

TENANT NEWS



N.S.W.

No.23

August '84

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TENANT NEWS WANTS YOU.



TENANT NEWS is the newsletter of the Tenants' Union of NSW.

It needs contributions. We would be HAPPY to print information on tenants' actions, campaigns, and experiences.

So send in your news and ideas. And lest we get too deadly serious, jokes and pictures too!

Remember the Tenants' Union is your union, and the newsletter a potential forum for sharing experiences, swapping ideas, establishing a dialogue.....

Hear from you soon.

Send contributions to:

"The Newsletter" T.U.

197 George St.

Redfern, 2016.

contribute!!

goodbye.....

The Resourcing Unit workers and T.U. Board members would like to say a sad goodbye to Cait Perry, Jane Skelton, and Deb Whitmont. Cait and Jane were our wage pause workers, and Deb the lawyer. Apart from the fact that their departure has doubled our workload (complain, complain) we really miss their smiling faces!

thanks to all those who came to our party. We had a great time and hope you did too.



➤ PUBLIC HOUSING ACTION ◀

did you know....

➔ * THAT THERE ARE NOW 55,000 PEOPLE ON THE WAITING LIST OF THE HOUSING COMMISSION OF NSW?

➔ * THAT WAIT TIMES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING ARE NOW UP TO EIGHT YEARS IN SOME AREAS?

➔ * THAT IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS ONLY PROVIDED \$1 MILLION IN THE FORM OF DIRECT GRANTS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING?

1984 has been dubbed the 'Year of Housing' by the NSW Housing Minister, Frank Walker. Earlier this year the NSW Government asked the Commonwealth to provide enough funds to double the proportion of public housing stock. But this year the state government has only committed \$89 million for public housing. Almost all of this money is in loans, from bodies such as the GIO and the Rental Bond Board. Some of it is borrowed with interest rates of up to 16% - money which must be repaid from public housing funds and money which could be better used to acquire housing stock.

Commonwealth grants are also inadequate. This year the Federal government will only provide \$530 million under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The NSW share of this is about \$176 million to be split between public housing and home purchase assistance schemes. But this does not let the state government off the hook.

what we want!

➔ 1. IF THE NSW GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT DOUBLING THE PROPORTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING STOCK THIS WILL COST \$448 MILLION EACH YEAR FOR TEN YEARS.

➔ 2. AT THE VERY LEAST IT SHOULD PROVIDE \$90 MILLION TO MATCH LAST YEAR'S EFFORT.

➔ 3. A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THESE FUNDS SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF GRANTS - AT LEAST \$10 MILLION.

➔ 4. THE REMAINDER OF THE STATE'S CONTRIBUTION SHOULD BE IN THE FORM OF LOANS AT CONCESSIONAL INTEREST RATES.

➔ 5. ALL THE COMMONWEALTH FUNDS FOR LOW INCOME HOUSING SHOULD BE ALLOCATED TO PUBLIC HOUSING TO HOUSE THOSE MOST IN NEED.

WITH A TOTAL COMMITMENT FROM THE STATE AND COMMONWEALTH OF \$624 MILLION ANNUALLY, THE WAITING LIST FOR PUBLIC HOUSING CAN BE REDUCED TO AROUND 18,000 IN TEN YEARS.

A Phone-in conducted by the Tenants' Union earlier this year, highlights the fact that people with children often face severe difficulties and blatant discrimination when it comes to obtaining housing on the rental market.

"No

Fifty three phone calls were received, of these 29 people reported trouble finding rented accommodation, trouble which was directly related to the fact that they had children. These difficulties were not 'one off' experiences but continuous, encountered almost every time they had to find new housing, and even once they were in a place.

