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tenant

NEWS

NO 45 JUNE 1992

COLLECTORS ISSUE



The Tenants Union of NSW 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
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ANGER IN CARAVAN PARKS

This article was written from information in a report by Colin Jones, a worker with CPSA.

A new 'Code of Practice' for Caravan Parks came in on March 30. It has upset a lot of park residents.

The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association (CPSA) ran 20 seminars for park tenants all around NSW.

More than 1,000 caravan park tenants came to hear how the new Code will effect them. Most of these were van owners, who rent the site. Many were very angry with what they heard.

Somewhere between 70,000 and over 100,000 people live permanently in caravan parks in this State. Most parks are up and down the NSW coast.

A majority are older people on a pension. Many have sold the family home to move in to a caravan park and cannot afford to move back.

In these parks, tenants often see their landlord daily, and there are park rules which are sometimes objectionable.

These residents are now affected by the Residential Tenancies Act and this new 'Code of Practice' for caravan parks.

They feel that the State Government has forgotten them, and only took notice of the park owners when the Act and Code were written.

But the seminars had a very positive and interesting by-product.

The Park and Village Tenants Association (PAVTA) is based on the Central Coast and already has branches in Tweed Heads, Shellharbour and Tuggerah Lakes.

PAVTA had people at all the seminars, and so were able to contact more park tenants.

In 6 weeks they formed 7 new branches which brought in 500 new members.

At present, PAVTA relies on voluntary staff and membership donations. But they are very active and look set to grow.

It would be unwise for a Government to ignore caravan park tenants. They are a large number of angry voters.

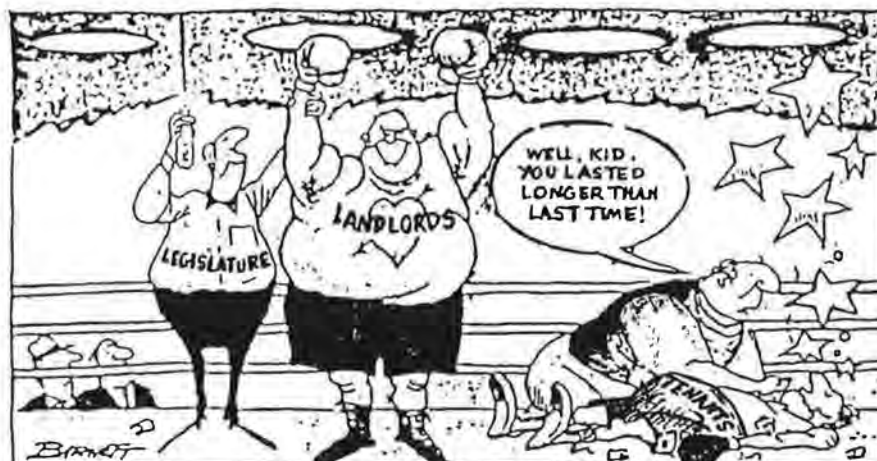
Listed below are some common complaints.

1) Evictions for no reason. People who own their own vans/ relocatable homes can be evicted for no reason. Although they must be given 180 days notice.

This really worries many people who own relocatable homes. They feel eviction for no reason is unjust. It costs thousands of dollars to move many of these homes.

2) Visitor fees.

One pensioner couple had to pay \$80 for their grandchildren to stay over Easter.



They say there was no extra cost at all to the park owner. Their 'relocatable' is completely self contained

3) 'Premiums'.

Park owners can charge a fee if a van on-site is sold in their park. Even if they do nothing to help with the sale.

And there is no legal limit on what they can charge. Which means they can block a sale by charging a very high premium.

4) Rent Increases.

It is said that in one area local park owners meet over dinner to fix local market rents.

This manipulation is hard to prove or control when the laws say that rent is set by the market.

5) Unfair Agreements

Written Agreements must now be given to all new tenants, which is good. But park owners can use them to force harsher terms on existing tenants.

A Central Coast park owner is now charging bond, which has rarely if ever been done before. He is also demanding that residents have a certain number, colour and size of terracotta pots. (This demand may be illegal).

6) No 20 Year Leases.

Park owners can now give 20 year leases to people who own their own relocatable home. But many won't, because long leases would reduce the possible resale value of a park.

Clearly, there is a lot of room for reform in the Act and this new Code.

[Ed's Note: The Code mainly affects van owners who rent the site. Some concerns are shared by tenants who rent mobile homes.]



