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T E N A N T NEWS

TENANTS UNION OF NSW
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July 1989 Annual Report Edition No.37



Photo: Shelter

TENANT NEWS

Annual Report Edition No.37 July 1989

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The Tenants' Union of New South Wales represents tenants against unfair treatment by property owners and real estate agents.

We help tenants to work together for decent, affordable and secure housing by:

- * Resourcing tenants advice services
- * Lobbying Governments on tenancy issues
- * Publicising tenants' problems and rights

We believe that good quality housing is a basic human right... This means security of tenure, houses in good repair and protection against excessive rents for all.

Solidarity in numbers is the only way that our rights can be fought for and won.

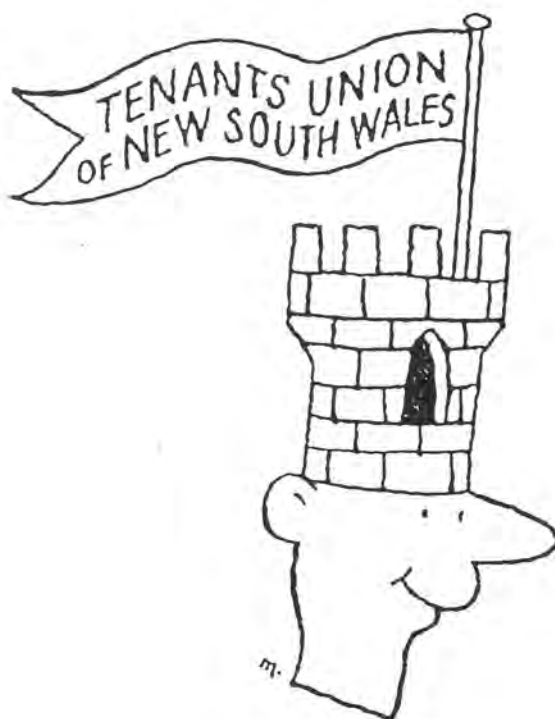
Join the Tenants' Union and help fight for tenants' rights in NSW



TENANT NEWS is produced by
the Tenants' Union of NSW,
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THE TENANTS' UNION LIVES!



Despite the withdrawal of government funding, the Tenants' Union will survive to continue its work for the tenants of NSW including:

- * Co-ordinating the Tenants' Advice Hotline, which continues to operate with the support of a roster of workers in various community organisations. The Hotline runs Monday to Friday, 9.30am - 1pm and 2pm-5pm.

- * Publishing the Tenants' News every quarter to keep members informed of all developments affecting tenants in NSW.

- * Updating Tenants' Union publications and resources to cover the new legislation, expected to be introduced on 30 October, 1989.

- * Campaigning for tenants' rights. The 1987 Act may be finalised but the fight for decent tenancy legislation continues!

- * Training for tenants' advisers.

- * Community education strategies including the new Migrant Community Education Kit, which is available for community organisations and individuals working with people of non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Tenants' Union currently employs a legal worker and a part time resources/training worker, with some limited administrative backup. We will continue with this staffing arrangement for as long as funds hold out.

This is where members of the TU come in. The TU Board of Directors has made a decision to ask members to make a voluntary one-off donation of \$5.00 each to the Tenants' Union. This \$5.00 levy (more if you can afford it) will be of great assistance in helping the TU to continue its work for the tenants of NSW.

If you can afford to help, please post your donation to the Tenants' Union, 68 Bettington St, Millers Point, 2000 as soon as possible. THANK YOU.

NEW TENANCY LEGISLATION 30 OCTOBER, 1989

During the week that most eyes were focused on Canberra and the Peacock Coup, Joe Schipp finally got his amended Residential Tenancies Act through State Parliament, with a mooted commencement date of 30 October, 1989.

You may recall that the original Residential Tenancies Act was passed in May 1987, but was still not in operation when the ALP lost office in March last year.

On gaining power, the new Minister for Housing, Mr Joe Schipp, made several attempts to introduce pro-landlord changes to Labor's Act. However, in the face of sustained parliamentary and community opposition, he eventually backed down on the most dangerous of his amendments including:

- * An amendment to the 1987 Act reducing the period of notice for tenants in 2 weeks' rent arrears from 14 to 7 days;
- * An amendment reducing the limit for 4 weeks' rent in advance from \$300 to \$250 per week.
- * An amendment requiring the tenant to pay the full costs of preparing the tenancy agreement. Under the '87 Act, the cost is shared by the landlord and the tenant.
- * An amendment limiting the jurisdiction of the Tribunal to breaches of the lease. The '87 Act gives the Tribunal jurisdiction over *disputes* and breaches.
- * An amendment allowing people other than the owner or agent (eg tradespeople) access to the property without written authorisation. The '87 Act requires written authority.

Schipp's concessions represent a limited victory for tenants but even in its relatively unamended form the 1987 Act fails to come up with the goods on all the really important issues:

- * It fails to give tenants security of tenure,
- * It fails to give them protection against sky rocketing rents,

- * It fails to give tenants with children protection against discrimination
- * It fails to establish a housing code to guarantee an acceptable standard of maintenance for all private rental housing.
- * It fails to cover boarders and lodgers, the most vulnerable "tenants" in the private rental market.

