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BOND RETURN REQUEST

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic) — Sections 63, 419A

Your rights at the end of tenancy — how to claim your bond and dispute deductions

WHEN TO USE THIS BUNDLE

Use this bundle at the end of your tenancy to formally request the full release of your bond. Use it alongside your move-out inspection documentation and your original condition report.

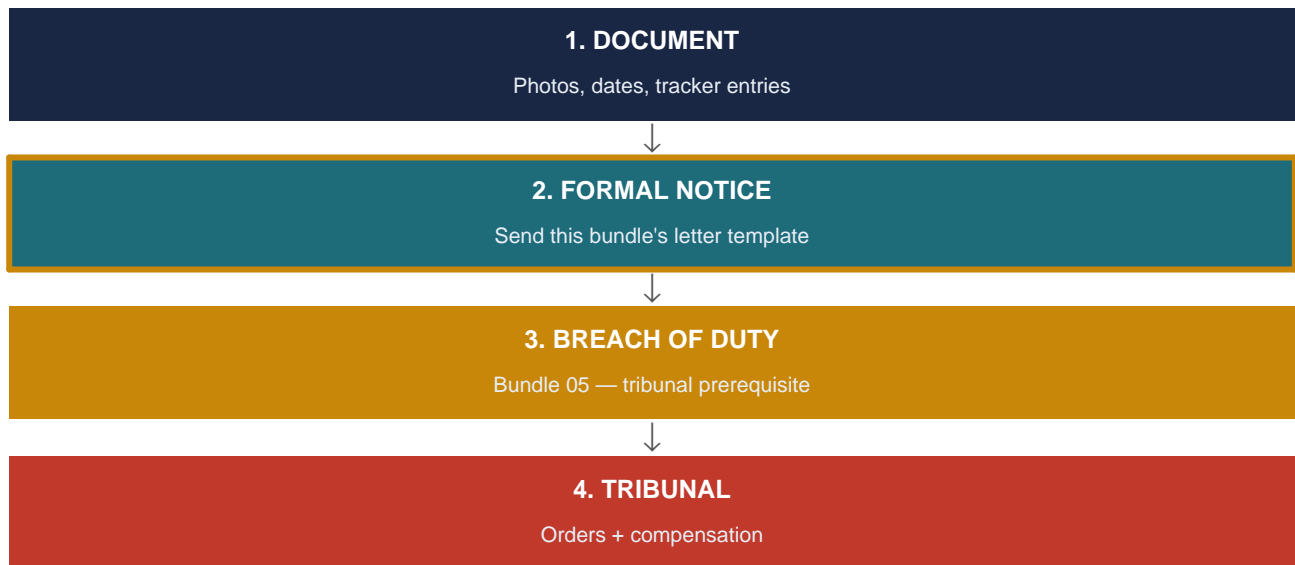
KNOW THE LAW — BOND RETURN AND RENTER'S DUTIES (SS.63, 419A)

Under Section 63 of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, a renter must return the property in a 'reasonably clean' condition, having regard to its condition at the start of the tenancy. Fair wear and tear is not chargeable. The bond is held by the RTBA — either party can initiate a claim via RTBA Online. Under Section 419A, unresolved bond disputes can be referred to VCAT for a binding order. From 13 October 2026, the rental provider must notify you in advance of any claim on your bond and must provide evidence supporting the claim — unsubstantiated bond claims are no longer permitted.

FAIR WEAR AND TEAR VS. DAMAGE

FAIR WEAR AND TEAR (NOT CHARGEABLE)	DAMAGE (CHARGEABLE)
Minor scuff marks on walls	Large holes in walls
Faded paint (normal sunlight)	Stains, significant marks
Carpet flattening from normal use	Carpet stains from spills or burns
Small nail holes	Broken fixtures or fittings
Worn door handles / locks	Damaged appliances

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS — YOUR ESCALATION PATH



The highlighted box shows where this bundle fits in the journey.

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STEPS TO SUCCESS

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic) — Sections 63, 419A

01 Photograph the property thoroughly before vacating
Mirror your move-in documentation exactly — photograph every room, every surface, every appliance. Email photos to yourself immediately for a timestamped record.

02 Compare move-out photos to your original condition report
Note where the property is in the same or better condition than at move-in. This is your evidence against unjustified deductions.

