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A MESSAGE FROM REIA PRESIDENT ADRIAN KELLY

REGARDING TENANTS AND THEIR RENT PAYMENTS

A message to tenants who have lost or are facing losing their job.

There is so much information swirling around out there that it is difficult to understand where to turn. We get that.

There is state and federal government assistance out there but when you have to wait on hold to Centrelink just to get your ID number, that's frustrating. We get it.

I said last week that our industry wants to help you. That's our role. Looking after tenants who have lost employment is nothing new to us. What is new is the scale of the problem, but we will help you get through this.

You need to continue to pay your rent if you can afford to do so. If you don't it creates a problem for you down the track and also creates problems for the owner of the property in which you live, many of whom have also lost their jobs and have families and children to feed.

If you can't afford to pay your rent, we understand. Don't bury your head in the sand and think that the problem will go away because it won't. TALK TO US! We will sort something out for you. We encounter this scenario all the time.

For example...Mary rents a home and pays \$250 per week in rent. Mary's work hours have been reduced by half. Mary comes to us, tells us her story (and shows us a letter from her employer) and says that she can now only afford to pay \$150 per week for the next three months. NO PROBLEM! We speak with the owner who is understanding and agrees to reduced rent payments of \$150 per week for the next three months. It's that simple.

Another example...John and his three mates rent a share house for \$400 per week. Two of John's mates lose their jobs. John talks to the agent to seek a short-term rent reduction to \$250 per week until his mates get back on their feet and the owner agrees. A simple outcome.

In both of the above commonplace examples everybody wins. Everyone keeps a roof over their heads (which everybody needs and will get right at the moment) plus the property owner can brace themselves for lower rental income. It's not difficult but COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

Last message to tenants. Yesterday the Prime Minister offered you a monetary lifeline. Talk to your employer and go and get it. There is your rental assistance and cash for other expenses right there. Go find it.

TO STATE GOVERNMENTS

I'm assuming that all state governments would prefer a soft landing at the other end of this crisis than a hard one.

The real estate industry stands ready to assist as we always have. Note the examples above. This is our forte and we are ready to do whatever we need to do to make sure that our tenants and property owners suffer as little damage as possible.

Your governments need to step up and reach a unified position on this and that position must be to keep the cash flowing through the economy. We have all been offered a lifeline yesterday by the federal government in the form of wages assistance so that everyday Australians can continue to pay their bills including rent.

The rent cash flow ensures that everyone wins and I unashamedly include the real estate agent in that. We need income in order to continue to employ our property managers who are at the coal face of looking after both tenants and landlords. Leaving tenants and landlords to sort out their own mess will end in utter anarchy.

For example, what about the case of a tenant who lives in a rental property in Melbourne but the owner of that property lives in Brisbane. They have never met. How will that negotiation end up?

TO PROPERTY OWNERS

We know that this is a stressful time for you, particularly for those of you that just like your tenant, have also lost employment.

We are here for you as we always have been and we will help you and your tenant get through this. We are all in this together.

But, I have heard stories of some property owners, particularly those managing their own properties trying to take advantage of the situation we find ourselves in. For those owners who do this, you are nothing short of greedy and pathetic. Just stop it and show some compassion.

TO TENANT LOBBY GROUPS

You need to understand that our industry wants the same outcome as you; to keep everybody housed and feeling secure at this time, but we all need to play our part. Simply calling for free rent for everybody just doesn't cut it. You need to be more socially and financially responsible than that and perhaps once and for all finally understand that money doesn't grow on trees.

Tenants who are still in employment need to continue to pay the rent and you need to be supportive of this because it is the right thing to do.

For those tenants who have lost employment or have had their hours reduced, let our industry work through those issues. You simply calling for everyone else to "suck it up" is utter nonsense given the

mess that we are all in. You need to show some true leadership for all Australians because that is the only way that we will all get through this.

TO OUR INDUSTRY

Thank you for the leadership that you are showing during these trying times. We will get through this but there will also be casualties.

Above all else, please continue to look after your tenants, even including those who are trying to abuse the system. Now is not the time to be petty. We all need to step up and get on with it.

Thanks for reading.

Adrian Kelly,

President.

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The Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA) is the national professional association for real estate agents in Australia.

For further information or to speak with REIA President Adrian Kelly please contact Samantha Elley via media@reia.com.au or 0413 986 068.