So, what does it do? In summary:

- * The Act requires 60 days' notice of termination where there has been no breach of the lease (Currently 30 days' notice is the norm.) Only 30 days notice is required when the owner intends to sell and in fixed term agreements with no holding over provisions, only 14 days notice is required. The tenant is obliged to give 21 days notice where there has been no breach of the lease.
- * Tenants have the right to appeal against an eviction where they have remedied the alleged breach.
- * The Act gives the Residential Tenancies Tribunal jurisdiction to deal with all tenancy 'disputes' including bond disputes and evictions. This should make dealing with disputes more straightforward for tenants, but it is likely that evictions will be processed more quickly by the Tribunal than they are currently by the local courts. This could cause hardship for tenants..
- * Tenants will have the right to apply to the Tribunal to have their rent deposited with the Tribunal until the owner remedies a breach or makes necessary repairs.
- * The tenant has the right to authorise urgent repairs to the value of \$500 if unable to arrange for the owner to do them. The owner is required to reimburse the tenant within 14 days. (Under the original Act, the limit for urgent repairs was set at \$800. This was one area where Schipp refused to back down.)
- * The landlord is obliged to respect the tenant's right to quiet enjoyment of the rented property and give appropriate notice of intention to inspect the property or show it to prospective tenants or buyers.
- * A standard lease specifying tenants rights and obligations with regard to repairs, occupation, retaliatory eviction and termination will be required for all tenancy agreements. Any special conditions included in the lease will be invalid if they contradict the spirit of the legislation.

The few rights granted to tenants under the legislation are of course more than balanced by corresponding rights for landlords, rights which give them a much easier ride than under current legislation eg the Act gives landlords the right to apply for an immediate termination order and possession where the tenant has allegedly caused or permitted serious damage or personal injury. This is a potentially very dangerous provision.

It is also disappointing that the Minister for Housing still refuses to meet with the Tenants' Union to discuss the new legislation, and totally refuses to set up a Review Committee (as promised by the Labor Government) to address

problems with the implementation and operation of the new Act.

We, of course, won't know just how the legislation will work for or against tenants until we see it up and running. However, we will be giving a more detailed analysis of the Act before its introduction and hope to have a fully updated tenants' rights booklet giving practical and detailed information on the Act and how to use it as soon as possible.

We will also be running workshops on the legislation in September/October. Please phone the Tenants' Union (02) 27-3813 if you would like to attend.

INTRODUCING WITS THE WESTERN INFORMATION TENANCY SERVICE

Even though the Tenancy Advice and Housing Referral Services (TAHRS) network has been defunded, community tenancy and housing groups are maintaining their presence in Sydney's West.

The Western Sydney Housing Information and Resources Network Inc (WESTERN) has managed to find enough money to employ a worker, Paul Mortimer, for six months (28 hours per week) from May to November, 1989, in its new Western Information/Tenancy Service (WITS).

With the demise of the TAHRS network, community groups will find themselves under pressure from their local community to provide some tenancy advice. WITS intends to establish a tenancy advice network within existing community organisations and will provide training and support to tenancy advisers, in co-operation with the NSW Tenants' Union.

WITS also plans to monitor the Department of Housing's new Tenancy Service, available by phoning (02) 229-0011. This government service is more limited than that provided by the TAHRS network. It remains to be seen whether it can provide adequate advice and support, and

whether it is meeting the needs of particular target groups, such as NESB tenants.

WITS will also research and publicise housing issues in Western Sydney, a formidable task, to say the least.

In summary, WITS objectives are:

- * To establish a network of Tenancy Advice Services in existing organisations;
- * To provide training and support to Tenancy Advice Services, in consultation with the Tenants' Union;
- * To research and educate the community on housing issues in Western Sydney;
- * To investigate sources of funding for tenancy services in Western Sydney.

If you wish to know more about this new service, please contact WITS Project Officer, Paul Mortimer, PO Box 461, GRANVILLE, 2141. Ph: (02) 891-4710.

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING RENT INCREASE NOTICE

We've had a number of calls recently from tenants who find themselves facing immediate rent increases because notices of the increase have mysteriously gone 'missing' in the post. The landlord, of course, claims the notice was sent and has a dated copy to prove it. The tenant has no proof they didn't receive it, so it's a case of the tenant's word against the landlord's - and, of course, if they don't like it, they can move out.

The problem arises because the landlord is not required under the Residential Tenancies Act to guarantee delivery of notices of rent increases. What it amounts to, is the perfect way for the landlord to avoid giving the required 60 days notice.

But, all is not lost. If you believe you have not received adequate notice of a rent increase, you should make a complaint to the Tenancy Services Unit of the Department of Housing who will attempt to mediate on the dispute. If this is unsuccessful, they will proceed with an investigation and lay charges if they can establish that the landlord did not give adequate notice. Remember to always keep all rent receipts and copies of correspondence with your landlord or agent to support your case. Applying to Tenancy Services to enforce your rights gives you protection against retaliatory eviction for 12 months after you make the application.

If you have actually begun to pay the increase, you can then sue the landlord for overpaid rent through the local court. Apparently, this has been done successfully. If you are considering this option, ask your local Chamber Magistrate for advice about taking a case to court and your eligibility for Legal Aid.

RESERVATION FEE LEGISLATION

On 7 April, 1989 new legislation came into effect regarding reservation fees. Under the legislation a landlord can ask for a reservation fee as consideration for holding rental premises until a lease is signed BUT:

- * The Reservation Fee can be no more than one week's rent and only one reservation fee can be asked for;
- * The tenant must receive a receipt giving full details of the reservation period on payment of the fee;
- * If the landlord decides not to rent the property to the prospective tenant the whole of the fee must be refunded;
- * If the tenant decides not to rent the premises, the landlord may keep as much of the fee as is equal to the amount of rent that would have been paid during the period the premises were reserved but must refund the remainder (if any) to the tenant;
- * If a tenancy agreement is entered into, the fee shall be paid towards rent for the premises.