*As for accommodation for immigrants,
there is the Hilton, Sheraton or Menzies.
And don't forget to register at your local
CES Office!*

MIGRANT WORKER FUNDING

The Tenants' Union has been given funds to employ a Migrant Tenancy Worker part-time for 9 months only.

The grant is from the Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and comes under the Migrant Access Programs Scheme (MAPS).

The worker should begin the project by the end of July.

That person will work mainly with recently arrived migrants in 2 or 3 communities: to let them know that they have rights and where to get help with tenancy problems.

Also, the worker will look at how to give recent arrivals better access to services such as the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

There may also be work done on an information package to give migrants when they arrive at the airport.

An aim is to produce and distribute a final report on the project.

The report will look at the various strategies used and see which worked best. This will be useful for other people working with recently-arrived migrants.

SUPREME COURT - AGAIN

The Supreme Court has again forced the Department of Housing to follow the rules of 'procedural fairness' when it wants to evict tenants.

This decision backs up the recent Nicholson case when the Supreme Court said the Department could not evict without a given reason.

John Godwin of Kingsford Legal Centre sent us the case details of 'Peter King -v- NSW Land and Housing Corporation and Ors.' Kingsford Legal Centre represented Mr. King.

On March 25, the Department applied for vacant possession, saying that Mr. King had broken the conditions of a Tribunal Order.

The tenant applied to have the order set aside, but the Tribunal issued a warrant before considering the tenant's application.

The tenant had no chance to deny that the Tribunal's conditions had been broken.

The Tribunal just took the word of the Department.

Eventually, on 10 April, the Full Bench of the Court of Appeal continued an injunction that stopped the eviction.

Judge J. Priestly said:

".... the argument that procedural fairness was denied to Mr. King has merit."

"The trend (in the High Court and Supreme Court is) that only when a statutory power explicitly ousts the rules of procedural fairness that..... the authority.....may proceed without due regard to those rules.

".... how is the Tribunal to know whether the condition has been complied with or not....without giving both parties....an opportunity to be heard...."

So the Department of Housing had to take the case back to the Tribunal

The tenant lost. But the Supreme Court's decision is important because it has said again that public tenants must have a chance to put their case to the Tribunal.



MICHIKO FINALLY WINS

Sue Creek

One of our 1991 Tenant of the Year recipients, Michiko Yoshida, has finally been refunded her bond after 15 months of litigation.

You may recall she took action in late 1990 against her landlord because he appeared to have a history of ripping off bonds from his non-Australian tenants.

Despite winning her case at the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, the landlord refused to comply with the Tribunal order to refund her bond money.

Instead, he took action in the Local Court which prevented the Sheriff enforcing the order.

The landlord also subpoenaed our files - the first time this had ever happened to us in our 16 year history!

The Tenants' Union was naturally concerned about the precedent involved in this threat to client confidentiality.

Redfern Legal Centre took up the case and raised the 'legal privilege' argument (even though the T.U. does not have lawyers) on the grounds that we give advice of a legal nature.

In the end, no ruling was made on this as the Magistrate confirmed the Tribunal's jurisdiction over landlord/tenant bond disputes.



A small amount of costs were awarded against the landlord. Having failed in the Local court, the landlord threatened Supreme Court action, but *finally* decided to call it a day and paid up.

Many thanks to Redfern Legal Centre solicitors, Frances Gibson and Louise Blazejowska, for all their hard work - and to Michiko for persevering!

NEW TENANTS HANDBOOK

We are about to rewrite and reprint our Tenants Rights Handbook, currently called 'Your Rights as a Tenant in NSW'.

Phillipa Bellemore, who wrote the Tenants Rights Manual and Factsheets, has been employed as a consultant to put it all together.

It should look a lot better than the last edition, and contain more up-to-date information.

Hopefully, it will be available by August.

Redfern Legal Centre Publishing is interested in distributing the handbook, so it will be sold in bookshops as well as through us.

The Uniting Church's Board for Social Responsibility is considering helping us out with the production costs.

NEW POSTER

Rose Vala

It is some time since the Tenants Union has had a poster. So I, as a student on placement, have been designated to co-ordinate the birth of a new poster.

We need a poster because we want more people to know that there is somewhere they can call with their tenancy problems, and to know that there is an organisation lobbying for better tenancy laws.

As a student who rents I am only too aware of the pitfalls experienced by many tenants.

