

tenant news

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The following reports were delivered to the Annual General Meeting of the Tenants' Union held at the Rachel Foster Hospital on 23rd March, 1986.

SECRETARY'S REPORT TENANTS IN N.S.W.

Early in 1985 a considerable squeeze occurred on the supply of housing in the private rental market in Sydney. Vacancy rates fell from the previous norm of 3-5% to below 1% almost everywhere. The people most affected were, of course, those at the bottom end of the market. One or two bedroom flats for below \$120 pw and 3-4 bedroom houses for below \$180 pw have been scarce in any area of Sydney since.

Things aren't much better for country tenants. The squeeze on supply has penetrated into pockets of the country and generally stock has continued to deteriorate. Country tenants have even less access to advice and support than their city counterparts.

The publicity generated from this shortage of supply has worked almost always to the detriment of tenants. Many landlords have seized upon their newly-gained knowledge of tenants' predicament to raise rents or otherwise exploit tenants housed in their buildings. Evictions of poor tenants and tenants who question the landlord's right to treat their property as a feudal domain, and landlords or Real Estate agents who stubbornly refuse to carry out essential repairs, have sadly all become very common scenarios.

Reform of the Landlord and Tenant Law has maintained its painfully slow journey towards realization. We can cautiously predict that an interim Residential Tenancies Tribunal will appear in 1986 and reformed legislation sometime after that, possibly in 1987. It remains to be seen just how much, if at all, tenants will benefit from the changes.

TENANTS' UNION ACTIVITIES

Phenomenal pressure has been exerted on Tenants' Union (TU) workers over the past 12 months to give tenancy advice. Rent increases, evictions, repairs and bond disputes continue to be major issues for tenants on the private rental market and a certain amount of the time spent by TU workers

in this office is inevitably spent dealing with tenants whose personal lives have been shattered by one or more of these problems. Many enquiries were received from squatters, licensees, caravan dwellers and protected tenants. Hundreds of hours of work were also put into maintaining and resourcing the Tenants' Hotline and Tenancy Advice Services, which are staffed wholly by volunteers. To these volunteers we and literally tens of thousands of New South Wales tenants are indebted.

The TU has been pushing for funded Tenancy Advice Services for a number of years and midway through 1985 the Minister for Housing, Frank Walker, finally agreed to the introduction of 11 such services in 1986, with the possibility of another 10 in 1987. Negotiations with the Government for the network of services, now known as Tenancy Advice and Housing Referral Services (TAHRS) have been protracted and at times extremely frustrating. Nevertheless, at the present time the ground work for establishing these services is well under way with a lot more work still to come. Establishment of the TAHRS network is a major priority for the TU right now.

TU workers have been involved in a number of campaigns over the last 12 months. Hundreds of tenants of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown were saved from eviction when their homes were purchased by the Housing Commission after a lengthy campaign by the Prince Alfred Tenants' Association (PATA). PATA was resourced, advised and supported by the TU in conjunction with a number of other community groups. Currently a similar campaign is under way with tenants of St. Vincents Hospital. Actions to improve the rights and conditions of caravan dwellers have been taken and most recently the TU was involved in the People for Public Housing Campaign which gained considerable publicity in Canberra last week. It is a fundamental concern of the TU that the amount and quality of public housing be improved given that the long-term solutions to the current housing crisis rely substantially upon the achievement of this goal.

Dozens of tenancy workshops and community education programs have been conducted for large and small organizations alike, including a pilot migrant education program for non-English speaking tenants.

Maryanne Veliscek was employed as a Grant-in-Aid worker (a three year funded position from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs) in April last year and has made significant progress towards setting up the kind of networks and infrastructure which will, in the long run, be necessary to achieve the goals pinpointed for the workers in this position. In December Maryanne began 9 months maternity leave and Christine Gibson was appointed to work on the project in her absence. The TU Board has high hopes that eventually, through sound policies and effective work in this position, non-English speaking tenants and tenants from ethnic backgrounds generally will achieve a greater level of knowledge of their rights and the confidence to be able to stand up for those rights when dealing with landlords and Real Estate Agents in the private rental market.

Media work has become a regular feature of the responsibilities taken on by TU workers. Constant liaison, press statements, and radio and T.V. interviews have all been handled with the sort of care which we all now know is essential for effective communication with the mass audiences of these media outlets.

In July 1985, the Ministers for Housing and Consumer Affairs jointly sponsored the Private Rental Housing Conference. The TU also played a part in the organization of this event. About 250 people attended the conference from a variety of backgrounds including banking and finance, Real Estate, business and consultancy areas. A large number of bureaucrats from key housing areas attended and some workers from the community sector. The task of putting an uncompromising TU position to an audience consisting largely of besuited men, sprinkled occasionally with community sector workers, fell to Frances Press who, under very difficult circumstances, carried off the occasion with aplomb. Amongst other points in her speech, Frances advocated the imposition of Rent Control and we watched delegates from the Real Estate and business lobbies visibly pale in response. On that occasion they had no need to worry as a variety of speakers, including the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr. Pacuillo and the Minister for Housing in Victoria, made it quite clear that Rent Control was not on as far as they were concerned.