NB: If a landlord refuses to return your reservation fee or to put it towards the rent, apply to the Consumer Claims Tribunal for assistance in recovering the fee.



CLAUSE 306(b)... THAT YOU LEASE THIS HOLE IN THE GROUND IN ITS PRESENT CONDITION....

TENANTS' UNION OF NSW ANNUAL REPORT

April, 1988 - March, 1989

INTRODUCTION

The last 12 months have seen another series of critical points reached in the housing situation for people in NSW and in similar ways, across other parts of Australia.

At the macro-economic level, substantial effects of financial deregulation, balance of payment deficits, public expenditure cuts and industry restructuring have contributed to further housing unaffordability and reduced supply to low income earners. At the political level, the election of a Liberal/National Party government in NSW heralded attacks on public housing and low income private rental tenants.

In the tenure debate, the pre-eminence of home ownership aspirations launched a new series of ingenious government subsidies, joint venture proposals and privatisation plans.

Some of the small social policy gains of the last decade in NSW were either swept away or made to look decidedly shaky. A few significant examples are the axing of Rental Bond Board funds to the Housing Information and Tenancy Services Programme which funded the Tenants' Union and the statewide network of 19 community Tenancy Advice and Housing Referral Services; the parliamentary introduction of amendments to Labor's 1987 Residential Tenancies Act; and the targeting of certain planning instruments for removal, notably Section 94 of the Environment and Planning Assessment Act.

Within this environment over the last 12 months, the Tenants' Union has had no shortage of issues to address as they effect private tenants. It has been a volatile year

in the private rental market with rents increasing rapidly in the early part of 1988, easing slightly in their increase towards the end of 1988, and now, in 1989, on the move again as interest rates increase almost as rapidly as house prices.

Consequently, inquiries from renters to the Tenants' Union and the local services have steadily increased, so that in the 12 months to February, 1989 a total of 50,000 inquiries were received by the network.

Tenancy /Housing Advice

The Tenants' Hotline, jointly staffed by the Tenants' Union and the local tenants' advice and housing referral services during 1988, continued to provide a major service to predominantly private tenants in NSW over the past 12 months.

This accessible and independent telephone advice service catered for a substantial number of the approximately 50,000 inquiries received through the Tenants' Advice and Housing Referral Service Network in 1988.

Despite the loss of Department of Housing funds to services assisted under the HITS Programme, the Hotline will continue in 1989 through the co-operation of the Tenants' Union and other local community organisations in various parts of the State. Training for new tenancy advisors joining the Hotline service was conducted in February/ March 1989.

Local Tenancy Advice and Housing Referral Services (TAHRS)

The Project Officer (Generalist) position at the Tenants' Union has had primary responsibility for resourcing and working with the TAHRS network. Significant support has also been provided by all other staff, as required, particularly in the training, publications and legal areas.

Major areas of activity have been:

- (a) Resourcing and backup to the TAHRS and TAS network through provision of materials, discussion of local issues, organising telephone tree conferences, and disseminating information on local actions/campaigns.
- (b) Assisting in the organisation of TAHRS quarterly meetings, including setting of venues and workshop topics, provision of materials and organising workshop facilitators.
- (c) Collection of statistical returns on service provision for the Tenants' Union and TAHRS network. Details include types of problem presented, type of tenancy, cultural background and referral to other agencies.
- (d) Assisting in the organisation of representations to the NSW government seeking a reversal of the HITS funding decision.
- (e) In recent months, liaising with existing TAHRS and other community organisations concerning ongoing provision of tenancy services beyond 31 March, 1989.

CAMPAIGNS

Law Reform

The Campaign Action for Rental Reform coalition lobbied extensively on a number of issues early in 1988. These included fair rents, discrimination, advocacy rights before the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, security of tenure, rights for boarders and lodgers, and the introduction of the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act.

Tenancy law reform issues have continued to take a high priority during the past twelve months. The Coalition Government decided that the ten years of negotiation behind the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act had resulted in an Act which was "anti-landlord", and sought to rectify this 'problem'.

In November, 1988 and again in February 1989, the new Minister for Housing, Mr Joe Schipp, moved a number of amendments to the Act including reducing the period of notice for evictions from 14 to 7 days in cases of rent arrears; allowing landlords' access to a property without written notice, which represents a real invasion of privacy for tenants; and allowing landlords to dispose of tenants' property which has been left on premises if they decide it is not valuable. These were but a few of the 40 odd amendments proposed. However, to date, they have not been passed through the Legislative Council due to opposition by both Australian Democrats and the ALP.*.

Despite the difficult political environment that tenants are currently experiencing, it is encouraging that a number of community groups, trade unions and politicians of all persuasions have supported our position on law reform. Amongst the most vocal of our political supporters has been independent Member for Bligh, Clover Moore. Clover has been a tireless campaigner for tenants' rights and has taken up the cause of preserving low-income housing generally. Mr Richard Jones, Australian Democrat MLC, and Mr Ernie Page, Member for Waverley and Opposition Spokesperson on Housing in 1988 and early 1989, have also been active supporters of tenancy law reform.

However, without widespread community support these politicians would be voices in the wilderness. The difficulties experienced by many renters, particularly those on low incomes, is recognised throughout the community. During the past twelve months a number of trade unions have expressed their support for our campaign. Many, including the Public Service Association, the Building Workers Industrial Union, the Miners Federation, the Australian Bank Employees Union and the NSW Social Welfare Workers' Union have contributed by writing letters of support, and endorsing our newspaper advertisement calling for the introduction of the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act or making donations.

* Please see page 4 for an update on the new Residential Tenancies Act.

