

5 March 2021

MEDIA RELEASE: OPEN LETTER

NSW community sector sign on today to open letter calling for stronger protections and additional financial support for COVID impacted renters through transition

Yesterday Minister Anderson announced a six-month transition period following the end of moratorium protections on 26 March, including limited protections against eviction for tenants with COVID-induced arrears.

In an open letter to Ministers Anderson and Ward published today, 40 NSW community organisations welcomed Minister Anderson's announcement, but expressed concern the proposed transition plan may fall short of the protections required to support the security of low-income renting households and the economic recovery of NSW. Endorsing organisations include Tenants' Union of NSW, Vinnies NSW, Mission Australia, Community Industry Group, People with Disability Australia, Uniting NSW, Community Legal Centres NSW, Jesuit Refugee Service, Older Women's Network, Better Renting, GetUp, and a wide range of other community and faith based organisations and unions.

Community organisations across NSW are seeing, first hand, the financial hardship and broader impacts many NSW renters are experiencing as a result of the pandemic.

They are calling for an extension on key NSW moratorium protections through the transition period and additional financial support to assist COVID impacted renting households.

The open letter calls for the NSW government to:

- **Extend the eviction restrictions and rent reduction provisions for impacted tenants**
- **Provide additional financial supports via for example, No Interest Loan Schemes for tenants struggling with rent or targeted COVID rent relief payments**
- **Provide additional funding for services supporting tenants**

Key media contact:

Leo Patterson Ross, Chief Executive Officer, Tenants' Union NSW

Quotes:

Quote attributable to Yumi Lee, Manager, Older Women's Network

"We're worried about the number of older women who will find themselves homeless once this moratorium ends. The cost of this is going to be enormous - not just the financial difficulty for older people with hardly any savings to organize a move and try to find a new home – but there's also the health impact. The stress this causes is horrendous, and it's

being inflicted on a group of older people whose health is particularly compromised. It's just cruel." - Yumi Lee, Manager, Older Women's Network

Quote attributable to Father Peter Smith, Promoter of Justice and Peace Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

"COVID-19 has affected us all over the last 12 months but most if all, those in unstable employment and housing. The NSW eviction moratorium has been a substantial policy to protect the most vulnerable and the thought of it being removed along with income support will be debilitating for many of these vulnerable families. We urge the government to maintain the moratorium on eviction for the sake of our most needy people."

Quote attributable to Nishadh Rego, Policy, Advocacy and Communications Manager, Jesuit Refugee Service

"Temporary visa holders, including people seeking asylum, who lost jobs during the pandemic have had no access to the JobKeeper or JobSeeker programs. They have had to rely on emergency assistance from parishes, schools, diaspora groups, and NGOs such as Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to survive.

Although rent arrears have skyrocketed, the Evictions Moratorium has ensured that many people seeking asylum have been able to maintain a roof over their heads. Extending the Evictions Moratorium will help give people the stability to look for jobs post-pandemic, and also prevent a likely avalanche of rough sleeping" –