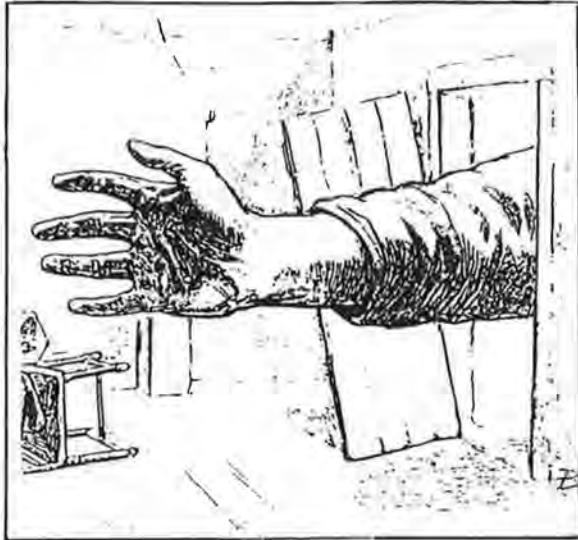
Before beginning my placement I had little knowledge of my rights.

Our poster will highlight the T.U. as somewhere to get help.

It will also offer the option of joining the T.U. so that tenants can become a stronger force.



FEDERAL HOUSING AGREEMENT THREATENED



Federal funding of public housing could end under changes being looked at by the Federal Treasurer, John Dawkins.

The worst option being considered is to repeal the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA), and just give the money to the States.

This would be a disaster for public housing in NSW.

Another option being looked at is to get rid of special purpose grants, which fund aboriginal, pensioner and crisis housing.

And instead, Housing Minister Brian Howe is looking at cash assistance for low income earners who rent privately.

If accepted, these changes would be a huge shift in ALP policy, and would mean a lot less public housing in Australia.

NCOSS and NATO have reacted very angrily to the ideas, and ask people to send protest letters to the Prime Minister and Treasurer at Parliament House, Canberra 2600.

As they point out, 'this is serious'.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

Christine Bird

Is the Department of Housing Domestic Violence Policy working?

A Department of Housing tenant's life, and that of her children, was put at risk by the Hurstville branch's refusal to carry out its own Domestic Violence policy.

The Sutherland Domestic Violence Committee has complained that refusal to close her file and open a new one under another identity left the family at risk when her extremely violent husband was released from prison and began looking for them.

The Department replied that a review of the case and other issues raised by the committee was undertaken, but nearly three months later no outcomes or statement by the Department have been forthcoming.

The treatment of this case, and others, has been so careless that the Committee questioned:

Has the Department changed its policy to rehouse domestic violence tenants "within weeks"?

Does the risk of domestic violence take precedence over the need to fully utilise housing stock?



(e.g. place a family in a slightly larger flat than their entitlement.)

Has the Department educated its staff on the domestic violence policy and its obligations?

What is the financial and crisis housing assistance stated in the Department's domestic violence policy?

Has the Department decided that the provision of support workers and access to legal services obviates its requirement to provide accommodation for domestic violence applicants?

This last question was raised when community workers from several regions and the Department's officials felt that with such services available, women could safely be left where they were living.

We await the answers.

INJURIES AND INSURANCE

All landlords have to take out public liability insurance to cover tenants.

A member of the Tenants' Union writes:

"Last year I tripped and fell on common property where I rent. Eventually discovered I had cracked my pelvis, also a minor break to a finger.

"A friend (who knows about these things) advised me to lodge a claim.

"My first call was to a legal centre who passed me on to a solicitor who had expertise in the field of personal injury.

"They photographed the area where I had fallen, obtained x-rays and found out which insurance company my landlord was insured with.

"Insurance companies hate parting with a cent and at one stage suggested the fall was all my fault!

"After a year at last an offer was made, conditional that no further claims be made arising from the fall. This was accepted.

"Of course the solicitors had to charge for their work but I have some compensation for being incapacitated for more than a week, relying on friends for food etc."

Eventually a settlement was made which gave nearly \$8,000 to the tenant.



16 YEARS AGO

The first edition of Tenant News was dated 10 November 1991 and titled "Tenants' Union News". It had 10 typed pages.

It was described as the newsheet of the Tenants' Union of NSW, 118 Regent Street, Redfern (still the address of South Sydney Community Aid), open Wednesdays 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. only.

It had 45 people applying for membership and the formation meeting had been held on 17 August 1976.

A statement issued at that meeting said in part:

"The Tenants' Union will bring together tenants, representatives of tenants' groups and others interested in promoting a better deal for tenants."