Alongside union support has been widespread support from our members and from concerned community organisations. Organisations such as the Ethnic Communities Council, the Uniting Church, the Anglican Home Care Mission, and the NSW Council of Social Services have provided invaluable support on the law reform campaign. Our thanks to all those organisations for their encouragement and assistance.

The Ritz

The proposed development of the Ritz Boarding House became a campaign issue for the Tenants' Union and the Northern Suburbs TAHRS from May to August, 1988. The Ritz, built in 1911, is a decaying colossus of 100 rooms at Cremorne Point. On the 12 June last year, the 97 residents of the Ritz were given notices to quit, effectively ending the debate between North Sydney Council and the developer over the fate of the building. A development ban on work on the Ritz was imposed by the Building Trades Group of Labor Council, and the tenants were eventually summonsed to the Supreme Court by the owner. The residents lost their case in Court but their campaign gained much publicity for the plight of boarders and lodgers who have no protection under current or proposed tenancy legislation. The campaign also highlighted the continuing loss of low income accommodation through development in Sydney.

Funding of Independent Tenants' Advisory Services

On December 2nd, 1988 the Minister for Housing announced the abolition of the Housing Information and Tenancy Services (HITS) Programme. This Programme funded the Tenants' Union, and nineteen locally based Tenants' Advice and Housing Referral Services. (TAHRS), Shelter NSW and the Housing Information and Referral Service.

This decision precipitated widespread community opposition. In order to highlight this concern, the Tenants' Union participated in a broadly based campaign which involved both industrial and community action. Submissions were presented to the Minister for Housing and the Premier, outlining the benefits and achievements of our services. However, to date these have fallen on deaf ears. Even more disappointing is the decision by the Minister to refuse to meet with the Tenants' Union to discuss the matter in detail.

The undoubted highlight of the campaign was the public rally, held outside Parliament House on February 21, 1989, which attracted a crowd of 2,000 people. The rally involved a wide range of concerned groups, such as people from various churches, building workers, disabled, public, private and Community Tenancy Scheme tenants, and squatters. The purpose of the



THE YEAR THAT WAS

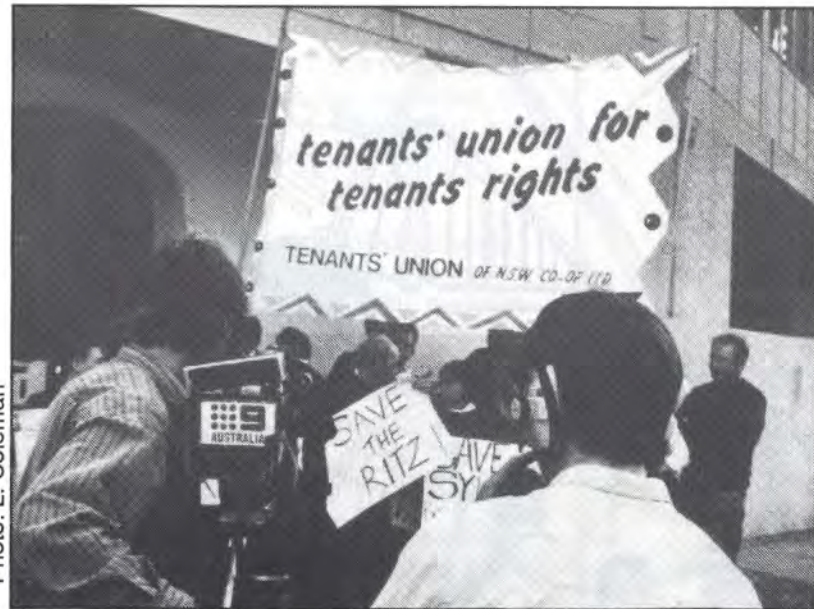


Photo: L. Coleman



Photo: Shelter



Photo: Shelter



rally was to pressure the Government into refunding independent services by showing that there is a wide range of support for housing issues as housing affects everyone in the community. The rally was preceded by a march from Belmore Park.

Project workers, Amanda Kenyon and Lin Broadfield, played a pivotal role in the planning and execution of the rally, through addressing mass meetings of building workers, organising posters and pamphlets for the rally, and in finding speakers and entertainment for the day. Organisation for the rally involved both private and public peak housing groups in NSW, women's housing groups, disabled groups, and Community Tenancy Schemes.

The rally also provided the opportunity to present a petition containing approximately 14,000 signatures which were collected at a picket outside the Minister for Housing's office. The picket was organised by the NSW Social Welfare Workers' Union and was supported by the entire community housing sector.

The Tenants' Union thanks all the supporters who wrote to the Minister, attended the Rally or signed the petition. It is understood that the Minister has received over 500 letters of concern from individuals and organisations regarding his decision to withdraw funds from independent tenancy advisory services.

PUBLICATIONS

The Tenants' Union has continued to provide a range of resources to members, external organisations and the general public over the past 12 months.