So we were all most surprised when just a few months ago the Premier engaged himself in a tub-thumping exercise thundering about landlords raising rents and threatening to bring in..... you guessed it, Rent

Control. The Department of Consumer Affairs set up a Hotline which informed callers what little there was that could be done about rent rises and the Government won the three by-elections which were being conducted at the time, which was what the whole kerfuffle was about anyway.

An important aspect of the TU's work has been ongoing involvement with other groups in the community sector. Liaison has been maintained with these organizations, particularly Shelter, Housing Information and Referral Service (HIRS) and the Public Tenants' Development Project. A Community Housing Forum was established whereby a closer relationship could be developed between community groups in the housing area.

The TU has continued to liaise with a number of Government departments through its involvement on various committees, the Rental Housing Task Force being one example.

STAFF

Currently, TU staff are Kerry Dent, Frances Press, Jane Hearn and Christine Gibson. An administrative officer is expected to join the staff soon and a legal worker is still being sought.

Mary Perkins, who had worked for the TU for 4½ years, resigned late last year. Mary saw the TU through thick and thin and on some occasions was the only worker. At all times she brought to bear an overall perspective and vision which took account of long-term as well as short-term strategies. This perspective has proved invaluable now that changes to the TU's structure and funding are proceeding so quickly. We are extremely grateful to Mary for her generous contribution over the years and we are hopeful that she will continue her association with the TU as a member of the Board.

Sue Creek was employed to write a report concerning the proposed Residential Tenancies Tribunal. She travelled interstate to examine tribunals currently operating and generally did some excellent work which will prove invaluable to the Campaign Around Rental Reform.

Greg Combet, in his report last year, credited the staff with achieving an awesome amount of work. If that was the case in 1984 then there just simply

aren't words to describe the amount and quality of work performed by staff under appalling conditions in 1985. The TU activities described above give some indication of the amount of work they've ploughed through. Remember, in the main it's been three or four people who've done all that. It's only when you actually come into the office that you can appreciate the pressure under which staff have been working. A fire in the building last year cut down the amount of useable office space by half and left a legacy of dampness which has posed a real threat to the worker's health.

It is essential to get the problems with our premises sorted out soon and when we get on to an even keel again we must ensure that in return for their commitment, TU workers are provided with safe working conditions which allow them to deal effectively with the high stress levels that go along with the job.

Since they suffer from the problem common to all of us of being merely human beings, the workers sometimes make mistakes and consequently draw criticism. In the heat of the moment, we who criticize sometimes tend to overlook their achievements and the workers can feel devalued as a result. The TU is going through a time of unprecedented activity and the workers are entitled to know that they have the full support of the Board and the membership generally. On behalf of the Board and the membership I'd like to confirm absolutely and wholeheartedly that that is the case. If tenants in New South Wales really knew of the energy expended on their behalf at the present time I'm sure that more of them would become involved. To Kerry, Jane, Frances and Christine - Thanks.

LAW REFORM IN 1986?

The previous Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr. Pacuillo announced that a draft bill reforming the legislation would be tabled for 6 months to allow public comment. A Cabinet Minute on the legislation has been produced and various Departments asked to comment. As yet the legislation has not been tabled nor has the TU been made aware of its contents. The date when it is to be tabled has been postponed so many times that its not even worth speculating on.

The TU has called a number of public meetings with a view to establishing a working party responsible for coordinating groups undertaking specific

tasks associated with the campaign. The working party is now meeting and the campaign is called the Campaign Around Rental Reform, giving it a rather mischievous acronym: CARR.

It is sufficient at this stage to note that the campaign is under way and its coordination with other TU activities will hopefully give it extra impetus when the crucial months finally arrive.

FUNDING

Major sources of funding for 1985/86 are the Department of Housing, the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Law Foundation, the Westpac Grant, and the Legal Services Commission.

The main source of TU funding will be the Department of Housing allocation for the TAHRS network. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs provide funds for the Grant-in-Aid position which is ongoing for a total of 3 years. The Law Foundation funded a project which examined the proposed Residential Tenancies Tribunal. Under the Westpac Grant the TU has received some office equipment and very soon expects to have a computer which will greatly facilitate certain aspects of TU operations. The Legal Services Commission was previously the major source of TU funding and in fact it was through the Commission that Westpac funding was channelled. The exact role that the Legal Services Commission (now the Legal Aid Commission) will have in funding the TU is still uncertain.

Another possible source of future funding will be moneys made available for International Year of Shelter and the Homeless.

THE COMING YEAR

The establishment and consolidation of the TAHRS network and its structural integration with the existing TAS network is a major task. The Campaign Around Rental Reform is equally vital to the interests of the TU in 1986.

