



Article Side

Three reasons why investment property repairs should be left to the professionals by [Ian Comyns](#)

Article published on December 12th 2011 | [Real Estate](#)

Exchange licensee Ian Comyns shares a recent case which shows what can go wrong when landlords do their own maintenance on rental properties, and highlights the importance of having professionals carry out repairs.

What happens when you do your own repairs?

Some of our owner/clients like to carry out their own repairs. This is just one example of why this is not such a good idea.

It should be a straight forward transition from outgoing tenant to incoming tenant.

As you may know already, we schedule a three day vacancy to allow for carrying out an inspection and scheduling any additional cleaning or repairs that may be necessary. There are outgoing and incoming condition reports to be written and video reports to be made. It is a busy time for all concerned.

In this case the owner had regularly attended the property during the tenancy to carry out repairs. He had become personally known to the tenants and had on occasions accessed the property by using keys, with the prior permission of the tenants of course. As the tenancy progressed, the tenants and owner would contact each other directly regarding repairs and access without first contacting us.

Imagine the scene.

The outgoing tenants have vacated the property and the owner calls in to the property to carry out minor repairs and maintenance. Next thing this office is fielding a phone call from the owner to say that the tri-fold doors have fallen on his head with a subsequent repair bill of between \$2,000 and \$3,000. All three panes of glass have shattered and the frame is dented quite deeply in places.

He says that he went to push the door open and it completely fell out of the uppermost track. The rest you already know. The cause he says, is a bottom guide bolt that was missing a pin and was therefore not holding the door into the bottom track. So he asked, why did the outgoing tenants not report this repair? He was in essence holding them responsible.

This is quite baffling isn't it? If the bolt was broken, why did the tenants not report it? They certainly didn't report it to us. Well of course I asked them this very same question.

(I wondered if they had ever used the door. If they hadn't then I was thankful. They too have a baby.)

Back to the question.

Why wasn't this reported to us, the managing agents? Well, the answer was, it was reported by the tenants directly to the owner. But wait there's more. The owner attended the property and repaired or replaced the very bolt that failed. So says the outgoing tenant.

So we have an owner/client who says that the tenants never reported an essential repair resulting in a loss. On the other hand we have tenants who say that they not only reported the repair but that

the owner â€œfixedâ€• it.

Meanwhile the incoming tenants were scheduled to take possession. They too have a child, a five year old boy.

Their immediate concern was â€œhow safe is this door now?â€™™ Secondly they were unimpressed that the new rental home costing \$950/week would be offering an immediate loss of amenity.

Where a property manager comes in.

This example raises some questions about the advisability of tenants and owners communicating with each other directly in relation to repairs. It also raises the obvious questions about the liability issues of not engaging licensed tradesmen to do the work.

If this particular repair had been reported to us as managing agents, there would be a record.

Secondly, if we had arranged for the work to be done it would be by a qualified and fully insured tradesman. The line of responsibility would be clear. How will this situation resolve itself?

We have an owner holding a tenant to account for a repair costing between \$2,000 and \$3,000. We have a tenant stating categorically that the repair had been reported to the owner and that he had attended the property and carried out the repair. The tenants say that they have e-mail records and photos to prove this.

Meanwhile the new tenants await the arrival of the new bolt that will make the door usable. But if the owner installs it, will it be safe?

Article Source:

<http://www.articleside.com/real-estate-articles/three-reasons-why-investment-property-repairs-should-be-left-to-the-professionals.htm> - [Article Side](#)

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Article Keywords:

property management company, real estate inner west, property management services, property management sydney

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