Current publications include:

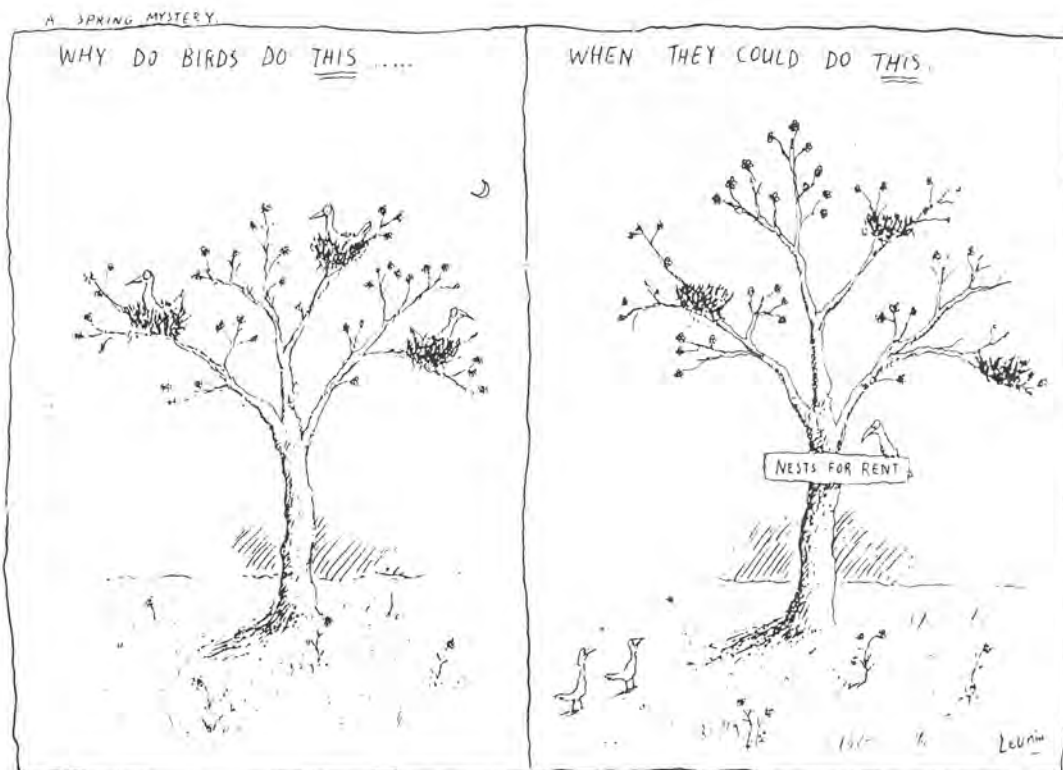
****Your Rights As A Tenant In NSW***

A "How To Survive in the Private Rental Market" guide for tenants. Despite having allocated the funds in our budget to update and translate this booklet we were unable to commence work in 1988 due to ongoing delays in the law reform process. As soon as the legislation is confirmed, we will begin on this important project.

Copies of the most recent edition are available free to members, \$2.00 per copy to community organisations, unions etc ((bulk purchases) , and \$5.00 per copy to individual non-members.

****Tenancy Law From A Tenant's Perspective, More Legal Stuff, & Practical Aspects of Being a Tenants' Adviser***

These three comprehensive training manuals are designed for tenancy advisers and provide valuable information on tenancy and related issues. The manuals are available at a cost of \$45.00 per set.



***Tenancy Training Lesson Notes**

A resource kit, including case studies, for tenancy advisers.

***Tenant News**

Our quarterly newsletter provides information for members on a variety of issues including advice on tenancy problems, information on assistance available to renters, the latest news on law reform and, occasionally, housing news from overseas

*** The 1987 Residential Tenancies Act - An Outline**

A comprehensive overview of the provisions of the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act, prepared by our former Legal Officer, Peter Barling.

*** Tenants' Union Lease**

A practical and ideologically sound model lease for use by tenants and landlords.

Publications and resource material currently being finalised include the Migrant Community Education Kit which provides a comprehensive set of resources in 11 languages for organisations and individuals working with migrant tenants.

During 1988, the Tenants' Union also produced a new membership brochure, a brochure on fair rents and new Tenants' Union car stickers - *Slum landlord in Boot* and *Join the NSW Tenants' Union*. We also reprinted our Tenants Union T-shirt and are currently reprinting our poster, *It's Your Home, Defend It*. (See inside back page for our resources price list and order form.)

TRAINING

In the past 12 months, in addition to a significant training provision to workers within TAHRS organisations, the Tenants' Union has been involved in a broad approach to community education and public awareness of tenant issues and concerns.

Many basic tenancy workshops have been conducted with generalist community organisations, local government workers, TAFE and ethnic organisations, womens' and youth refuges and neighbourhood centres.

A Case Conference was held for the first time with tenants' advisers, and specific Hotline services have been geared up in the past 12 months.

The ongoing provision of skills training in the tenancy/legal area, and the general community education strategy of the Tenants' Union is another priority issue the new Board and members will have to review in the light of recent funding cuts.

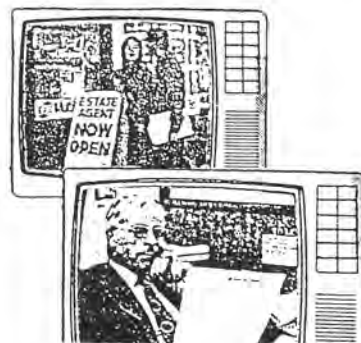
ETHNIC ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Ethnic Issues Sub-Committee has continued to be active during 1988-89. The Committee has taken primary responsibility for supporting the Migrant Community Education Worker during the last year, and has addressed a number of other issues including:

- * Problems with Department of Housing service delivery to applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- * Preparation and distribution of a paper on the effects of proposed amendments to the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act on tenants from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- * Preparation of a joint submission with the Ethnic Communities Council and Shelter NSW seeking funds for a Migrant Housing Worker through the NSW Department of Housing. This has yet to be finalised;
- * Preparation of a submission to the Office of Multicultural Affairs during their national consultations;
- * Organising and conducting a Housing Presentation for the Ethnic Communities Council Social Welfare Sub-committee.

