

How to take the stress out of moving

Moving house is often cited as one of life's most stressful events - and complaints to consumer watchdogs reflect this. Below are some tips to help reduce the stress - whether you're bringing in help or doing the hard yards yourself.

Hiring a van, truck or trailer

If you have the muscle but not the tools of the trade, you may decide to hire a van, truck or trailer for your move.

To help protect yourself when hiring a vehicle:

- > Read rental agreements carefully. Look out for clauses that allow the hirer to keep all of the security deposit or bond money in certain circumstances.
- > Carefully examine the vehicle's condition report.
- > Check the vehicle for existing damage, marks or scrapes not recorded on the report.
- > If in doubt, do not leave the hire company's premises if you find any damage on the vehicle that is not in the condition report. Make sure the company acknowledges, in writing, any damage that you find.
- > Consider taking photographs of the vehicle's condition.
- > Make sure you are there when it is inspected at the end of your rental.

Moving house using removalists

If DIY is not your cup of tea, you may choose to engage a furniture removal company. Removalists offer a range of services including packing, unpacking, storage and moving items between locations. Before you engage a company, get several itemised quotes to ensure you get the deal right for you. Things to remember when using a removalist:

- > Ask about any additional charges - such as whether there is a call-out rate and how will it be charged. For example, if it will cost more if the move takes longer than expected or if access to the property is difficult.
- > If you are paying an hourly rate, ask whether this covers the time when the van leaves and returns to the depot.
- > Check what insurance the removalist offers and what it covers.
- > Check your goods before and after they are moved.
- > Always read over the terms and conditions carefully.

The Australian Consumer Law (ACL) applies to furniture removalist companies. Under the ACL, you have specific rights in relation to services you buy. If a service or goods fail to meet these consumer guarantees, you have the right to a remedy. Moving home can be stressful, but knowing and understanding your rights can go a long way to helping ease your mind.