The organisation had grown from the Tenancy Working Group of NSW Shelter. All its work was done by volunteers. And these volunteers were doing good work.

In five months they had run tenancy workshops for 160 people, and they already had out the first "Your Rights as a Tenant in NSW" in 7 languages.

A major article was about a State Government proposal to control bond money. The Rental Bond Board did not exist then.



Sid Einfeld, then Minister of Consumer Affairs, said bonds would be controlled by his Department, and released by the Consumer Claims Tribunal. The Government could retain the interest money.

The Tenants' Union congratulated him and pointed out the possibility of funding a Tenancy Advice Service from this money.

Nowadays we are having this funding discussion all over again.

TENANTS SERVICE MODEL

Paul Mortimer

The Tenants' Union has recently developed a model which it will recommend for the future funding of community-based Tenants Advice Services in NSW.

This took some months and considerable work to complete.

The task now is to see what support we can get for the model from the major political parties.

The ALP is committed to refunding of community-based Tenancy Services but has not said what they would look like or how many.

The Coalition Government defunded the previous program of Tenants Services and is not likely to refund them.

We are confident that our model is cost efficient and would be effective.

We are hoping that at least one of the major political parties will recognise this and give some commitment to funding tenants services along the lines of our model.

The Tenants Union will keep members informed of developments on this issue.



STEUNPUNT WONEN: AMSTERDAM'S TENANTS UNION

Source: Philip Pamment, Tenants
Union of Victoria

Steunpunt Wonen means Housing Advice Bureau. It advises and helps tenants, and helps develop government policy. It is funded by the City of Amsterdam.

After the war, Holland had a huge housing shortage, and so the Dutch government passed some good tenancy laws.

Rent Control

Each year, the government sets a rent increase for all housing in Holland. Last year it was 3%, this year 5.5% is proposed. This is considered too high by tenants.

Security of Tenure

A landlord can only evict a tenant through a court, and must convince the court why their needs are more important than the tenants'.

These cases rarely succeed, so tenants can usually stay in a house for life if they want it. And what's wrong with that?

Repairs

If repairs aren't done, a tenant can apply to a Commission to freeze rent increases.

So the tenant doesn't have to pay that years' rent increases (e.g. 3%) until the repairs are done. Over years, this can be quite costly to a landlord and puts real pressure to get repairs done.



The agent calls at an
inconvenient time...

Rent Subsidies

These are paid as a right to people on lower wages. They vary on a sliding scale depending on rent paid and the tenants' wage.

Public Housing

Housing Corporations own 50% of housing stock. They use money lent by the government to build housing on land leased from the city municipalities. The corporations mainly supply 'social housing', at the cheaper end of the market.

Most tenancy work is done by volunteer 'tenant committees' with a common landlord.

They co-ordinate repairs, disputes and applications for local tenants. The Steunpunt Wonen helps establish and resource these committees.

Australian governments have a long way to go before they can match Holland's far-sighted tenancy laws.

THE AMERICAN WAY

The Sydney Morning Herald reported on January 22nd:

"SIGNS OF PROFIT WRITTEN ON TENEMENT WALLS

"The owner of an apartment building in Newark, New Jersey, where authorities found human faeces in the lift and blood on the walls has been ordered to live there for a month.

"Frank Oliver, 63, of Wayne, was sentenced last Friday to spend 30 days in the building on a conviction for maintaining a nuisance.

"Oliver's wife, Madeline, said yesterday the building was 'not that bad'. She said her husband tried to get rid of cockroaches, but 'you never really get rid of them'."

MEDIA ATTENTION: TENANT OF YEAR

Hugh Sheerin was named "Tenant of the Year" at the 1992 AGM of the Tenants' Union.

We're pleased to say that this got quite a bit of media coverage up in Newcastle where Hugh lives.

The Newcastle Herald ran a detailed article, accompanied by a picture of their local hero outside his Department house.

The story was also run on Newcastle radio.

And, of course, Hugh and the Tenants' Union took the opportunity to publicise the events leading to the award.

That is, the Department of Housing's folly in trying to evict some public tenants and not give a reason. Hugh worked hard to stop this.

All in all, a successful event.



RANDWICK TENANCY SERVICE

Krista Thomas

The Randwick Information and Community centre operate a Tenancy Advice service on Friday of each week between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

This services all private and public tenants in the Randwick municipality and provides them with advice, education and advocacy on all relevant tenancy issues.

