



## Renters' Forums: Summary of Key Outcomes

# LISTENING TO RENTERS' VOICES

April 2025

Between May and November 2024, a series of innovative Renters' Forums was hosted by the Tenants' Union of NSW in partnership with the Sydney Alliance and NSW Fair Trading. In the full [Listening to Renters' Voices report](#), we document what we heard from renters across Greater Sydney in forums held in the CBD, South West and North West Sydney; renters in regional New South Wales in the Hunter, and in the Illawarra and the South Coast. The central purpose of these forums was to directly engage renters across NSW, particularly those from often marginalised communities, to share their experiences and propose solutions related to the challenges of renting.

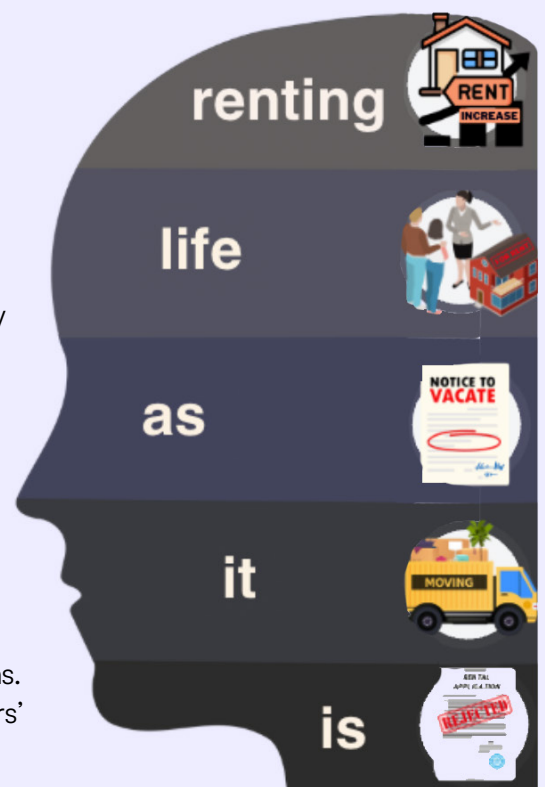
The format of the forums was shaped and driven by renters themselves — this encouraged open discussion, the sharing of both problems and solutions, and direct interaction with policymakers.

The forums employed a participatory and inclusive approach, moving beyond traditional consultation methods to actively involve renters in shaping public policy. By partnering with Community Champions and community organisations, the project successfully reached diverse groups, including First Nations renters, regional renters, young renters, and renters of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Key findings — Renting life as it is...

Key findings from the forums were firstly that the renting experience in NSW is often marked by significant challenges, including:

- Unaffordable rents, the financial strain caused by rent increases, and the high cost of securing a new rental home.
- Breakdown of relationships with landlords and agents, with renters feeling powerless and fearing repercussions for asserting their rights or requesting repairs.
- Intense competition and barriers to securing a rental home, particularly for single parents, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities or without a local rental history.
- Instability and fear of eviction, often due to 'no grounds' evictions, leading to frequent moves,
- emotional stress, and reluctance to request necessary repairs.
- Challenges with bond disputes, with renters often struggling to get their bond back for what they perceived as dubious reasons.
- Poor housing conditions lead to adverse health impacts and impact overall wellbeing.
- Cost of living pressure made worse by high energy bills, often due to energy-inefficient homes that are too hot in summer and too cold in winter, with a lack of adequate heating & cooling options.
- Poor quality homes impact renters' wellbeing, creating discomfort, anxiety, and embarrassment.



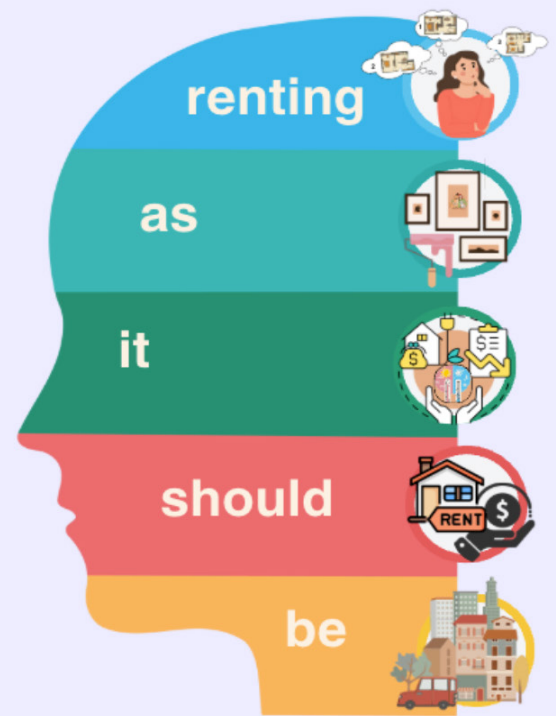


## Key findings — Renting life as it should be...

In envisioning ‘Renting life as it should be,’ renters expressed a desire for:

- a home that is genuinely affordable.
- a rental home that feels like home, offering stability and security.
- a home that is cheap to cool and heat while being better for the climate, with access to energy-efficient features and renewable energy options.
- living close to the things they need and their community,
- a range of rental homes to choose from, providing renters with greater agency and reducing the pressure of high competition.

During the Forums, renters offered solutions to bring about the vision of renting as it should be, including advocating for government investment in building and maintaining social housing, climate resilience solutions for rental homes, and financial support for renters. They also expressed a desire for greater security and stability, easier access to repairs and modifications, and the right to keep pets.



The Renters' Forums served as a powerful platform for renters to feel heard by leaders in government, with elected representatives in attendance and participating at the tables, as well as the NSW Rental Commissioner and other key figures from relevant departments who feed into policy making processes. This participatory process offered solutions to navigate the overwhelming feeling of the challenges faced by renters that are systemic issues requiring system-level solutions.

The Renters' Forums were developed as an alternative model to the traditional government consultation. The process of shaping the events' formula is documented in *Sparking a Conversation* to act as a guide to help facilitate events similar to the Renters' Forums and allow organisers to continue to use and develop the model.

