from the landlord.

This fact sheet is current as of 30 March 2026.

FURTHER HELP – TENANTS ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

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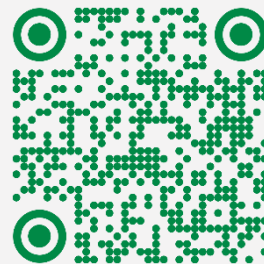
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