(PENN services public tenants in the southern part of the municipality.)

Since its inception in September, 1990 the service has been able to provide a professional level of tenancy advice about the Act, as well as focusing upon the relevant and topical issues that affect a largely non-English speaking population.

This has involved distribution of translations in four major language groups of the area and networking with agencies that are interested in assisting in providing workshops to groups about tenancy issues.

To date I have circulated a questionnaire to service providers with little response (November 1991)

However, given the time of year and the inimitable overload that most workers experience by this time of year, I believe this was not truly reflective of the need for tenancy workshops.

I have recently contacted the Ethnic Welfare Officer from the St. George and Botany areas and she is very interested in commencing workshops in the near future.

This would be done in co-operation with our own Grant-in Aid worker.

I have presented workshops to Volunteers as a fundamental part of educating them to assist tenants who many require the service whilst I am not present.



This was most successful and will be followed up periodically to update information.

The major focus of this service has been to offer a telephone service to tenants and, where necessary, to interview them about their problems.

Whilst statistics show a reduction in calls in recent months, this seems to be a general trend for this area.

Undoubtedly, the service is still very necessary as is reflected by the number of people who take up the option of taking their matters to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

Telephone work normally constitutes the major part of the workload however, in times when enquiries are low it does create the possibility to expand the service horizons.

Recently, I was approached by The Eastern Suburbs Action Group to assist in researching information about the current housing environment in the Randwick municipality.

This is part of a larger analysis of the Eastern Suburbs.

Whilst I was able to access some very interesting material there were obvious gaps in the information I could secure mainly due to government departments inability to provide it. e.g. The number of properties sold by The Department of Housing in the Randwick/Maroubra areas.

The most vital - but not very enlightening - piece of information was that singles are by far the greater population in the Eastern Suburbs local government areas requiring housing.

The average waiting time is seven years for one bedroom and bedsitter accommodation.

It is anticipated that this service will concentrate in the next months on providing workshops to a variety of different groups regarding the most topical rental issues.

In addition it is hoped that the service can show an increase in utilisation based on a concentrated effort on publicising the service.



Smiling guests on the Palace balcony - The Queen and the Duke exchange smiles while Prince Charles and Princess Anne are absorbed with the plates floating overhead.

BANK PAYS TENANTS THOUSANDS

Joe Thorn
Eastern Suburbs Tenants
Association

On 6 January 1992, Mr. Alex Di Cesare, aged 74, received a letter from a bank manager saying that the bank had entered into possession of his property as mortgagee under a registered mortgage executed in the bank's favour and that he had 14 days to vacate or legal proceedings would be instituted without notice.

Talk about using a battleship to shoot a rabbit!

Mr. Di Cesare had lived at the same address for 17 years after being told by the late owner that he could stay there for the rest of his life.

As a builder he renovated the property and acted as caretaker for the four other properties on the same block of land, all rented by young adults, some of them students.

After acquainting myself with the facts I applied to the RTT on Mr. Di Cesare's behalf for the lease to be extended beyond the fixed term and used the bank manager's name as landlord and the bank's address.

I also applied to the RTT on behalf of the other tenants for various orders - to be recognised as a tenant or what ever.

When the hearing dates had been set I rang the bank manager and explained that I foresaw legal problems and suggested he make an appointment to see me at my office and to bring his solicitor, which he did.

After explaining that the termination notices were illegal and that the issue of legal ones



could well be seen as retaliatory eviction in view of the applications to the RTT, I suggested the bank consider rehousing the tenants and offered to ascertain their individual positions.

Would have loved to hear the conversation after they left the office.

At the next meeting I produced a list of repairs Mr. Di Cesare had done over the years and recommended the bank offer him \$20,000 to leave and to offer the others \$1000 each.

The bank agreed to pay the \$20,000, knocked me down a little on the other tenants, drew up suitable contracts, paid out as agreed and got vacant possession on the 29th of February.

All in all a good result, though in retrospect I wonder if I could have asked for more.