Probably one of the most difficult problems in the coming year will be maintaining an overall perspective in the face of day-by-day changes. But with the long-term stability of the Union and its consequent effectiveness at stake, that perspective must be kept and we must rise to the challenge of dealing with problems of structure and policy at the right time.

In winding up I would like to thank the Board who have provided active support, ideas and direction over the last 12 months. New Board members and those who are continuing appear ready for similar involvement in the next year. Once again Peter Colley must be singled out for his outstanding contribution as Treasurer. For a few awful weeks late last year Peter was poised to resign if he was elected as President of the Sydney University Students' representative Council. But fortunately students there didn't have the wisdom to elect him and their loss has been our gain in 1986. To Peter goes thanks from all of us.

REPORT TO THE TENANT'S UNION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON THE GRANT-IN-AID POSITION

INTRODUCTION

The Grant-in-Aid scheme emanates from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The Tenants' Union submitted a proposed three year work programme for funding under this scheme in 1984. The grant was awarded in 1985 and Mary Anne Veliscek was employed to work towards the realisation of the submission's broad objective, i.e. greater access for tenants from non-English speaking backgrounds to the activities of the Tenants' Union.

The aims of the Grant-in-Aid work programme are:-

- * to improve the housing conditions of migrant tenants;
- * to contribute toward the elimination of discrimination against migrant people.

The process of implementation of the aims and objectives of the Grant-in-Aid work programme began with the worker:

- familiarising herself with existing services and undergoing training, e.g. attending workshops, giving tenancy advice;
- participating in the New World: New Housing Conference, the proceedings of which identified needs of migrants in the private rental market;
- arranging meetings with workers in high migrant tenancy areas to discuss the needs of migrant tenants;
- linking in with existing TAS's by disseminating leaflets in community languages and developing a Migrant Education Pilot Project;

- maintaining on-going contact through provision of resources, translation and interpreter services information, talks, provision of opportunities for involvement in workshops, information exchange on the Ethnic Consumer's Unit and other relevant services;
- Grant-in-Aid worker, along with other Tenants' Union staff involved in planning and providing training workshops, highlighting issues of concern to tenants from non-English speaking background and sensitising both workers and agencies to the needs of non-English speaking tenants.

Sensitising and resourcing local TAS/TAHRS's is a key function of Tenants' Union and hence an important role for the Grant-in-Aid worker. New material or information regarding needs of non-English speaking tenants should continue to be fed into Tenants' Union programmes, law reform campaigns, articles, etc.

The difficulties involved in maintaining a voluntary network of TAS's include recruiting, training and keeping bilingual tenancy advisors. The support sub-committee is one current mechanism for recruiting interest and developing the knowledge and confidence of migrant workers. The Migrant Housing Information Group project is potentially another mechanism.

The establishment of structures by which the Tenants' Union and migrant involvement can continue to develop remains a priority for the grant-in-aid worker. The Tenants' Union is currently going through a period of internal review necessitated partially by the funding of 11 TAHRS's. The implications for the TU and the grant-in-aid support sub-committee are not clear at this stage but the grant-in-aid worker will continue to participate in discussions relating to structural re-organisation to ensure that non-English speaking tenants' interests are represented and reflected by the structure.

The establishment of the grant-in-aid support sub-committee was something which involved a lot of the grant-in-aid workers' time and servicing this committee continues to do so. See attachments re role and structure of this committee.

As you may be aware Mary Anne Veliscek took maternity leave from December 1985. A new worker, Christine Gibson was employed from mid-January for a nine month period.

PROPOSAL FROM GRANT-IN-AID SUPPORT GROUP TO TENANTS' UNION BOARD
RE THE ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SUPPORT GROUP

At the first meeting of the grant-in-aid support group on August 7, 1985 it was agreed to seek endorsement from the Tenants' Union Board for the support group to become a sub-committee of the Tenants' Union Board, rather than a recommending group.

Proposed sub-committee structure

It is proposed that the sub-committee consist of at least two directors from the Board and one observer from the Immigration Department who may be invited to attend sub-committee meetings at the discretion of members. Eligible members from the existing support group, especially those with migrant backgrounds, could join the Board of Directors as vacancies arise.

The sub-committee would have the power to co-opt additional members, who would all be encouraged to join the Tenants' Union, and an up-to-date list of members would be provided to the Tenants' Union Board regularly. Guidelines re maximum size and the representative nature of the sub-committee need to be developed.

