

Finding and Keeping Quality Tenants in Canberra

A landlord's guide to tenant selection and retention

How to attract, screen, and retain high-quality long-term tenants for your Canberra investment property. Covers advertising strategy, application screening, reference checking, tenancy database searches, ACT-specific selection rules, and the proven techniques Jaira Properties uses to minimise vacancy and maximise tenancy duration.

Why tenant quality matters more than rent

The single most important decision you make as a landlord is who you allow to live in your property. A quality long-term tenant who pays rent on time, cares for the property, and communicates issues promptly is worth far more than the difference between a good rent and a great rent. Conversely, a problematic tenancy — arrears, damage, disputes — can cost you tens of thousands of dollars and months of stress.

This guide covers the complete process of finding, screening, and retaining quality tenants for your Canberra investment property.

1. Advertising your property effectively

The quality of your advertising determines the quality of your applicant pool. Strong photography, an accurate and appealing listing description, and broad portal coverage are essential.

Where to advertise in Canberra

Portal	Reach	Notes
realestate.com.au	Highest in ACT	Premium listing recommended for quality tenant pool
domain.com.au	Strong in ACT	Particularly strong for apartment/unit tenants
allhomes.com.au	ACT-specific	Strong local reach, used heavily by Canberra tenants
flatmates.com.au	Room/shared	For smaller properties or room rentals
Facebook Marketplace	Growing	Supplementary — good for budget-conscious tenants

Writing an effective listing

Your listing description should lead with the property's strongest features, mention the suburb's key lifestyle benefits (proximity to ANU, hospital, town centre, schools), list all inclusions clearly, and be accurate. Misleading listings generate the wrong enquiries and waste everyone's time.

- ✓ Lead with the key selling feature — "North-facing entertainer's deck" or "Walk to Woden town centre"
- ✓ List bedrooms, bathrooms, and car spaces in the headline
- ✓ Include EER rating (required by ACT law)
- ✓ Mention pets considered/not considered clearly
- ✓ State whether applications are via 1Form or TenantApp
- ✓ Include professional photos — minimum 8 to 12 images
- ✓ Mention proximity to key Canberra employment hubs relevant to your suburb

2. The application process

Jaira Properties uses digital application platforms (1Form or TenantApp) for all tenant applications. This ensures all required information is collected consistently and that applications can be compared fairly and efficiently.

What a complete application should include:

- ✓ Full name, current address, and contact details
- ✓ Photo ID (passport or driver's licence)
- ✓ Employment details — employer name, position, income, and length of employment
- ✓ Proof of income — last three payslips or employment contract
- ✓ Rental history — current and previous property addresses with landlord/agent contact details
- ✓ References — personal and professional, not family members
- ✓ Number of occupants and pets
- ✓ Desired lease commencement date

3. Screening and selecting tenants — ACT rules

Important — ACT discrimination law: Under the Discrimination Act 1991 (ACT), you cannot refuse a tenancy application on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, nationality, or pregnancy. You can only assess applications on the basis of their ability to meet the tenancy obligations — paying rent, caring for the property, and complying with the agreement.

Legitimate selection criteria include:

- ✓ **Rental affordability:** General rule — rent should not exceed 30% of gross household income. A \$700/week property suits households earning \$120,000+ per year.
- ✓ **Employment stability:** Permanent employment is preferred, but casual, contract, and self-employed applicants are not automatically excluded. Length and continuity of employment matters.
- ✓ **Rental history:** Contact previous landlords or agents directly. Ask specifically whether rent was paid on time, the property was well cared for, and whether they would rent to this person again.
- ✓ **Tenancy database check:** Screen applicants against national tenancy databases (TICA, NTD, or similar). Listings on databases are not automatic disqualifiers but must be assessed in context.
- ✓ **References:** Call references — do not rely on written references alone.

4. Pets — the ACT position

Under the ACT Residential Tenancies Act, a landlord cannot unreasonably refuse a request by a tenant to keep a pet. If a tenant requests to keep a pet, the landlord may impose reasonable conditions — such as professional carpet cleaning at the end of the tenancy, professional pest treatment, or a requirement that the pet be kept outdoors. Refusing a pet request without reasonable grounds may be challengeable at

ACAT.

Accepting pets can broaden your applicant pool significantly in Canberra — where many renters have dogs — and long-term pet-owning tenants are often among the most stable and committed.

5. Keeping quality tenants — retention strategies

The cost of losing a good tenant is significant. A vacancy of just two to three weeks, plus letting fees, plus the time to prepare the property and find a new tenant, can easily cost \$3,000 to \$5,000. Retaining a good tenant through proactive management is always more cost-effective than finding a new one.

Retention strategy	Why it works
Respond to maintenance requests promptly	Tenants who feel heard stay longer. Ignored maintenance requests are the #1 reason good tenants leave.
Provide reasonable rent increases only	An above-market increase that forces a good tenant to leave costs far more than the increase would have earned.
Communicate proactively	Keep tenants informed about inspections, tradespeople visits, and any changes. Surprises erode trust.
Acknowledge long tenancies	A simple acknowledgement at lease renewal — or a small gesture for a multi-year tenancy — builds loyalty.
Fix issues before they are reported	Proactive inspections that identify maintenance needs before tenants raise them demonstrate genuine care for the property and its occupants.
Offer early renewal discussions	Approach tenants 90 days before lease expiry. Long-term tenants value certainty. Early renewal avoids vacancy.

At Jaira Properties, we manage the entire tenant lifecycle — from advertising and screening to renewals and retention. Our boutique approach means your property and your tenants always receive personal attention. Get a free rental appraisal at jaira.com.au — jaira.com.au | Offices in Phillip and Gungahlin

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