TENANTS BALL

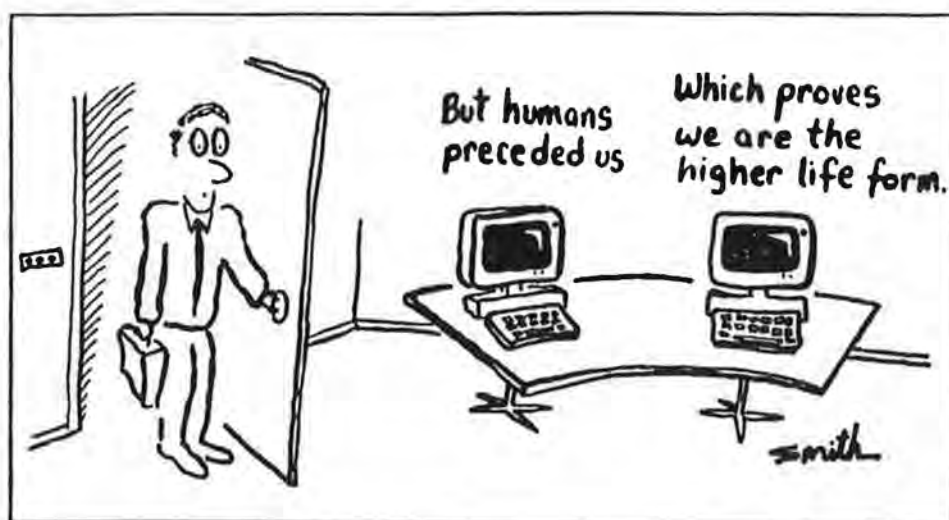
We have decided to hold a Tenants' Ball later in the year. All members will be sent details when it has been organised.

This will be a very enjoyable way to raise the profile of the Tenants Union.

It will be used to publicly highlight reforms needed by tenants in NSW.

If anyone would like to help out or if you have any ideas about venues or entertainers, please call the office on 247 3813.





NEW WORKER

A new Administrative Worker, Karen Davis, has been employed at the Tenants Union.

The previous Admin. Worker, Megan Brooks, has left us for a full time job.

She is now working in Penrith, providing AIDS education.

Megan touched the souls of all who met her. We wish her good luck and many thanks.

ARTICLES DEADLINE NOTICE

The deadline for articles for the October 1992 issue of Tenant News is:

SEPTEMBER 1st, 1992

NEW FACT SHEETS

Tenancy Factsheets have been produced by Western Sydney Tenancy Service (WESTS). They were written by Phillipa Bellemore.

They are available now in English, and some translations will be ready soon.

The factsheets are for tenants who need information on their rights. Community workers will also find them useful.

The series consists of 16 'Factsheets':

1. Residential Tenancies Act
2. Starting a Tenancy
3. Bond
4. Rent Increases
5. Rent Arrears
6. Repairs
7. Locks and Security
8. Access and Privacy
9. You Want to Leave
10. Landlord Ends Agreement
11. Residential Tenancies Tribunal
12. Public Tenants
13. Strata Title Tenants
14. Caravan Tenants
15. Boarders and Lodgers
16. Share Housing

All are now available except the last three.

If anyone would like copies of these factsheets they should contact WESTS on 891 6377 or the Tenants Union on 247 3813.

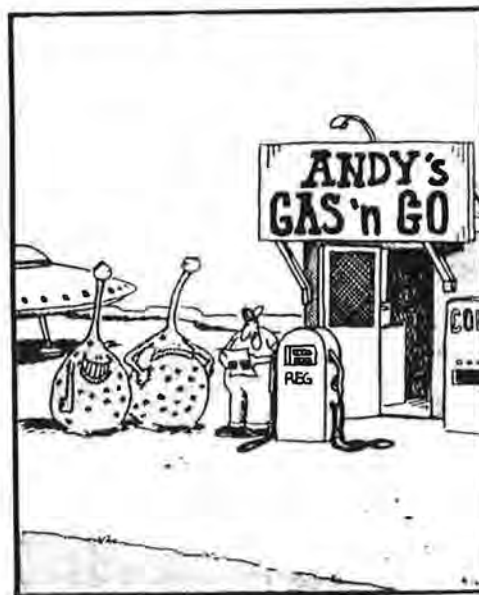
CANTERBURY SERVICE

Canterbury Council has started a Tenancy Advice Service once a week.

Every Wednesday afternoon it is at the Migrant Resource Centre, 139 Beamish Street, Campsie. The phone number is 789-3744.

It is for people renting privately in the Canterbury municipality.

This is a welcome initiative. Canterbury Council and their Community Information Officer, Simon Johnson, deserve recognition.



"Shoot! You not only got the wrong planet, you got the wrong solar system ... I mean, a wrong planet I can understand—but a whole solar system?"

