



Media Release

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For immediate release

Regis Towers Tenants Locked Out of Their Homes

A significant number of tenants have been denied access to their homes in Regis Towers, a large apartment block on Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

Over the last month, Redfern Legal Centre has been contacted by an alarming number of unrelated tenants complaining of being locked out of their units for days by the building management of Regis Towers, the largest strata plan building in Australia.

A radical change to one of the building's by-laws late last year has seen the introduction of draconian policies regarding the use of tenants' security access cards: their house keys.

Under the policy, tenants have had their access cards cancelled without warning for trivial or unfounded breaches. They have then been told they had to pay \$150 per 'breach' in order to have their access card reactivated.

RLC Tenant Advocate Tom McDonald commented, "We have been receiving calls almost daily from aggrieved residents about this issue. Many people pay the huge penalties because they feel they have no choice. Some are afraid to take action or speak out for fear of reprisals, including further lock outs."

"We've been told that this issue is affecting a significant proportion of the building. In some cases people are paying thousands of dollars in penalties to get access to their units. It should be noted that people are continuing to pay full rent whilst not having access to their properties," said Mr McDonald.

Examples of 'breaches' have included:

- a tenant lending an access card to a visitor so the visitor could go out and buy a carton of milk;
- a tenant accidentally picking up their flatmate's access card from the kitchen bench and using it; and

- a tenant passing their card to their boyfriend and the boyfriend swiping to let both of them in.

Tenants have informed RLC of:

- long queues of aggrieved tenants at the reception desk pleading to have their access cards reactivated;
- tenants having to wait three days just to get an appointment with the key manager to talk about why their card was deactivated – meaning a minimum of three days without a house key;
- and tenants having to find other accommodation because they could not get access to their homes.

There are strong penalties in New South Wales for landlords who lock out tenants illegally. The legal remedies available to tenants are not as straight forward when Owners Corporations and building managers are responsible for locking them out of their homes. With more and more electronic key systems being installed in apartment blocks and with the State's strata laws currently under review, it is an opportune time to introduce clear laws prohibiting these practices.

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Tenants affected by this issue have agreed to be interviewed by media. To arrange interviews contact RLC Communications Manager on 9698 7277.