



TENANT NEWS

N.S.W.

No. 24

DEC. '84

Happy

New

Year

*
IN THIS EXCITING ISSUE.....

*The Eastern Distributor-Distributing homelessness

National Tenants Union Conference

*Squatters Manual

*Housing Action Manual

*Crisis? What Crisis?!

*Letter to Walker &/or your local member re reform to the Landlord and Tenant Act.

*Membership renewals, membership renewals, membership renewals.

Women's Housing Conference

The Women's Housing Action Group (S.A.) has organised a conference to look at all women's housing issues, including availability, design, planning, management and finance.

The Conference will provide a unique opportunity for women from all over Australia to make an active contribution to the development of housing policies.

For details of registration contact, Marie Hill -
Ph: (08) 227 4822 (country and interstate reverse charges
accepted), G.P.O. Box 1072, Adelaide, S.A. 5001.

Adelaide Uni

1-3 March, '85.

THE EASTERN DISTRIBUTOR

DISTRIBUTING HOMELESSNESS.

In 1977, following the movement against inner city freeways and the green bans, most of the proposed freeway systems planned by the Department of Main Roads was scrapped. However, the area from the Cahill Expressway to Taylor Square has remained under threat of a freeway which will cut a broad swathe through Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst.

Since June 1984, this threat has been revived by an announcement from the Minister for Roads, Laurie Brereton, of his intention to push the Distributor through.

Local residents believe that the proposed freeway will destroy the local communities of Darlinghurst and Woolloomooloo. The immediate effect would be the loss of hundreds of houses largely inhabited by low income earners - including tenants, boarders and squatters. This housing will never be replaced and will speed up the historical depopulation of the inner city. It will also hasten the infringement of the Central Business District into residential areas and the escalation of property values in the surrounding areas.

Apart from the social and environmental cost of the proposed freeway, the advantages in terms of traffic management are dubious. A study done for the DMR in 1977, the De Leuw-Cather report, that the original proposal (which has since been scaled down) would result in a minor saving of regional travel time (under 2 minutes) and took into account only north-south traffic and did not address the problem of east-west traffic.

In response to Mr Brereton's announcement a public meeting was held at Heffron Hall in June 1984. As a result of this meeting the Anti-Freeway Action Committee was formed. The Committee is made up of workers and residents (including tenants, squatters and home-owners) from the Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst, and Surrey Hills areas.

From the beginning the Committee has called for a full-traffic management for the region, the examination of public transport options including light rail, and the conversion of DMR owned housing into public housing.

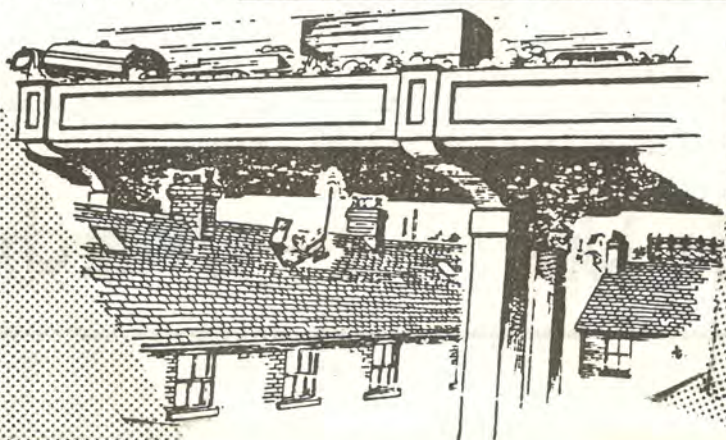
If you wish to contribute letters of protest can be written to the Premier, Hon N.K. Wran,

* the Minister for Roads, Hon. L.R. Brererton,
Parliament House,
Sydney. N.S.W. 2000.

* Jackson, Teece, Chesterman, Willis and Partners Pty Ltd,
40 King St,
Sydney. N.S.W. 2000.

who are conducting the DMR's Environmental Impact Study.

For further information on the activities of the Anti-Freeway Committee, contact 112 Oxford St, Sydney. Ph: 33 5637.