COCKTAIL PARTY

The Tenants Union recently threw a Cocktail Party to welcome its new Board members and thank those who have just left.

The party witnessed scenes which will not be recorded in this respectable publication.

But we welcome newly-elected Board members Linda Dalton, Tracy Goulding, Elizabeth Hayes and Mick Hillman, who bring with them a great deal of ability.

And we extend great thanks to Gary Moore (long-term Secretary), Mary Perkins, Colin James and Lyn Broadfield.

Each of these have given a great deal of hard work and good judgement to the Tenants' Union. Gary Moore, in particular, has helped steer us through a very turbulent period.

It is unlikely that the T.U. would have survived as well as it has without Gary's involvement.

NEW YOUTH SERVICES DIRECTORY

The April 1992 Edition of the Youth Accommodation and Services Directory for NSW is now available.

This is the 5th Edition of the Directory published by YAA (it has been updated roughly every 18 months since '86).

As well as information on 182 Youth Accommodation Services in NSW, this year it also includes contacts for Health, Employment, General Accommodation, Services for the Disabled and General Emergency Information.

To order a copy of the Directory please send a cheque for \$25 payable to the:

YOUTH ACCOMMODATION ASSOCIATION OF NSW
Box 8, Trades Hall Bldg, 4
Goulburn Street, Sydney 2000

(02) 267-8182



ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1991

(i) Increased Funding Base

The Tenants' Union now employs three dedicated and highly skilled workers, Sue Creek (Co-ordinator and Legal Worker), Paul Mortimer (Project Officer) and Megan Brooks (Admin. Officer).

With 2 1/2 full time positions, staff duties were re-organised in 1991 to more effectively deal with advice, policy, community education, advocacy and administrative tasks.

The purchase of essential replacement and new equipment in the office is underway.

Increased funding support from the Federal Office of Legal Aid & Family Services and the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales during 1991 has enabled the Tenants' Union to offer an enhanced range of services to tenants and is gratefully acknowledged.

The emergence of some local tenancy advice services supported by organisations such as the Uniting Church and local councils has been particularly welcome and fruitful relationships are being built between these agencies and the Tenants' Union.

(ii) Consolidation of Services

The Tenancy Advice Hotline handled 4,742 enquiries during 1991.

There was a disturbing increase, due to the effects of the recession, in enquiries relating to eviction.

The Tenants' Union continues to provide backup tenancy advice to workers in community and government agencies and acknowledges the extensive contribution made by volunteers



operating the hotline service in the various participating agencies.

Production and distribution of a range of community legal education materials were enhanced during 1991.

Three issues of Tenant News with an improved format were distributed to members and both the Tenants' Rights Manual (T.R.M.) and Your Rights as a Tenant (Y.R.A.A.T.) booklets were widely distributed.

The T.R.M. in particular is being extensively utilised and is available through bookshops and libraries in addition to general community organisation outlets and the Tenants' Union office.

Administrative management of the Tenants' Union office, financial reporting and systems were further upgraded during 1991 with improvements to:

financial records systems and reporting to the Board and funding agencies

(iii) Policy Development & Advocacy

The principal method that the Tenants' Union has pursued these activities during 1991 is in committee work collaborating with other agencies.

Tenancy Legal Working Party (T.L.W.P.)

A joint sub-committee of the Tenants' Union and the Combined Community Legal Centres Group of New South Wales, convened by the Tenants' Union.

Its focus is on legal and policy issues affecting tenants. In 1991, these issues included share housing, abandoned goods, caravan park rights.



purchase of a facsimile machine and a modem, better usage of data bases and upgraded computer memory

the external premises with repairs gratefully effected by the Building Apprentices Training Ltd. (B.A.T.L.) to fence and gate.

The introduction of superannuation, ratification of industrial conditions and development of staff training initiatives has assisted improved working conditions and productivity in the Tenants' Union office.

Boarders and Lodgers Action Group (B.L.A.G.)

The New South Wales government's Boarders and Lodgers Bill was perceived by tenancy advocates to have serious shortcomings.

These concerns were conveyed to key politicians and late in 1991 the government withdrew the bill. Negotiation is continuing over the future of this bill.

Residential Tenancies Act Consultative Committee (R.T.A.C.C.)