children

The Phone-in confirmed the experiences of workers and clients of Tenancy Advice Services and Womens' Refuges throughout the state. People with children are confronted with a variety of problems in this area. They are frequently not shown any accommodation by real estate agents, or may find themselves confronted with advertisements which state "no children or pets allowed". Because parents have to pay for the accommodation of their children as well as themselves it is impossible to find adequate housing at an affordable rent. The practise of raising rents once or twice a year frequently forces people to move simply because they cannot afford to remain. One woman complained of having to move twelve times in twelve years because of rent rises! This is clearly stressful for both parents and children. High rents also force people into overcrowded and/or substandard living conditions. Many people thus find themselves and their children living in totally inadequate and stressful conditions, biding their time on the housing commission list (which is already years long).

or

pets

However it is not always exorbitant rents that are the problem. Several complaints were received from people who were refused housing even though the places were well within their incomes, because of policies on the part of owners and agents of 'no children allowed'

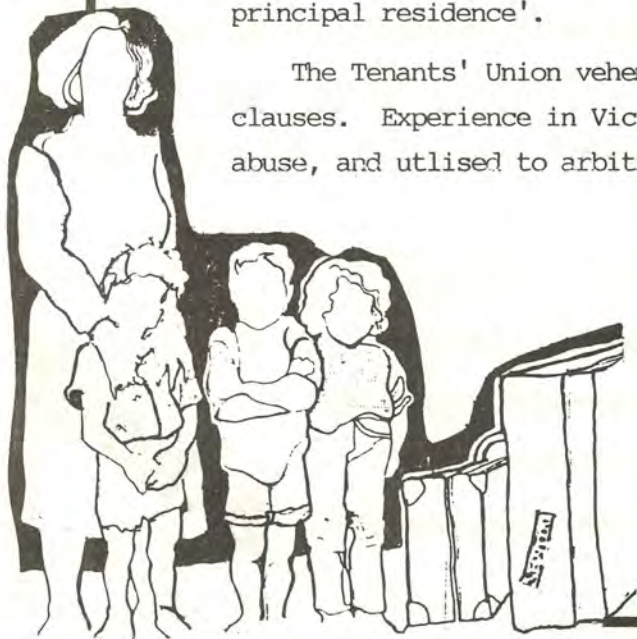
allowed."

Once again, tenants in NSW have been promised law reform by yet another Consumer Affairs Minister, Mr. George Paciullo. He has promised that new legislation will be introduced making it unlawful to refuse to let any dwelling because a child will live there. This is all very well. Unfortunately it seems there will also be an escape clause. This will probably allow agents/owners to refuse to rent to people with children where the "nature, character, size or surroundings" make the property 'unsuitable', and make a 'specific exception for premises in close proximity to the Landlords principal residence'.

The Tenants' Union vehemently opposes the introduction of any escape clauses. Experience in Victoria has shown that such clauses are open to abuse, and utilised to arbitrarily discriminate against tenants. →

Discrimination against

people with children



→ Further the Union believes that it is surely the responsibility of parents and guardians to decide what is appropriate accommodation for their children NOT landlords and real estate agents. In addition, there are mechanisms under the child welfare act for government authorities to intervene if this responsibility is not being met. It would be far more appropriate for the government to ensure that all tenants are guaranteed affordable, good quality housing.

To circumvent the 'hidden' discrimination against people with children the Tenants' Union would like to see the construction of a clause similar to that included in the ACT Landlord and Tenant Ordinance which prevents an agent or owner enquiring whether prospective tenants have children.

The Phone-in report is being submitted to Consumer Affairs and the Housing Ministry as part of a campaign to prevent such discrimination occurring. Any community groups interested in looking at the report can do so by contacting the Tenants' Union on 699 7605.

We would like to thank the Australian Consumers Association, the Lone Parents Council and the Anti-Discrimination Board for their co-operation



CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Quotable quotes from the minister for Consumer Affairs, George Paciullo

Rhetoric

WHAT I WANT TO SAY, FIRST AND FOREMOST, IS THAT I CAN BE ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AS BEING PREPARED TO STAND ROCK SOLID IN DEFENCE OF THE INTERESTS OF THE GENERAL COMMUNITY RATHER THAN GREEDY SELF INTERESTS.