The Migrant Community Education Project

In June, 1988, our three year Grant-In-Aid funding from the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) ceased and we sadly bid farewell to MaryAnne Veliscek who had done an excellent job in that position. MaryAnne was responsible for assisting the Union in identifying and beginning to address the needs of non-English speaking tenants.



The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1984) reports that 75% of migrants living in Australia for less than 2 years were renting privately. In general, newly arrived migrants are poorer, less resourced in terms of information and language, and more likely to experience exploitation and abuse in the private rental market.

A rather ironic measure of the success of Maryanne's work is that the reason given by DILGEA for defunding her position was that she had achieved the aims of her position in the three years and, therefore, was no longer needed.

In spite of this setback, the Union's Ethnic Issues Cub-Committee has continued to ensure that this particular focus is not neglected.

In addition, the Tenants' Union received a special multicultural grant from the Department of Housing in 1988/89 for a Migrant Community Education Project. The main aim of the project is to produce a resource kit suitable for use in informing non-English speaking tenants, particularly newly arrived migrants, about housing systems in Australia and their rights and obligations as tenants.

A project worker, Debby Michels, was employed in July, 1988 for a period of one year, to research, produce and oversee the implementation of the kit. The kit comprises:

- * A series of short videos which illustrate the most common problems experienced by NESB tenants;
- * Background information on the needs of NESB tenants;
- * A list of resources and agencies for further assistance;
- * Advice on how to organise education sessions with NESB tenants;
- * Workers' notes for use in presentation of the information;
- * Hand-outs for session participants covering the key points of the lease and bond.

The videos and the participants' hand-outs will be available in 12 languages including Arabic, Cantonese, Khmer, Lao, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Vietnamese, Macedonian, Samoan, Serbian and English.

The kits will be available for distribution in June this year and will be workshopped with community groups to ensure future use.

The kit will be distributed by both the Tenants' Union and Redfern Legal Publishing to a wide range of community and government welfare organisations throughout NSW.



EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

The Rental Bond Board (RBB)

Our Policy and Planning Co-ordinator, Michelle Strickland, has been a member of the RBB since 1988. Issues which have arisen before the Board of particular interest to the Tenants' Union include the use of tenants' bond principal and interest for tenancy services, home ownership subsidy schemes and the Rental Property Trust.

Caravans

The Tenants' Union participated in the Shelter NSW Working Party on Caravan Issues. Through this working party we have commented on the Department of Lands' "Crown lands Caravan Parks Draft Policy"

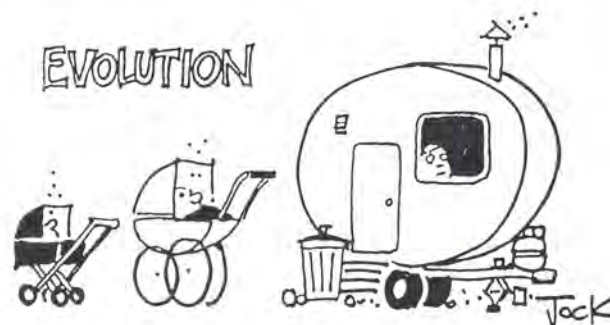
We also liaised with the United Campers' and Caravanners' Association regarding the inclusion of caravan residents in the Residential Tenancies Act.

The Tenants' Union is also a member of the Department of Local Government's Caravan Park Regulations Task Force.

SUBMISSIONS

During the last 12 months, a range of submissions have been prepared and forwarded to external organisations. These include submissions to:

- * The Ministerial Inquiry into Homelessness in the Inner City;
- * The Catholic Bishops' Consultation on the Distribution of Wealth in Australia;
- * The Government Housing Committee's Review of Protected Tenancies;
- * The Minister for Housing regarding proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act and withdrawal of funds to independent tenancy services;
- * The Premier regarding proposed amendments to tenancy legislation and withdrawal of funds to independent tenancy services.



All submissions involved extensive research, collation of materials from various sources, the writing of the submissions themselves, and follow up at public meetings on the Inquiries.

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

Direct involvement of tenants in the Tenants' Union has centred around two major events, International Tenants' Day and a mass housing rally outside Parliament House. Both events included speakers with a range of expertise, and entertainment. The first, held at Bondi Beach, was poorly attended, possibly because of inclement weather; the latter, a great success in terms of broad based support from building workers, church and disabled groups, public and private tenants, and community based groups in general. The rally, which was supported by the Social Welfare Workers' Union, was the focal point of two marches through the streets of Sydney.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Aboriginal Housing

An attempt was made in early 1988 to initiate an Aboriginal Tenancy Advice Service. The precedent for a group specific service had been made with the funding of the Combined Pensioners Association, and the concept of the service received endorsement from sections of the Department of Housing and the Aboriginal Housing Unit. A number of Aboriginal groups were contacted, including womens' housing and health and generalist services, who endorsed the concept and whose representatives attended a series of meetings to firm up the idea. Cathy Craigie of the Aboriginal Housing Unit and Norma Wells, from the Womens' Housing Company, were particularly helpful. The group formulated guidelines for the scope and delivery of such a service, including the employment of an exclusively Aboriginal staff. The proposal did not reach fruition for several reasons, but is definitely worth pursuing.

Womens' Housing

Womens' Housing issues have been addressed through a working party composed of representatives from the Tenants' Union, Shelter, the Womens' Housing Company, the Womens' Housing Programme, Youth Accommodation Association, the Womens' Action Network and the Housing Information and Referral Service. The group has representatives on the National Shelter Women's Housing Caucus, and takes part in a national phone hook-up organised through National Shelter.