It is proposed that the sub-committee have delegated authority to undertake the following:

1. to support the grant-in-aid worker;
2. to receive the grant-in-aid worker reports;
3. to formulate and revise, if necessary, the job description of the grant-in-aid worker;
4. to be responsible for decision-making, setting directions, projects and priorities of the grant-in-aid project;
5. to provide links with and/or necessary information about specific ethnic groups;
6. to offer practical assistance, suggestions and expertise on particular issues as required by the project;
7. to be responsible for evaluation of the project when required;
8. to receive quarterly financial statements relevant to the grant-in-aid grant, and to authorise expenditure of funds on discretionary items related to the project;

9. to make representations to the Board on industrial issues if necessary, and to be involved on any worker selection panels;
10. to report to the Tenants' Union Board at monthly Board meetings on the operations and decisions of the sub-committee, via the grant-in-aid worker and the directors;
11. to make recommendations to the Board on matters of Tenants' Union policy with regard to migrants and private tenancy related matters;
12. to submit for additional funds if considered necessary after discussion and approval at the Board level.

GRANT-IN-AID SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE TENANTS' UNION - MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES

1. Membership of the sub-committee should be at least 8 persons, but not more than 12.
2. The sub-committee should seek to ensure that at least 50% of the committee members are of non-English speaking background, and all members should be involved with migrant and tenancy issues.
3. It is desirable for the sub-committee to encourage at least one 'consumer representative' where possible.
4. At least two members of the sub-committee should be members of the Tenants' Union Board of Directors.
5. The sub-committee will attempt to ensure representation from various geographical regions with large migrant populations, e.g. inner Sydney, Wollongong, Western Sydney.

SERVICE

TENANTS' ADVICE SERVICE (TAS) NETWORK AND TENANT ADVICE AND HOUSING REFERRAL SERVICES (TAHRS)

During 1985 the TU Resourcing Unit has continued to develop resources and maintain a network of volunteer Tenants' Advice Services throughout NSW. Generally these services are based in existing community agencies and are staffed by volunteers and/or the staff of that agency. This model was developed because:

- * it is not possible for a central Tenants' Union office to deal with the volume of tenants' enquiries;
- * tenants need access to information and assistance in their local area and in their own language;
- * a completely voluntary system is impossible to maintain. The placement of local TAS units in existing community agencies stabilises the network by ensuring that advisors have access to resources, i.e. premises and telephone. The staff of a community agency which hosts a TAS will also co-ordinate and provide some support to the volunteers.

At present there are approximately 100 volunteers involved for an average of 3 hours per week. This time may be increased as a result of workload, for example, a volunteer may spend more time if assisting a tenant with the preparation of a hardship plea and accompanying the tenant to court.

Volunteers working in the TAS fall into the following categories:

- (i) volunteers who have approached the TU offering assistance in the past or are retired or unemployed workers with some interest and/or experience in housing. The TU directs and introduces them to their local TAS and provides training;
- (ii) people already working as volunteers in community-based agencies. Many Neighbourhood Information Centres operate with their own roster of volunteers. In these centres the TAS usually becomes a distinctive section of the existing service, staffed by volunteers, who are supervised by the paid staff of the agency and trained and resourced by the TU Resourcing Unit;

(iii) workers co-ordinating a TAS in their own time. In some cases workers employed in a community agency organise a TAS outside working hours. Such workers can provide a variety of skills and contacts from their own work roles, which include youth workers, health workers and information officers.

It should also be noted that often the management of a community agency will permit a worker to develop and be involved in the TAS during work hours.

At the end of 1985 Tenants' Advice Services were operating throughout NSW.

Tenants' Advice Services in NSW:

Bankstown TAS, Bankstown.	Alternative Youth Housing, Matraville.
Community Centre, Civic Centre, Cabramatta.	Pymont TAS, Pymont.
Neighbourhood Centre, Fairfield.	Community Action, Albury.
Panania CYSS, Panania.	Mitchell CAE, Bathurst.
Sutherland CYSS, Sutherland.	Casino Community and Neighbourhood Centre, Casino.
Inner Sydney Information Van, Balmain.	Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre, Katoomba.
Bondi Beach Cottage, Bondi.	Lismore Community Aid and Info. Centre, Lismore.
Canterbury Info. Van, Campsie.	Lithgow Neighbourhood Centre, Lithgow.
Hillsdale Community and Info. Centre, Hillsdale.	Newcastle N'hood Centre, Newcastle.
Manly-Warringah Citizen's Advice Bureau, Manly.	Orange Information Centre, Orange.
Careforce, Newtown.	Mid-Richmond Neighbourhood Centre, Woodburn.

Penrith Accommodation Co-op.,
Penrith.

Wagga Wagga N'hood Centre,
Wagga Wagga.

Burwood Community Aid,
Burwood.

Illawarra Community Legal Centre,
Warrawong.

Illawarra Housing Info. Service,
Wollongong.

Dubbo TAS,
Dubbo.

Funding continued to be scattered among various organisations during 1984/85. Wollongong and Newcastle were able to maintain their respective TAS. Katoomba developed its service with a paid worker. Bankstown TAS was one of several services which evolved with Commonwealth Employment Programme (CEP) funding but which disappeared with the end of that grant, as no existing organisation could take up the load on a voluntary basis.

To allow the Network to deliver a proper service and be adequately resourced the TU persisted with its call to the State government for long term funding of the TU and its affiliated local tenants' organisations. Funds were being sought from Housing and/or the Rental Bond Board and by the latter half of 1985 this objective seemed close to fruition.