National T.U. Conference

Australia's Tenants' Unions had their first conference on November 15th and 16th. Representatives from unions in the A.C.T., W.A., Tasmania, Victoria and N.S.W. attended. As this was the first national gathering for some time, the days were spent exchanging information about the nature and funding of Tenants' Unions in each state; the various stages of law reform (or lack thereof) state to state; housing initiatives; and campaign strategies.

The conference highlighted the complete lack of uniformity with regard to tenancy laws from state to state. Whilst Victoria and South Australia have markedly improved theirs, W.A., N.S.W. and Tasmania are still grappling with archaic legislation that does practically nothing to afford tenants any rights. Nevertheless, despite the implementation of some reforms, the Victorian Tenants' Union still finds itself spending much of its energy and resources answering tenants enquiries and community education. Not suprisingly, many agents and owners take advantage of tenants ignorance of their rights. This, coupled with a severe shortage of rental accomodation and long waits for hearings at residential tenancy tribunals means that it is still difficult for Victorian tenants to enforce their rights to keep their homes in good repair and the like. Whilst the law in Victoria is a marked improvement to that in many other states (e.g. N.S.W..) it fails to adequately protect tenants from such things as excessive rents and substandard housing. There are lessons to be learnt from the Victorian experience when it comes to the type of legislation we would advocate for N.S.W.



The housing crisis is, of course, a major concern Australia wide. It was startling to learn of government strategies in the A.C.T. which have resulted in thousands of people being rendered homeless. Over the past few years our nation's capital has seen the large scale demolition of low income rental stock, only to be replaced by office blocks. No provision has been made for the relocation of those displaced.

In Western Australia, the Tenants' Union is gearing up for the disastrous consequences of their state playing host to the Americas Cup in 1986. The influx of tourists and spectators is expected to cause the widespread eviction of tenants as owners and investors reap profits from providing short-term tourist accommodation with rental housing stock. Such actions certainly cast doubt on how seriously governments take the housing crisis!

Campaign strategies and their effectiveness often varied according to the legislative backing afforded to tenants. In Victoria rent strikes for maintenance and against increased rents were often quite effective as 6 months notice of eviction is required. Unlike here, where tenants can find themselves out on the ear quite quickly if they complain too loudly, persistently, and /or militantly!

The Tasmanian Tenants' Union has been able to recently enforce a little used piece of state legislation against sub-standard housing to improve, at least in some cases, the lot of tenants. Because it is so small, Tasmanian Tenants' Union has also been able to use the media to good effect in exposing slum landlords. The press will even turn up to the Tenants' Union A.G.M.!

In the absence of any representatives from South Australia, it was interesting to see the video of "Give Them a House - And They Take a Street". This traces the development of the Hindmarsh Residents Action Group and their campaigns to save their suburb.

Thanks to Peter Anderson who supplied the video and filled us in on the South Australian situation.

We were also lucky enough to view Victoria's video "Tenants Strike Back". This was made to be part of the Union's workshops to tenants on their rights. (Oh for a bigger budget, N.S.W. moans.....)

Anyway, there is probably a lot more to say but Victoria has scurried off with the minutes and it's hard to remember everything.

All of us are hoping to maintain our newly forged links, keep exchanging information, and hopefully launch a national campaign next year. Till then.....



Victorian Squatters Union

The Victorian Squatters Union has recently prepared a manual full of useful info for those who want to squat. Realising that the housing crisis is worsening and that often it is only direct action that will house people, the manual is a veritable A - Z of how to find and keep a home through squatting.

It outlines legal risks, it gives some case histories of recent squats, and outlines the types of housing actions that occurred during the 1930's and 40's.

It makes every effort to place squatting in context: giving us historical and world wide squatting information; and examining widespread homelessness in Australia and its causes.

Thus squatting is taken out of the sphere of isolated and individual action and presented as a viable tactic against the housing crisis both by ind ividuals and groups.

The manual can be obtained from the Victorian Squatters Union by sending \$3 (or donation) to the Union at: P.O. Box 34,
Parkville. Vic. 3052.
Phone: (03) 419 0047.

..... TO THE OWNER

SQUATTER'S UNION

Housing Officer,
RAAF,
Defence Forces,
350 St.Kilda Rd,
Melbourne 3000.