SPECIFICALLY IN THE FIELD OF BUSINESS, I AM INTERESTED IN PROTECTING THE VICTIMS OF OUR SOCIETY AGAINST GREEDY AND SELFISH VESTED INTERESTS.

or



CONSISTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, MY DEPARTMENT WILL SHORTLY BE HOLDING A NUMBER OF SEMINARS IN THE CITY AND COUNTRY. THEY WILL INVOLVE, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANISATIONS TO ASCERTAIN WHAT ADDITIONAL SERVICES OR SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT CAN OFFER THE COMMUNITY.

IT IS PERHAPS SOMEWHAT INCONGRUOUS THAT GENERAL STANDARDS OF FAIR TRADING IN RELATION TO THE SUPPLY OF GOODS, SERVICES, CREDIT, ETC. ARE SET BY LEGISLATION, YET, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS RELATING TO PROTECTED TENANCIES, NO STANDARDS ARE SET TO ENSURE THE FAIRNESS OF THE LANDLORD AND TENANT RELATIONSHIP.

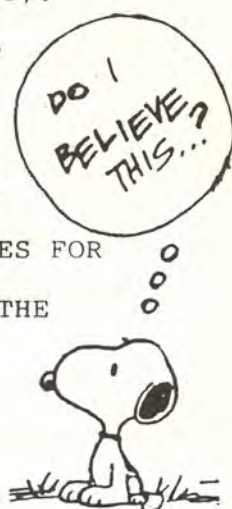
action?

I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE, THEREFORE, THAT AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSUMER AFFAIRS POLICY, I WILL SHORTLY BE SEEKING CABINET APPROVAL TO THE PREPARATION OF DRAFT LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO EFFECT MAJOR REFORMS TO THE LANDLORD AND TENANT RELATIONSHIP.

FIRST IT IS OUR INTENTION TO ESTABLISH A RESIDENTIAL TENANCY TRIBUNAL TO PROVIDE THE MEANS BY WHICH LANDLORD AND TENANT DISPUTES CAN BE SIMPLY, CHEAPLY AND QUICKLY RESOLVED. I SHOULD SAY THAT SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAS LANDLORD AND TENANT REFORM LEGISLATION ALREADY INCORPORATED, AS DOES VICTORIA (AND THE VICTORIAN LEGISLATION WAS INTRODUCED BY A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT). IT IS OUR INTENTION, HAVING OBSERVED BOTH OF THESE ACTS, TO CHOOSE THE BEST OF BOTH.

WE WILL ESTABLISH MINIMUM STANDARDS OF REPAIR FOR TENANTED PREMISES. THESE WILL REQUIRE THAT LANDLORDS PRESENT PREMISES FOR RENT IN A HABITABLE CONDITION AND THAT THE TENANT MAINTAIN THE PREMISES IN HABITABLE CONDITION.

WE WILL RE-IMPOSE A STATUTORY REQUIREMENT OF LANDLORDS TO GIVE RECEIPTS FOR RENT.



Excerpts from Paciullo's speech notes
- address to the Australian
Association of National
Advertisers, 23.5.84.

Mr. G. Combet,
Secretary,
Tenants' Union of N.S.W.,
118 Regent Street,
REDFERN, 2016. 10.

Dear Mr. Combet,

I refer to your telegram of 12th June, 1984, seeking an urgent meeting between the Tenants' Union and myself. As you are aware, I will shortly be seeking Cabinet approval for the preparation of draft legislation designed to effect major reforms to the law of landlord and tenant. Issues to be addressed include the establishment of a Residential Tenancy Tribunal, minimum standards of repair, and, except for some small exceptions, the prevention of discrimination against tenants with children.*

I will also be proposing to Cabinet that the draft legislation be made available for public review and comment for a period of at least six months, before any decision is made as to the final form of the legislation. In addition to the landlord and tenant legislation, I intend to seek Cabinet approval for changes to the Landlord and Tenant (Rental Bonds) Act, 1977, which will facilitate the funding of community-based housing and information services.

As a period for discussion and public comment is to be provided for any new legislation dealing with the landlord and tenant relationship, I would regard that time as an appropriate one for a discussion between us. I shall look forward to a meeting at that time, and suggest that you contact me again following the tabling of the draft Bill.