Representatives from the group met with Renata Haldor, the new Liberal head of the Women's Advisory Council, on security of tenure for women in public housing, the need to continue crisis and medium term accommodation for women, discrimination against women with children in the private rental market, and the inclusion of age as a ground for complaint in Anti-Discrimination Legislation, with particular reference to the private rental market.

THE ORGANISATION

The Members.

1988/89 has seen a continuing membership growth of the Tenants' Union. At this time, there are 1193 individual members.

A number of members have been active during the past year, along with the staff and Board, with particular involvement in fund-raising events and campaign activities.

With changes introduced to the N.S.W. Co-operative Act during 1988, concerning the encouragement of more active participation from co-operative members in the affairs of their organisations, certain constitutional amendments will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

The Staff

The Tenants' Union has been excellently served by highly competent and committed members of staff during the past 12 months. They are:

Administrative Officer
Margaret Cobb

Clerical Assistant
Joan Noyes

Policy & Planning Co-ordinator
Michelle Strickland



Migrant Resources Officers
Mary Anne Veliscek
(until May, 1988)

Debbie Michels
(July, 1988 - June, 1989)

Publications/Media Officers
Tracy Goulding

Sue Creek
(Relief March - June, 1988)

Training Officer
Martin McEwen
(until Dec. 1988)

Project Officer (Organiser)
Lin Broadfield

Project Officer (Generalist)
Edmund Lourey
(until Nov. 1988)

Amanda Kenyon
(from Nov. 1988)

Legal Officer
Peter Barling
(until Nov. 1988).

With the loss of Department of Housing funding assistance from 31st March 1989, the Board has had to terminate the services of most of the staff. This loss is a savage blow to the organisation and to the individuals concerned. The Tenants' Union extends many thanks to the staff for their outstanding efforts and wishes them every success in their future endeavours.

With continuing assistance from the Legal Services Commission and judicious use of remaining funds and assets, the organisation has been able to retain a full-time Legal Officer's position, a part-time resource and community education worker's position, and part-time administrative/bookkeeping support.

The drastic change in organisational size and capacity from 1st April, 1989 and the continuing necessity of identifying new resources for the organisation's operation will figure prominently in the Tenant's Union agenda over the next 12 months.

The Board of Directors.

During the last year, the Board has continued to play an active role in management initiatives and a range of issues which the Tenants' Union has pursued. The Board members have been:

Simon Draper - tenant
Nick Warren - tenant/TAHRS rep.
Anna Marie Antonio - tenant/TAHRS rep.
Maree Callinan - tenant & Treasurer
Michelle Burrell - tenant & Secretary
(resigned Nov. '88)
Sonya Hendricks - home owner
Gary Moore - tenant & Secretary
(from Nov. '88)
Gerry Fox - tenant & TAHRS rep.
(resigned Sept. '88)
Eric Elder - tenant
(resigned Oct. '88)
Elena Galtos - tenant
(resigned Nov. '88)
Caroline MacDonald - tenant
(resigned July '88)
Christine Gibson - tenant
(resigned July '88)

The Board members elected at the Annual General Meeting have responsibility for guiding and managing the organisation in line with its aims and objectives. Along with the membership and staff, the new Board should strive to maintain the most effective level of activity to assist tenants in N.S.W., a difficult task in the current environment.

The Committees

Over the past 12 months, the Tenants' Union has introduced further committees and working parties to assist in the development of the organisation's initiatives. Some of these committees involve the co-operative working talents of Board members and staff, Tenants' Union members, and individuals from other organisations in the general community with specific skills that can enhance the activities undertaken.

The Committees are:

* Management

The Management Committee meets monthly to oversee the day to day business of the organisation. It is attended by all staff and includes the Secretary, Treasurer and one other Director.

* Ethnic Issues.

The Ethnic Issues Sub-Committee has been operating for two years and is supported by a number of ethnic and generalist organisations with an interest in tenancy issues affecting people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The committee meet monthly and its activities are outlined in detail earlier in this Report.

* Employment

The Employment Sub-Committee meets as required and is charged with overseeing all employment and industrial relations matters within the Tenants' Union. It consists of two Directors and two staff members.

The Tenants' Union Industrial Agreement, after a long negotiation period, was registered with the N.S.W. Industrial Commission in late 1988. This Committee continues to review and develop job descriptions and recruit new workers.

* Membership

The Membership Sub-Committee operated strongly for the first half of 1988, both as a support group for the Project Worker (Organiser) and in developing a membership recruitment strategy.

Both Board members and staff believe that this Committee's renewed operation in 1989 should be a priority.

The Premises

After a long period of negotiation and renovation, the Tenants' Union moved to new premises in Millers Point during 1988. The future use of this building and its security of tenure in light of N.S.W. Government funding decisions on the H.I.T.S. Programme will be early agenda items for the new Board and the organisation as a whole.

SOME COUNTRIES DON'T HAVE REAL ESTATE AGENTS TO ANNOY THEM...



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1989 presents a watershed for the Tenants' Union. The organisation's resource base has been drastically cut whilst the social, economic and political environment facing tenants is grave.

The focus over the last few months has been to prioritise the scope of Tenants' Union activity to a realistic level commensurate with the available resources and to actively seek broader membership and Board participation in the organisation's affairs.

The Tenants' Union needs to cement co-operative and fruitful partnerships with the remaining local tenancy and housing services, trade unions, community legal services and peak community sector organisations.

Some immediate tasks to be focused on include:

- *The continuation of migrant community education strategies and, in particular, the best method of utilising the resource and skill base that the Migrant Resource Worker can offer until June, 1989;
- *The best methods of continuing the training function for tenancy advisers;
- * The establishment of a back-up legal network for tenant cases; and
- * The continued production of high quality and relevant publications and resources.