OF VICTORIA
P.O. BOX 29
FITZROY
419 5242
3065

Dear sir/madam,

I wish to inform you that the Squatters' Union has occupied the home at the above address on behalf of a lone mother, who is supporting three young children on a Widow's Pension of \$115 per week. We have occupied the home because it has been left vacant for two years and because of the desperate housing situation of the M _____ family.

Ms. M _____ and the children have been living in the private rental market in a small house paying \$95 per week rent. She has tried repeatedly to find alternative and cheaper accommodation to no avail. She has been on the Ministry of Housing waiting list for 16 months but they have no housing available.

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$23, being a week's rent (as calculated using the Ministry of Housing's rental rebate formula) for the above home. We believe this home, together with the other 40 empty homes in _____, should be handed over to the Ministry of Housing promptly.

Hoping for your co-operation,

Emma T. Holmes.

.. .. .

OPENING DOORS

Don't Let Houses ROT!

WE, THE RESIDENT OF THIS PROPERTY, HAVE MADE THIS OUR HOME BECAUSE WE ARE HOMELESS AND ARE ON A LOW INCOME.

WE HAVE NOT COMMITTED ANY CRIMINAL ACTION IN OCCUPYING THIS HOME NOR HAVE WE ANY CRIMINAL INTENTION.

OUR SOLE AIM IS TO MAKE A HOME FOR OURSELVES (AND OUR CHILDREN). WE ARE PREPARED TO PAY A REASONABLE RENT AND ASK TO LIVE IN PEACE.

BEFORE TAKING ANY ACTION, OR IF YOU WANT FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT THE SQUATTERS UNION OR OUR LEGAL ADVISORS ON 6894133.

SQUAT

..... TO THE HOUSING MINISTRY

SQUATTER'S UNION

OF VICTORIA
P.O. BOX 29
FITZROY
419 5242
3065

Mr. Ian Cathie,
Minister for Housing,
Myer House,
250 Elizabeth St.,
Melbourne 3000.

Dear Mr. Cathie,

Re:

_____ Street, Frankston.

The Squatters' Union occupied another empty Defence Force home today on behalf of a lone mother supporting three children on an Invalid Pension. We have occupied this home because it has been left vacant for 12 months, because it was being vandalised and because of the desperate housing situation of the _____ family.

For the past 2 years the family has been living in a caravan, paying \$95.00 per week in housing costs. Mrs. _____ has been on the Housing Commission waiting list for 13 months. Recently, Mrs. _____ doctor stated that the family needed to be re-housed urgently because of their health. All the family have had repeated chest infections and the 9 year-old has a broken arm and asthma.

We believe this home should be resumed by the Ministry of Housing and that Mrs. _____ should be given a legal tenancy.

We would appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Emma T. Holmes.

IF THE POLICE COME

1. Appoint one person to speak to them;
2. Speak to them through a window or from a balcony. DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR.
3. Ask them why they have come; ask them for their names and phone number.
4. Try to bring their attention to the points on the door notice (outside).
5. If this fails, say you wish to consult the other occupants of the squat.
6. Return to them, say you have sought legal advice and that this is a CIVIL MATTER, so there is nothing further to say.
7. If they persist, ask them if they are there to arrest anyone and, if so, on what charge.
8. DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR. Police cannot make an arrest through the door.
9. If they have come to arrest a named person, tell them that you do not wish to discuss the matter further. Avoid questions about whether the named person is on the premises.
10. If they persist and are going to enter forcibly, do not open the door. Tell them forcible entry is a criminal offence.

IF BY SOME CHANCE THEY GET IN

1. Demand to know whether you are being arrested, and if so, under what provision of what Act.
2. If you are arrested, do not resist or say anything except your name and address (of the squat).

IF THE LANDLORD CALLS

1. Do NOT open the door. Say you have legal advice not to speak to them. Tell them to read the notice on the door.

NOTE: that we do not need to state what our "reasonable excuse" for being there is - that will be left for the courts, if the matter goes to court.