A consultant's report had agreed that a network of Tenancy Services needed to be established not only in areas where there were large numbers of tenants but particularly where tenants were having problems in the private rental market. Areas with a large proportion of non-English speaking tenants need consideration for example as their tenancy problems are exacerbated by having to cope with a foreign language and culture.

A joint Housing Department/Consumer Affairs funded project, Housing Information and Tenancy Services (HITS) would fund the venture. Eleven services as well as TU funding was proposed. The Resourcing Unit then directed itself to developing the establishment of these funded services.

So far the eleven TAHRS's which have been established are in six metropolitan locations, two regional metropolitan locations and three country locations. The regional metropolitan TAHRS's do not exactly coincide with the Housing Commission regions for those areas.

The metropolitan TAHRS's are:

- * eastern suburbs (Waverley - Botany)

- * inner city (Darlinghurst - Sth. Sydney - Pymont)
- * inner west (Leichhardt - Burwood - Marrickville)
- * western (Parramatta - Housing Commission region)
- * south western (Fairfield - LIVERPOOL)
- * northern suburbs (Manly/Warringah)

The regional metropolitan TAHS's are:

- * Illawarra - based at Wollongong
- * Hunter - based at Newcastle, and

The country regional TAHS's are:

- * Northern Rivers - based at Lismore
- * southern - based at Albury
- * Monaro - based at Cooma.

The Tenants' Union has identified major gaps at the following metropolitan regions: southern metropolitan (Sutherland), mid-North Coast (Gosford), inner southern metropolitan region (Canterbury) and the southern eastern suburbs (Botany). As well there are a number of country areas which need servicing.

Problems experienced with the TAS network

In 1985 there were no increases in staffing levels at the TU Resourcing Unit. Increased funding seemed a possibility in 1986 but the present staff, with a limited budget, had to try to maintain the voluntary network as well as set up new services.

The number of tenants seeking assistance has continued to increase, as have recorded enquiries for the twelve months ending June 1985. The available resources are spread thinly.

Efforts have been made to curtail the growth of the TAS network. However, the demand from tenants in community agencies has been so great that requests for establishing and resourcing new services were constantly received. Services were still being set up demanding or expecting TU resourcing. The loss of some Youth and Community Services (YACS) funded

agencies limited the scope for expanding the voluntary network.

Hotline

The TU has established and continues to maintain a telephone advice service, the "Hotline". The Hotline roster is staffed by volunteers and the TU Resourcing Unit co-ordinates the roster.

However, during the last year we've experienced unprecedented difficulty in staffing the roster. The reasons for this seem to be:

- * a volunteer system is inherently unstable;
- * the increased number of tenants using the Hotline means extra pressure on the volunteer;
- * due to funding problems, many community agencies are unwilling or unable to foot the bill for the Hotline, i.e. the associated staff time and phone, stationary, and postage costs.

Bi-lingual Advisors

Tenants lacking fluency in English often experience the greatest difficulty in obtaining accommodation, negotiating with landlords and agents, and resolving tenancy disputes. For this reason, the TU has established a network of bi-lingual workers who have contacts in and knowledge of particular migrant communities. Constant work is needed to maintain this network. The problems confronting this system are similar to those associated with the TAS and Hotline.

Problems with a Volunteer System

The voluntary system of Tenants' Advice Services has a number of problems. The most major one is the lack of stability, i.e. volunteers come and go, with great frequency. Placement of the TAS in community agencies has had a stabilising effect. However, the ability of the agency to host the TAS or Hotline roster shift is dependent on the goodwill of the agency's staff and management committee. Very often a change of either of these will result in a TAS or Hotline shift being abandoned or rebuilt from scratch. This system also results in TAS units being placed in locations where there are volunteers and willing agencies rather than need. Consequently, there are locations where there is a need but not a TAS.

Over the past few years the problems of this system have been exacerbated by a marked and dramatic increase in the number of tenants seeking assistance, and a shortage of TU resources and staff time with which to support the TAS network. Increasing demand has stretched both the Resourcing Unit and the TAS network to the limit.

It is unlikely that 1986 will see an improvement in the supply and standard of rental housing. The TU expects the demand from tenants to increase. The expected law reform will also result in increased demand as tenants try to come to grips with the new legislation.

Workshops

Training workshops were held at Rachel Forster Hospital in January, July and November. In addition, TU workers visited Nowra (January), Pyrmont (July) and Wagga (September). A workshop directed at migrant youth workers was also held at Cabramatta.

Some workshops involved a minimum of eight hours, usually broken into two four hour sessions. The workshops covered basic information on major aspects of tenancy:

(i) Beginning a tenancy

- * search for accommodation;
- * costs and charges;
- * application for tenancy;
- * inspection records;
- * Rental Bond Board.