Yours sincerely,

George Paciullo
GEORGE PACIULLO.

SEE NEXT PAGE



* See report:

"No children or pets allowed"

in this issue.

➡ For a long time the Tenants' Union has argued that the interest from tenants' bond money should be used for tenants' needs.

For a long time this money has been used mainly to subsidise home ownership - which is already heavily subsidised and which provides no housing solution for those who will always be dependent on the rental market for accomodation. Nearly 50% of all tenants will NEVER be in a position to buy a home.

It appears that Pacuillo wants to use the Bond Board money to fund the C.T.S; expand the R.A.S., and to lend support to community groups where appropriate (and who decides this?).

* R.A.S., Rental Advisory Service

C.T.S., Community Tenancy Scheme

It seems that the department is in the process of reviewing tenancy advice needs and how these are being met by other government agencies and community groups.

Ironically the Tenants' Union and its many advice services haven't been consulted. Perhaps, despite all the rhetoric on community involvement and participation Consumer Affairs is having difficulty in figuring out where the community is.

If the Tenants' Union and its Tenancy Advice Services are not community groups trying to meet the plethora of tenants needs, what are we?

Tenants need a properly funded service and advocacy network - which the Tenants' Union tries to provide.

Expansion of the R.A.S. is all very well but it is not an organisation of tenants, it does not advocate on the part of tenants, it does not produce any written tenancy information, nor does it undertake any community education programmes. The Tenants' Union has already made inroads in these areas and with proper funding could do so on a larger and more effective scale.

So we need to beware of the rhetoric. There's a lot of talk and vague promises about better deal for tenants - but tenants will have to keep agitating to ensure a positive result.



PINE AVENUE

Sleeping well lately? If you have, then you obviously don't live in Pine Ave, Bondi Junction. Recent Council decisions to extend road and parking facilities in this area mean the immediate demolition of all the flats on one side of the street. Half of the demolition has been completed. Some of the residents have lived in these premises for decades. One woman recalls moving in before the Sydney Harbour Bridge opened. All the residents are on low incomes or pensions, some supporting children.

There have been conflicting Council statements about the future of Pine Ave residents. Some of the tenants have been rehoused and some have not. The present Council policy in regard to relocation of tenants is unknown. These long standing members of our community have been left disoriented and confused by the move to smaller and sometimes unsatisfactory alternative accommodation. Those not relocated have been left homeless.

Some of the younger residents have made unsuccessful requests for social work assistance to help ease the distress caused by the abrupt move. Instead the residents reported ruthless treatment at the hands of demolition workers. One woman told us that her toilet was smashed with a sledgehammer to ensure that she would move out that day. Others wondered at the apparent lack of safety precautions, for instance the absence of scaffolding for much of the demolition. Does a similar fate await the residents of the remaining two blocks of flats?

for
Bondi



New South Wales

The Editor,
Bondi Spectator,
P.O. Box 39,
BONDI BEACH 2026

Dear Sir,

The Mayor of Waverley, in a column in your newspaper, said he was happy to receive "from the Town Clerk a letter from Frank Walker, Minister for Youth and Community Services, in which he complimented Council on its 'concern and support for Community Welfare Services' in the Waverley area."

The Mayor said: "Council has an extensive programme of welfare services for the needs of the community, and says that it is very gratifying to know that they are appreciated and to receive such compliments from the Minister."

This is an outrageous distortion of the truth.

Normally, when I provide grant money to an organisation, I send written encouragement to the recipient to continue fostering that particular programme.

The Mayor has misconstrued my comment to indicate support for the Council's involvement in the community welfare area. I am, in fact, dismayed at the dramatic rundown in Council welfare services since the Liberals took control of the Council.

Since its election, it has ravaged community services to the extent that it has deprived the aged of decent housing and unemployed youth of jobs and training.

This Council, which once led the country in providing council-run community services and sought to improve the quality of life of all its residents, now seems more concerned with building Taj Mahals for its own use.

I believe the Council plans to spend nearly \$1 million extending the Council Chambers, mainly for entertainment.