HOUSING ACTION MANUAL

6

Under a CEP grant, one of the Tenants' Union workers is currently working on a Housing Action Manual. The manual differs from other publications of the Union in that it will look at how tenants, licencees, squatters and the homeless can take group action against the housing crisis.

It will outline how to go about forming a tenants group; lobbying councils and government; engage in actions such as squatting, rent strikes; how to get media coverage and a host of other things.

It would be wonderful if all you people out there who have been involved in action around housing - establishing co-ops, preventing evictions, starting squats, housing campaigns, etc, etc, - could come forward and share that experience and knowledge. What tactics worked, which ones didn't, and why? Handy hints for keeping a group together and enthusiastic.

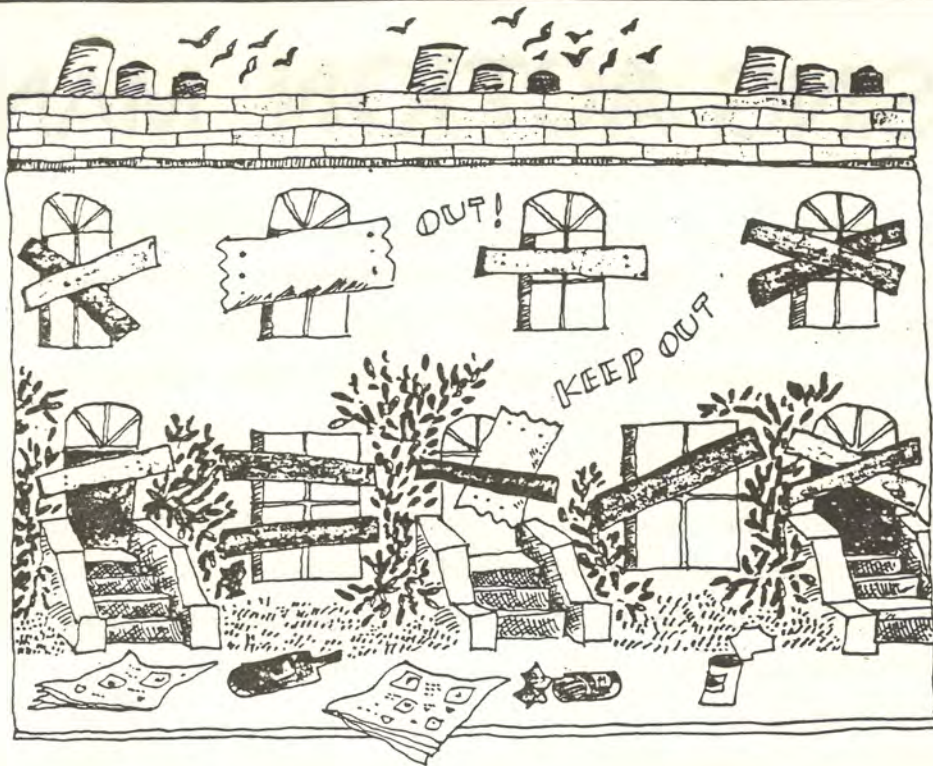
It would be great to hear, not only of recent actions, but of actions that have occurred in history.

If you are full of interesting information, come forward with it and tell us!!! Photos and paraphernalia would be useful too.

Contact Frances at the Tenants' Union on 698 8446.



Some people have nowhere to live



even though many houses remain empty.

FROM "HOW WE LIVE" BY ANITA HANER AND CHRISTINE ACCHIE.

Crisis? What Crisis?!

DID YOU KNOW?

* A 20% RISE IN HOUSE PRICES PLUS AN INCREASE FROM 8% UP TO 12% IN INTEREST RATES NECESSITATES A 64% INCREASE IN WAGES.

(page 65, P. Apps, Home Ownership - the Australian Dream)

* IN 1973 THE RATE OF FORECLOSURE ON LOANS WAS 1 OUT OF 950. BY 1979 THIS HAD RISEN TO 1 OUT OF 70!

* BETWEEN JUNE 1980 AND MARCH 1984 HOUSING COMMISSION LISTS GREW BY 30,000 FAMILIES.