(ii) During a tenancy

- * the lease;
- * landlords' and tenants' obligations;
- * repairs and maintenance;
- * privacy;
- * rent (arrears, receipts, increases).

(iii) Ending a tenancy

- * by tenants choice;
- * at end of term of lease;
- * during term of lease;
- * eviction, legal processes involved;

- * lockouts;
- * negotiations.

(iv) Protected tenancy

- * rent control;
- * eviction;
- * repairs, maintenance;
- * privacy.

The workshops attempted to provide tenants' advisors with ideas about strategies and tactics as well as information.

Resources

English - the booklet "Your Rights as a Tenant in NSW" has been reprinted. No extra funds were received for its reprinting, consequently it is now on sale for \$1 per copy (Tenants' Advice Services exempt).

Multi-lingual - all the multi-lingual material has been reprinted. No extra funds were received to reprint this material. However, the multi-lingual booklets are an abbreviated version of the English, hence they are distributed free-of-charge.

Tenants' Rights Manual - the manual is now out of print. There were no funds for updating or reprinting in 1985. The TU will redraft and reprint the manual when the reforms to the Landlord and Tenant Law are passed. At present it is unlikely that funding organisations will provide grants for printing while law reform is on the agenda.

Stickers - Tenants' Union bumper stickers are available.

T-shirts - with the slogan "Don't go Mental Over Rental" have been reprinted.

TAS Circular - the circular is designed to facilitate communication between the TU and the TAS network and other tenants' advisors. It is published as needed. The circulars provide information of immediate relevance to advisors, e.g. new Hotline rosters, resource persons, etc.

Tenants' Union poster - a beautiful production - to be available in eleven community languages.

Newsletter - the newsletter is published quarterly but has encountered

difficulties in the past in meeting deadlines due to a shortage of staff time. The purpose of the newsletter is to provide information on tenancy and housing issues, and reports from the TU Board of Directors and Resourcing Unit.

Calling cards - have been produced advertising the Hotline number. These have been distributed to TAS and other relevant agencies.

Statistics - the statistics continue to be collected. However, it should be noted that it is difficult to collect accurate statistics from an under-resourced and over worked network of volunteer advice services.

TAS advertising leaflet - a leaflet advertising local TAS's has been produced and distributed to the TAS's for use by themselves.

"Join the Tenants' Union" leaflet - a leaflet giving reasons for a TU, and encouragement to join has been printed and distributed.

Housing Action Manual - a Housing Action Manual, designed to complement the Tenants' Rights Manual, will be released soon.

General Comments on Service

As the housing crisis deepens, the TAS network is placed under greater pressures. Government cuts to expenditure on community services has also had severe effects on many TAS's:-

- some have closed because the sponsor organisations have lost funding. This has been of particular concern to the TU because the closures have occurred in inner city areas where private tenants are highly concentrated;

- other organisations find themselves unable to divert resources away from their funded activities into tenancy advice and assistance;

A consequence of these pressures has been that the TU staff have taken on an increasing number of individual tenancy enquiries.

Hence the TU is cheered by the prospect of funding from the Departments of Housing and Consumer Affairs for both the TU Resourcing and Policy Unit and its affiliated Tenants Services.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The purpose of this side of the TU work is to effectively and thoroughly inform the community of their rights and obligations.

When tenants are equipped with adequate information they are better able to protect themselves, they are also less likely to be abused. In our experience tenants who front landlords and agents obviously knowing their rights are more likely to have those rights respected. It seems that much of the abuse occurs because landlords and agents can assume and take advantage of tenants' ignorance. Unfortunately the housing crisis has become even more severe and thus made it easier for unscrupulous landlords and agents to take advantage of tenants.

In our community education activities we have tried to target specific groups of people - either prospective tenants or tenants-in-need, and workers in a position to pass information on to tenants. Most of this side of our work is implemented by giving talks to relevant community educational and government organisations. Over the last year we've given talks to:

students:- Macquarie University, general Orientation Week talk;

- TAFE, students involved in Dental Auxiliary Training;
- Mitchell College SRC;
- Economics students at East Sydney Tech.

youth: - Burnside Home, to Khmer refugee youth;

- Opposition Youth Crisis Centre.

migrants:- Burnside Homes;

- Grant-in-Aide workers funded by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

other: - tenants' group at Kings Cross (September);

- Cooma public talk (October).

In addition, the TU had a stall on tenancy during Law Week.

Media interest in the housing crisis stepped up during 1985. As a result

the TU received coverage in several newspapers, on radio and TV. Items were placed in: The Daily Mirror; The Glebe - especially in relation to Prince Alfred's Tenants' Association; 2RSR - report on the Womens' Housing Conference; 2FC - a "Background Briefing" report on the housing crisis; 2JJJ - various snippets especially on the 5.30 report; Channel 0 and Channel 10.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT, ACTION & PARTICIPATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS & PROJECTS

21.