Among its more notable and devastating attacks on the Waverley community are:

- the systematic dismantling of Waverley's nationally acclaimed housing programme;
- the return of a \$1.1 million grant for aged housing to the Federal Government;
- the cancellation of an aged housing project at Bondi Junction;
- the withdrawal of funds for a youth worker at the Bondi Junction Youth Centre;
- the withdrawal of Council from a youth job creation programme.

In view of the appalling attitude of the Council to the welfare of its citizens, I wish to make it quite clear, as Minister for Youth and Community Services, that I do not endorse the inhumane and callous welfare policy of this Council.

Yours faithfully,

(FRANK WALKER)
Minister for Youth
and Community Services

Letter from the Minister received by Bondi Spectator on Monday, July 30.



238 Campbell Pde — 'BONDONDO' fights back!

I am writing on the behalf of the tenants of 238 Campbell Pde, Bondi Beach. Our block of twelve units is warmly referred to as 'Bondondo'. A rather majestic building, slightly ravaged by time and previous owners neglect. There exists between tenants a strong bond of friendship, a community spirit resides, a reflection in itself of the Bondi Community. But apparently there are plans a foot to tart Bondi up, another "Surfers Paradise". This lies in opposition to the very essence that first drew me towards Bondi. Its unique Australian culture clearly visible through its colourful architecture and its thriving multicultural communities, all under threat now from the redevelopers. The new buildings represent an eyesore to me! There is no warmth or charming character in the architecture, only fake prestige. So, in the name of progress we are threatened with eviction.

We are being evicted because the new owners plan to renovate the building. Basically they plan to do a cheap makeup job, then double or triple the rents or put the flats under strata title.

Not only is this unknown company disrupting my whole life, I have large financial worries existing on the dole which covers my food and rent, certainly no funds to re-establish myself elsewhere! There are others in the flats faced with the same problems as me, some are young and can cope. But there are also two old people living here, one lady for over fifteen years — the eviction is a catastrophic blow to their lives, total devastation, as they are not so readily equipped to handle change.

When I see the situation in its entirety, I accept progress. To fight it is a losing battle. But I fail to see why the new owners, who are set to make large profits at the expense of our welfare, should not reimburse us in some way.

Not so!! The new owners are out to give us a hard time, bullying the helpless. The whole eviction procedure is being handled in a sly underhand way.

The first was a notice slipped under all doors by a Pty Ltd company which is not registered as a business in NSW, has no business address and legal searches have failed to come up with the real owners name — rendering this scare tactic invalid. The notice stated that the building was changing hands, that the company would soon commence renovating the building to council requirements. The building is far from being condemned, both the plumbing and electrical systems are in a reasonable state. Yet the eviction notice stated that they needed to do plumbing and electrical overhauls. They apologised for the inconvenience but stated that they had no other alternative than to advice us to look for other accommodation. How my poor heart bleeds!

The first of a number of inconveniencing tactics aimed at driving the residents out began shortly after. They dumped rubbish from the two downstairs flats, already being renovated, onto our premises and left it — not only an ugly sight but a health hazard, which probably aided the Council to accept their plans for renovation. Some of the tenants have been given seven to fourteen days to get out. By evicting us at different times, they are making it hard for us to stand as a united front. The unfairness of the situation has raised our backs in anger. Where can justice be found and who do we turn to for help?

Sue Jenvey.

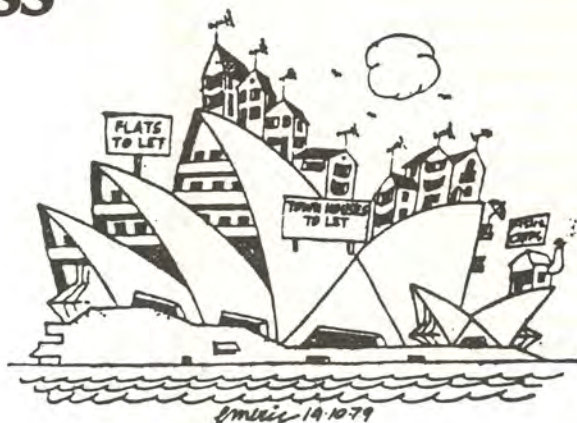
Bondondo

Developers' Express

1st stop Darlo

2nd stop Bondi

3rd stop -----?