03 Lodge your RTBA claim on the day you vacate — don't wait for the agent
You do not need the agent's permission or cooperation. Lodge your own claim via RTBA Online as soon as you vacate. This starts the 14-day clock running against the rental provider: if they do not lodge a dispute within 14 days, the RTBA releases the bond to you. Waiting for the agent hands them control of the timeline.

04 Send the template letter the same day
Fill in all [bracketed] fields and send it to the agent. The letter notifies them your claim is already lodged, your evidence is on record, and any deduction they want must now be raised as a formal, evidenced dispute within the 14-day window.

05 Challenge every unjustified deduction in writing
If the agent proposes deductions, respond in writing itemising your objection to each claim with supporting evidence. Use the Deductions Log in your tracker.

06 Apply to VCAT if unresolved
Any unresolved bond dispute can be referred to VCAT under s.419A for a binding order.

IF YOU NEED TO ESCALATE — WHAT VCAT CAN ORDER

VCAT can issue a bond order under s.419A directing the RTBA to release all or part of the bond to you. VCAT will assess each deduction individually against your evidence. A well-documented Evidence Tracker with entry and exit photos is significantly more persuasive than verbal claims.

★ GOOD TO KNOW — FAIR WEAR AND TEAR CANNOT BE CHARGED

Lease clauses attempting to require professional cleaning, carpet replacement, or repainting as standard end-of-tenancy obligations are generally unenforceable in Victoria. The Act's 'reasonably clean' standard prevails.

★ GOOD TO KNOW — PORTABLE RENTAL BOND SCHEME (LIVE FROM 1 JULY 2026)

If you are moving to another Victorian rental, you can now port your existing bond directly to the new tenancy instead of paying a second bond upfront — for a \$35 administrative fee. Your current bond must be paid directly to the RTBA and held under 'Renter Pay' status; third-party or unregistered private holdings cannot be ported. The State guarantees any claim on the original bond, and you become liable to the State if a claim is later awarded. Apply at rtba.vic.gov.au.

■ CRITICAL — FAIR WEAR AND TEAR IS NOT DAMAGE

Landlords cannot deduct for normal wear and tear — scuff marks, minor carpet flattening, small nail holes, faded paint. They also cannot charge full replacement cost for depreciated items. Challenge every unjustified deduction in writing.

■ CRITICAL — DON'T WAIT FOR THE AGENT — FILE THE CLAIM YOURSELF

You never need the agent's permission to get your bond back. File your own claim via RTBA Online the day you vacate. That puts the 14-day dispute clock on the rental provider — not you — and if they stay silent, the bond is paid to you automatically.

■ CRITICAL — FROM 13 OCTOBER 2026 — CLAIMS REQUIRE ADVANCE NOTICE AND EVIDENCE

The rental provider must notify you before claiming on your bond and must supply evidence for every deduction. A claim made without advance notice and supporting evidence is procedurally defective — challenge it in writing immediately and cite the strengthened bond claim rules.

1. COPY

Copy the letter below into a new email

2. FILL

Replace every **[bracketed]** field with your details

3. SEND

Email it — request a read receipt, save a copy

Fill in every **[bracketed]** field, then send via email — request a read receipt.

SUBJECT:

FORMAL NOTICE — BOND CLAIM LODGED: [Insert Property Address]

1. NOTICE OF VACATION

- I confirm that I vacated the above property on **[Insert Vacate Date]**.
- The premises were left in a clean and reasonably maintained condition, consistent with Section 63 of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 and the condition of the property at the commencement of my tenancy.
- Move-out inspection photographs are attached to this notice.

2. NOTICE OF BOND CLAIM LODGED

- I have lodged a claim with the RTBA via RTBA Online for the full release of my bond in the amount of **[\$[Insert Bond Amount]]**.
- This claim was lodged on **[Insert Claim Date]**. You will receive notification from the RTBA directly.

3. PROCESS AND TIMELINE

- If you consider any deduction is justified, you must lodge a formal dispute with the RTBA within 14 days of notification, with written itemisation and supporting evidence for each item.
- I note that any claim on the bond must be notified to me in advance and supported by evidence, per the strengthened bond claim requirements effective 13 October 2026.
- I will assess any claimed deduction against my move-in condition report and photographic records.
- If no dispute is lodged within 14 days, the RTBA will release the bond to me in full.
- Any unjustified deductions will be referred to VCAT under Section 419A.

4. EVIDENCE ON RECORD

- All move-in and move-out records — condition reports, dated photographs, and all correspondence — are being maintained in a chronological evidence index.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Property Address]

[Date]

[Contact Number / Email]