The Tenants' Union has had involvement in the:

- NSW Council for Social Services pre-budget submission;
- Metropolitan Water Drainage and Sewage Board - discussions on the way in which the proposed new water rating system will affect tenants;
- Low Energy Advisors - discussions on the problems advisors may face in assisting low-income private tenants getting retrofitting to cut power costs (May).

There was also ongoing participation in:-

- the Combined Legal Centres group;
- Shelter NSW (a board member);
- H.I.R.S. (Housing Information and Referral Service) - a board member;
- the Community Housing Forum (which the Tenants' Union was also heavily involved in establishing);
- the Community Tenancy Scheme Advisory Committee;
- Singles;
- the Rental Housing Task Force; and
- the Ethnic Communities Council.

As well, there was continuing liaison with Redfern Legal Centre with regard to Law Reform, and the best ways to deal with tenancy case work.

Conference and Seminars

The Tenants' Union contributed to and participated in:

- the Canterbury Housing Forum - organised by Canterbury CTS;
- the Randwick Housing Forum - organised by Council Head Office;
- the National Womens' Housing Conference held in Adelaide from 28th Feb. to 3rd March, 1985;
- the Private Rental Housing Conference - organised by the Housing Department and the Dept. of consumer Affairs and held on 28th June, 1985;
- the State Legal Centres Conference held in September, 1985;
- the Tenants' Participation Conference (Public/CTS tenants); and
- a seminar on assessment of private rental at Hawkesbury Agricultural College in October, 1985.

As well, the Tenants' Union contributed to the report commissioned by the Department of Consumer Affairs entitled "Private Renting: Public Issues" prepared by Chris Paris.

Campaigns

The Tenants' Union participated in the following housing action campaigns:

- Movable Dwellings Residents' Committee (MDRC):- to have long-term caravan dwellers recognised as tenants by the law and conditions improved;
- Alpha House:- this involved assisting a group of tenants in a Newtown warehouse to fight an eviction notice. This group consisted mainly of low-income artists and they were interested in other forms of tenure. The Tenants' Union assisted with information and contacts and Alpha House is now seeking funding as a co-operative. (They have not been evicted yet either!); and
- the Camperdown Prince Alfred Tenants' Association (PATA) - for more information regarding this see the Secretary's Report.

1986 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ELECTIONS

The following people were elected as directors in 1985 for a two year term. They have one more year to serve:

Peter Colley
Meredith Foley
Regina Haertsch
Patrick Moylan

The following people were elected as directors for a two year term at the 1986 AGM:

Greg Combet
Gary Moore
Tracey O'Shea
Mary Perkins
Paul Wright

The following people were elected as alternate directors for a one-year term at the 1986 AGM:

Caitlin Perry
Vanessa Jeavons
Virginia Pidcock

OFFICE HOLDERS

Secretary - Paul Wright
Treasurer - Peter Colley
Membership Secretary - Terry Johnson

LETTER TO MEMBERS

24.

Dear Member,

C.A.R.R.

The Tenants' Union is currently working with CARR, a lobby group campaigning for just landlord and tenant legislation in NSW.

Earlier this year the Premier, Mr. N. Wran, announced the Government's proposal to establish a Residential Tenancies Tribunal and to reform the current Landlord and Tenants Act 1899.

A Residential Tenancies Tribunal with an initial jurisdiction over excessive rents and rent increases will open on 1st October, 1986. Draft legislation is being prepared to widen the jurisdiction of the Tribunal to deal with all tenancy matters. The draft bill will be publicly released by the new Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mrs. D. Grusovin, in mid-August for six months community debate.

The Tenants' Union will actively support members who wish to make submissions to the Department during this period. This is your opportunity to influence the new legislation to guarantee the maximum protection of tenants is achieved.

In the meantime while legislation is being drafted it is important that we show our support for the recommendations of the Cabramatta Tenancy Working Party Report "Reforming a Feudal Law".

A campaign leaflet is enclosed with your newsletter. Please fill out the postcard and send it off as quickly as possible!

Should you wish to receive further information about CARR's activities complete the slip on the back of the leaflet and forward it to the given address or contact the Tenants' Union of NSW direct on 699-7605.

JANE HEARN
PROJECT OFFICER
TENANTS' UNION OF NSW

TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1985

TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 1985

	<u>1985</u> \$	<u>1984</u> \$
<u>MEMBERS FUNDS</u>		
<u>SHARE CAPITAL</u>		
1001 shares of \$1 each fully paid	1001	885
Accumulated funds 31st December 1985	46448	60239
	-----	-----
	\$47449	\$61124
	=====	=====
 This is represented by:-		
 <u>FIXED ASSETS</u>		
Furniture and fittings (Note 2)	6772	8764
	-----	-----
 <u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
Cash at bank	12881	8423
Deposit - Building society (at call)	27199	46950
Interest bearing deposits	350	350
Other debtors	288	427
	-----	-----
	40718	56150
	-----	-----
<u>TOTAL ASSETS</u>	\$47490	\$64914
 <u>CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>		
Monies held in trust	12	60
Sundry creditors	29	3730
	-----	-----
	41	3790
	-----	-----
<u>NET ASSETS</u>	\$47449	\$61124
	=====	=====

The accompanying notes form part of the accounts.