Update

- * Alison, who has been a contact person for the residents and tenancy groups, has had her mail interfered with on several occasions. She is now forced to collect her mail from the Post Office.
- * The new owners, Haysons, are refusing to pay the new deposit on the gas connection to the block of flats. They conveniently left the \$1,500 bill in Alison's mail box. The gas company has extended the time in which the bill has to be paid but the tenants hold little hope that Hayson's will voluntarily maintain their gas supply.
- * And more on the 'gas front'..... The hot water supply was fluctuating madly, sometimes it would work, sometimes not. Hayson's refused to fix it, so the tenants called in the gas person. He couldn't find anything wrong on the gas end of things, so they checked the power supply. It appears that two fuses has been removed and hidden!

to bondi renters

The Spectator recently published a letter from Frank Walker, the Minister for Youth and Community Services, in which he made the following criticisms of the Waverley Council:

- . the systematic dismantling of Waverley's nationally acclaimed housing programme.
- . the return of a \$1.1 million grant for aged housing to the Federal Government.
- . the cancellation of an aged housing project at Bondi Junction, and so on.

We are a group of tenants recently served with notices to quit our homes, due to the redevelopment of the building into upmarket strata title units, by the real estate speculators Haysons Pty. Ltd. No compensation has been offered for tenants to move even though some have lived in their homes in excess of 10 years. Obviously these plans are in line with the Council's current policies. Policies which appear to discourage low income earners from living in the area.

We have recently had meetings with tenants in similar circumstances as ourselves and have come to the staggering conclusion that there has been an alarming surge in re-development programmes of buildings which traditionally used to house the aged, low income earners and the unemployed.

We would like to get in touch with tenants, individuals or groups, in this area who are facing the same difficulties as ourselves and to this end would appreciate you publishing our address below.

Our aim is to keep our homes, for which we pay reasonable rents, and to prevent the ruthless evictions of all above-mentioned low income groups.

We urge these people to come forward and write to us at below address or phone Alison at phone

Bondondo Residents:

Yours faithfully, 238 Campbell Parade
Bondi

from bondondo

—FIGHT BACK—MAKE LINKS—FIGHT BACK—

SQUATTERS OUSTED!

A group of Maoris recently squatted in a disused community centre in Curlewis St Bondi. Going under the name "Kotahitanga" (coming together) they hoped to set up a Maori drop in centre and to secure for themselves a place to live (a hard thing to do in Bondi where the council seems intent on intensifying the housing crisis) In its finite wisdom the ruling faction of Liberals and right wing independents

decided to demolish the building instead. The council has no plans for the site. To add insult to injury Mayor Markham quite freely spread racist remarks about New Zealand Bludgers! This from a council that is using tax payers money (almost a million in fact) on entertainment facilities for the council chambers.



TENANTS' UNION OF N.S.W. CO - OP LTD.,
197 GEORGE ST.,
REDFERN 2016.

REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST
PUBLICATION NUMBER NBH 2043.

**Get Your
Friends
to Join the
Tenants' Union!**



TENANTS' HOTLINE.
For advice and assistance
Phone: 698 8033
Mon. - Fri. 9-5.

APPLICATION TO JOIN TENANTS' UNION

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Telephone.....
Occupation.....

Please tick

Are you a tenant? Squatter?

Are you a home owner?

Cost: Pensioners/Unemployed/Students \$2

☐ ☐ ☐

Workers \$5

Organisations \$15

Donations \$

I enclose \$

This covers purchase of shares and a service fee.

I declare that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature.....

Witness.....

Date.....

Return to:
Tenants' Union of NSW Co-op Ltd.,
197 George St., Redfern 2016.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Service
Shares
Receipt No.....
Membership No.....

Donation
Non-member trust
account