(W.D. Scott, p.10)

* THERE ARE NOW 130,000 FAMILIES ON HOUSING COMMISSION WAITING LISTS. THAT'S MORE THAN $\frac{1}{4}$ MILLION PEOPLE!

* 130,000 PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS

* 300,000 PEOPLE ARE IN TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION SUCH AS CARAVANS, CARS, AND COMDEMNED BUILDINGS.

* THAT 300,000 FAMILIES RENTING IN THE PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET ARE EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.

* 10,000 PEOPLE SLEEP WITHOUT A BED EACH NIGHT.

(p.2, Private Tenants, Public Problems)

Pretty disgusting, isn't it?

It's time for reform

As most people who are tenants are aware, there is a great and urgent need to overhaul the law that governs landlord and tenant relations. At the present time legislation in no way recognises the fact that rented accommodation-whether it be a house, room, caravan, or whatever- is HOME for at least a third of the population. Hence, there is no protection from eviction and rent increases (no matter how unreasonable), and it is difficult, often impossible, to get repairs done.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr G. Pacuillo, has said that he will table a draft for reform to the Landlord and Tenant Act, next year. The Tenants Union wants to ensure that this reform will rectify the present imbalance in the law. We believe that security of tenure (i.e. protection from arbitrary evictions) and rent control is essential. Without these a tenant is vulnerable to retaliatory eviction and rent increases should they try to enforce any other rights that may be granted them through reform.

The Real Estate lobby is already quite strong. We want to make sure that tenants voices are heard. Thus we ask tenants, boarders, caravan people etc to send a copy of this letter to their local member/the minister for housing/the minister for Consumer Affairs.

The Hon. F.J. Walker
Minister for YACs and Housing
34th floor, 8 Bent St
Sydney. 2000

Mr. G. Pacuillo
Minister for Consumer Affairs
1 Oxford St
Darlinghurst, 2010

send this!! →

Dear Sir,

I am aware that long overdue draft legislation for reform of the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1899, is to be tabled in 1985.

As a renter on the private rental market I am concerned about the insecurity of this form of accommodation. There are no checks on rent increases, arbitrary evictions, and unattended repairs.

Reform legislation should include some form of rent control, security of tenure, and repair checks, as rental accommodation represents long term housing for myself and many others.

Tenancy reform has been introduced in other states without significantly deterring landlord investment. There has been no discernable effect on the supply of rental accommodation in those states due to the existence of these laws. I therefore urge you to adopt the recommendations of the Cabramatta Working Party and to ensure for the first time fairness in the landlord and tenant relationship and to extend this protection to those who use as their homes caravans, caravan sites and boarding houses.

Yours Sincerely,

In 1968 the South Australian State Government decided to put a freeway through Hindmarsh. The Highways Department compulsorily acquired over 300 properties in the area. Many of these were demolished and others fell into disrepair . . . the freeway proposal was never implemented.

In 1980, the Residents Association helped set up a Housing Co-operative.

"... it is one of the foundations of the co-op that the tenants do get involved . . . that is the part that attracted us because we didn't really want to be . . . Housing Trust (tenants) straight out. We did like the idea of being able to have some say in . . . where we live."