- 2 -
TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1985

	General	Resource	Grant	Community	Community	Law	Total
	Project	in Aid	Employment	Employment	Foundation		
	Programme	Program	Program	Program	Project		
	NEC 731	NEC 732	NEC 731	NEC 732	Project		
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<u>INCOME</u>							
Donations	433						433
Leaflets	599						599
Service Fees	614						614
Bank Interest	209						209
Miscellaneous	321						321
Resource Manual		90					90
Fees for Workshops/Training		411					411
Fees for Photocopier use		925					925
Expenses Recovered	2080						2080
Grants		68790	20785	2956	2951	5815	101297
Building Society Interest		5148					5148
	4256	75364	20785	2956	2951	5815	112127
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>							
Salaries & Wages		56207	16705	7012	7012	5011	91947
Travel		838	515	30	1078	419	2880
Printing		1908					1908
Postage	386	285					671
Stationery	10	331					341
Hotline		250					250
Telephone		1152					1152
Photocopier		459					459
Publicity (including T.A.S.)		2576					2576
Multilingual Project		379					397
Workshops		230					230
Insurance		358					358
Building Society Charges		17					17
Miscellaneous	4	301	5				314
Depreciation	1992						1992
Labour On-costs			248	317	317		882
Other Labour				1262	878		2140
Materials & Equipment		562	441	3194	1166		5363
Newsletter Printing	618						618
Subscriptions	40						40
Bank Charges	199						199
Administration			973	1457	1554	299	2203
Travel Allowance						2260	4283
Secretarial		2084	2161				4245
Audit		400					400
	3249	68355	21048	13272	12005	7989	125918
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
(DEFICIENCY)/SURPLUS FOR YEAR	1007	7009	(263)	(10316)	(9054)	(2174)	(\$13791)
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Accumulated Funds 1st January 1985							60239

Accumulated Funds 31st December 1985							\$ 46448
							=====

TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1985

1 ACCOUNTING METHODS


- (a) The accompanying financial statements have been prepared in accordance with conventional historical cost principles and have not been adjusted to record either changes in the general purchasing power of the dollar or changes in the prices of specific assets.
- (b) The accompanying financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in Australia and conform in all material respects with International Accounting Standards.

2 FIXED ASSETS

	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Depreciation</u>	<u>Written Down Value</u>
1985			
Furniture and fittings	10,681	3,909	6,772
1984			
Furniture and fittings	10,681	1,917	8,764

STATEMENT BY TREASURER OF
TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

To the best of my knowledge and belief the accompanying income and expenditure statement and balance sheet give a true and fair view of the results of the abovenamed organisation for the year ended 31st December, 1985.


Peter Colley - Treasurer

SYDNEY, March 1986

AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF
TENANTS UNION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CO-OP LIMITED

We have audited the financial statements set out on pages 1 to 3 in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

In my opinion:

- (a) the attached balance sheet and statement of income and expenditure are properly drawn up in accordance with the provisions of the Co-operative Act, 1923, as amended, and so as to give the information required by or under this Act in the manner so required and give a true and fair view of:-
 - (i) the state of affairs of the Co-operative at 31 December, 1985 and of
 - (ii) the income and expenditure of the Co-operative for the year ended 31st December, 1985.
- (b) I have obtained all the information and explanation which to the best of my knowledge and belief were necessary for the purpose of the audit.
- (c) Proper books of account have been kept.
- (d) The balance sheet and income expenditure accounts are in agreement with the books.
- (e) The register of members and other records which the Co-operative is required to keep by or under this Act or by its rules, have been properly kept.
- (f) The rules relating to the administration of the funds of the Co-operative have been observed.



R. B. BROWN
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

DATED, 18th March 1986

TENANT NEWS

TENANTS' UNION OF NSW CO-OP LTD
197 GEORGE STREET
REDFERN NSW 2016

REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST
PUBLICATION NUMBER NBH 2043

POSTAGE PAID IN AUSTRALIA
D104 30150D

Get Your Friends to Join the Tenants' Union



APPLICATION TO JOIN TENANTS UNION

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE.....

OCCUPATION.....

PLEASE TICK

ARE YOU A TENANT? SQUATTER?

ARE YOU A HOME BUYER?

COST: PENSIONERS/UNEMPLOYED/STUDENTS \$2

WORKERS ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ \$6

ORGANISATIONS ☐ ☐ ☐ \$20

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 N.S.W. CO-OP LTD
197 GEORGE STREET., REDFERN 2016

OFFICE USE ONLY

SERVICE	DONATION
SHARES	NON MEMBER TRUST
	ACCOUNT

RECEIPT NO.....

MEMBERSHIP NO.....