The contribution of members with available time, skills and interests in these areas cannot be over-emphasised.

The organisation's short-term (1989) financial viability is sound but without additional funding from government or alternative sources, difficult decisions and a further reduction of activity in 1990 will be inevitable.

Once again, to all staff, Board members and members, a huge thanks for navigating a long year. Let's tackle the new challenges.

TENANTS' UNION RESOURCES

JUNE, 1989

***Membership Package** - Tenants receive a membership package when they join which includes a Tenants' Union membership card, the latest edition of *Tenant News* and a copy of *Your Rights As A Tenant In NSW*.

***Your Rights As A Tenant in NSW** - A survival guide for tenants in the private rental market (January, 1989). Free to Tenants' Union members/\$5.00 per copy to individual non-members/ \$2.00 per copy to bulk orders by community organisations, unions, local councils etc. These organisations may choose to sell the guide to tenants or distribute it free of charge depending on their own resources.

***Tenant News** - The Tenants' Union quarterly newsletter with all the latest news on life and the law in the private rental market. Distributed free to members; Non-members - \$12.00 pa.

***Tenancy Advice Manuals** - A set of three manuals for use by tenancy advisers - *Tenancy Law From A Tenants' Perspective*, *More Legal Stuff* and *Practical Aspects Of Being A Tenants' Adviser* (May, 1989).....Set of 3 \$45.00

*** Tenancy Training Lesson Notes** - A resource kit including case studies for tenancy advisers (November, 1988).....\$35.00

*** Migrant Community Education Kit** - A kit for use by community workers to inform tenants of non-English speaking background about their rights and responsibilities as tenants in the private rental market. Videos and handouts available in 12 languages. Workshop Kit and video in one language.....\$70.00
Each additional language tape.....\$30.00

*** The Residential Tenancies Tribunal Project Report** - A look at residential tenancy tribunals in Australia from a tenants' perspective.....\$25.00

*** Going Nowhere** - A report on permanent caravan park residency produced by Central Coast TAHRS.(September, 1988).....\$5.00

*** Informal Tenancies** - A report on informal tenancies among tenants of non-English speaking background. By Jenny Fong, TRAC, 1988....\$3.00

*** Tenants Union Lease** - A lease for ideologically sound landlords.....\$1.00

*** Tenants' Union T- Shirts** - *Don't Go Mental Over Rental*\$15.00

***Tenants' Union Poster** - *It's Your Home, Defend It*.....\$8.00

***Tenants' Union Stickers** - *Slum Landlord In Boot/ Don't Go Mental Over Rental*.....\$1.00

*** Tenants' Union Membership Forms and Fair Rent Brochures**Free

TENANTS' UNION RESOURCES ORDER FORM

Please indicate number of copies beside each item and forward to The Tenants' Union of NSW, 68 Bettington St., MILLERS POINT, 2000.

___ *Your Rights As A Tenant in NSW* \$2.00/\$5.00
___ *Tenancy Advice Manuals* (Set of 3)\$45.00
___ *Tenancy Training Lesson Notes*\$35.00
___ *Migrant Community Education Kit*
___ Workshop Kit and 1 video\$70.00
___ Each additional language tape\$30.00.
Languages: _____
___ *RTT Project Report*\$25.00
___ *Going Nowhere*\$5.00
___ *Informal Tenancies*\$3.00
___ *Tenants' Union Lease*\$1.00
___ *Tenants' Union T-Shirt*\$15.00

___ *It's Your Home, Defend It*\$8.00
(Tenants' Union Poster)
___ *Slum Landlord in Boot*.....\$1.00
___ *Don't Go Mental Over Rental*\$1.00
(Tenants' Union Stickers)
___ *Tenants' Union Membership Forms*.....free
___ *Tenants' Union Fair Rents Brochure*.....free

Please send the above resources to:

Name/Organisation.....
.....
Address.....
.....

I enclose cheque/ money order for \$.....
Please make all cheques payable to the Tenants' Union of NSW.

TENANTS' UNION MEMBERSHIP
Application/Renewal Form
(Note ammended fee structure)

Name _____

Address _____
Postcode _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____

First language _____

Ethnic Background _____

Occupation _____

Please tick

* Is this a: New Membership? _____ OR Renewal? _____

* Are you a: Tenant? _____ Squatter? _____ Home Owner? _____
Other?(specify) _____

* Can you assist the Tenants' Union in any way? Yes/No
Details _____

Fees

Membership fees apply from January 1 to December 31 each year. New members joining after June 31 may pay half fees.

* Unwaged/Pensioners/Unemployed/Student.....\$6.00
(1 share + \$5 annual service fee)

* Waged workers.....\$11.00
(1 share + \$10 annual service fee)

* Organisations
(5 shares + annual service fee based on income)
<\$30,000.....\$45.00
\$30-50,000.....\$75.00
\$50-100,000.....\$85. 00
>\$100,000.....\$105.00

* Donations.....\$ _____

I enclose.....\$ _____

(This covers purchase of shares and service fees.

Renewing members need pay only service fee.)

I declare that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature _____

Witness _____

Date _____

Return to:

Tenants' Union of NSW Co-op Ltd.,
Bettington Street, MILLERS POINT, NSW 2000.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Service	Donation
Shares	Non-member trust
	Account

Receipt No. _____

Membership No. _____

TENANTS' HOTLINE

For advice and assistance

Phone: (02) 251 6590

Mon-Fri 9.30 - 1 / 2 - 5pm



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