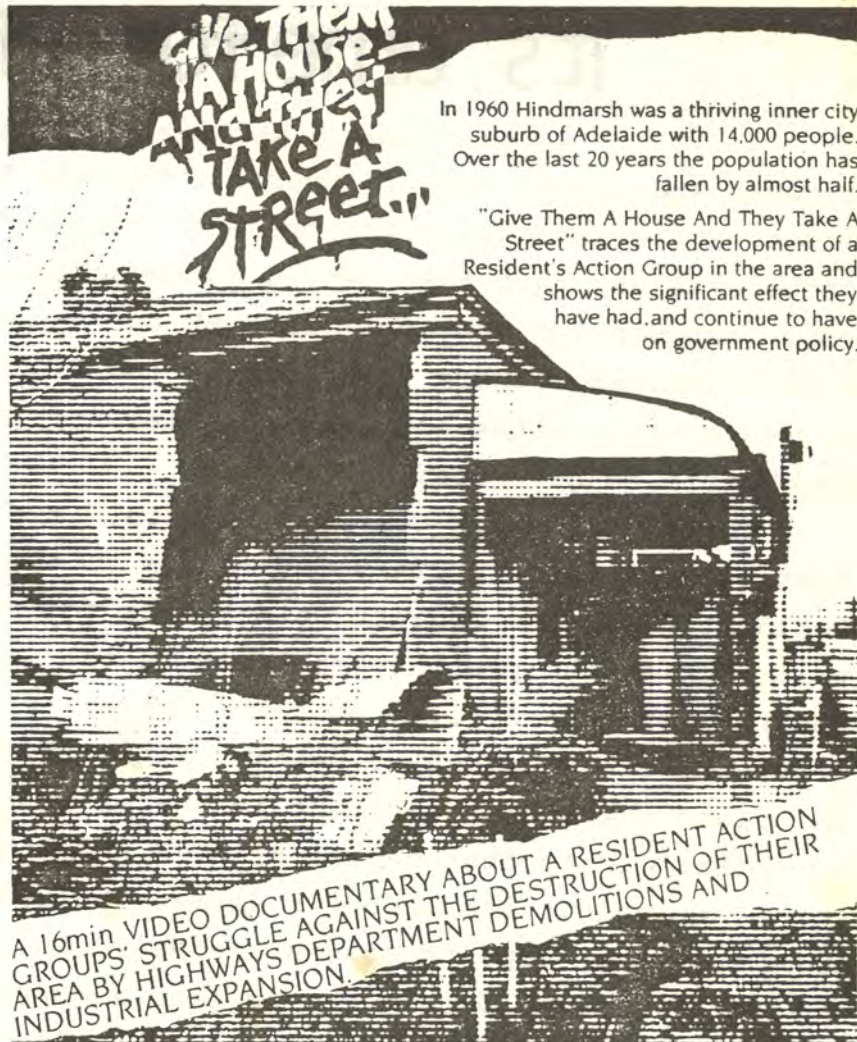
Irene Leighton
Secretary Hindmarsh
Housing Co-operative

Produced by
**SUE ROSS and
PETER ANDERSON**
in co-operation with
HINDMARSH RESIDENTS

16 minutes, colour, on ¾" U-matic video
and ½" VHS video. 1984, Australia

Available for Rental or Purchase from:
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PETER ANDERSON
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SCHEME**
19 HARRIS ST., FAIRFIELD NSW. 2165
Phone (02) 727 4333 — bh
(02) 569 9393 — ah
© SUE ROSS and PETER ANDERSON
Pamphlet by Glen Craig



In 1960 Hindmarsh was a thriving inner city suburb of Adelaide with 14,000 people. Over the last 20 years the population has fallen by almost half.

"Give Them A House And They Take A Street" traces the development of a Resident's Action Group in the area and shows the significant effect they have had, and continue to have on government policy.

"... well, I don't like squatting at anytime . . . I like to pay my way everywhere I go . . . but at the time we had no accommodation and we saw the door open and we just came in and took over."

Daphne Harford
Hindmarsh Squatter

1985 Membership renewals are now DUE! please

renew your membership!

APPLICATION TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP OF THE TENANTS' UNION.

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

Please Tick
Are you a tenant? Squatter?
Are you a home owner?
Organisation?

Annual Service Fee.

N.B. In cases of financial difficulty this may be negotiated with the Union.

* Pensioners/Unemployed/Students \$1 ☐ ☐ ☐
* Workers \$5 ☐
* Organisations \$15 ☐
* Donation \$ ☐
I enclose \$

Signature.....
Date

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

OFFICE USE ONLY.
Service
Donation
Receipt No.....
Membership No.....

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NSW., AUST.
2016

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PUBLICATION NUMBER NBH 2043.

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



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

Are you a tenant? Squatter?
Are you a home owner?

	Pensioners/Unemployed/Students	Workers	Organisations	Donations	Enclose
\$2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
\$5		<input type="checkbox"/>			
\$15			<input type="checkbox"/>		
\$				<input type="checkbox"/>	
\$					<input type="checkbox"/>

I declare that I am over 18 years of age.

Date.....

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

Service	Donation
Shares	Non-member trust account
Receipt No.....	
Membership No.....	