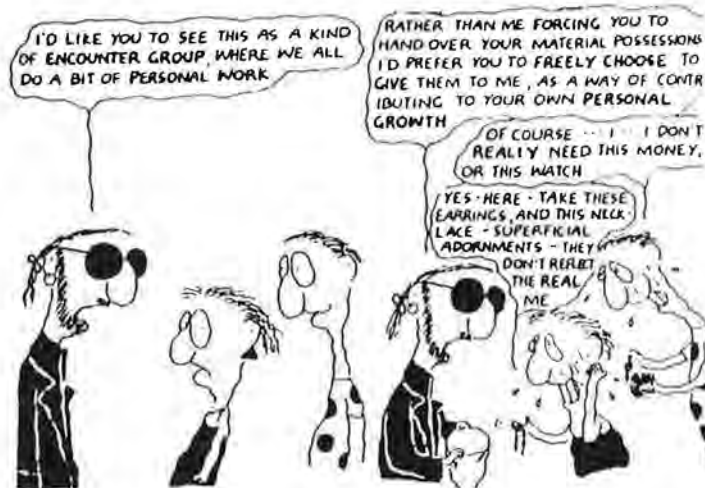
Convened by the Tenancy Commissioner to address issues arising out of operations of the Residential Tenancies Act and Tribunal. (Its brief excludes law reform.)

Although proving a fairly unwieldy mechanism for change, tenancy representatives have been able to prevent the Act being watered down against tenants' interests.

At one, Opposition Leader, Bob Carr, announced his intention to fund community based tenant advice services if or when the ALP regains office.

Other Forums

The Tenants' Union provides representatives for several other community based management committees, e.g. NSW Council of Social Service, Shelter - New South Wales, W.E.S.T.S. and R.I.C.C.



National Association of Tenant Organisations (N.A.T.O.)

Representatives from each State/Territory peak Tenants Associations comprise this organisation. Meetings are conducted approximately 8 times a year by national phone link up.

NATO is a very useful mechanism for exchange of information and strategies and for developing policy positions.

Forum of Non Government Organisations (F.O.N.G.A.)

This meeting is convened by N.C.O.S.S. Meetings included state political guest speakers.

Tenancy Service. Specific one-off activities also include the N.C.O.S.S. pre-budget submission and State Budget Night Analysis.

(iv) Consultations

An ever growing demand from government and the community sector itself for participation in advisory or consultative process saw the Tenants' Union during 1991 participate in a broad range of areas. Key consultations included:

National Housing Strategy (N.H.S.)

Instigated by the Federal government with a projected three year lifespan, this Strategy aims to develop national housing policy which is co-ordinated

with other principal social and economic policy areas.

The Tenants' Union has emphasised matters such as tenancy law reform, security of tenure, discrimination and needs of groups such as non-English speaking background renters.

New South Wales Department of Housing Consultations

The Tenants' Union has been involved in two principal consultations:

Department of Housing 'no cause' evictions

The number of public tenant evictions in New South Wales has dramatically increased since the introduction of the Residential Tenancies Act which allows landlords to evict with no reason.

On 24 December 1991, the New South Wales Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Housing must give reasons for eviction to the tenant and allow the tenant to put his/ her case.

The Department is currently appealing this decision.



(a) New South Wales State Plan under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement - examining how the New South Wales Housing Department delivers and expends its resources.

(b) Intergovernmental Reform, examining the best means of delivering housing and related services between the three levels of government.

(v) Campaigns

Apart from the previously mentioned Boarders and Lodgers Bill activity, other primary 1991 activities were:

(vi) Elections

In the May 1991 New South Wales general election, Tenants' Union volunteers letterboxed pamphlets in selected seats with high tenant constituencies raising issues of concern for tenants with candidates and focussing on the track record of the major parties.

A similar initiative was undertaken in the Entrance by election. In all situations, the candidate with policies and views most in line with tenant needs was elected.

(vii) General Media

Use of the media is an important mechanism for general community legal

education and the publicising of key issues for tenants.

A major focus of media activity for the Tenants' Union in 1991 was housing needs and rights of older people.

Other issues on which media coverage was gained included share housing, tenants' problems with the Tribunal and the Tenant of the Year Award.

increasing the level of membership and members active involvement in the organisation's activities

seeking funding for a solicitor's position to deal with the increasing complexity of casework, Tribunal hearing preparation and representation, test cases and appeals and tenancy advice back-up for the Hotline volunteers.



LOOKING AHEAD

Over the past three years, the Tenants' Union has successfully restructured following its major loss of resources in 1988/89 and has commenced a consolidation path.

Crucial elements in this approach will include:

enhancing the quality and breadth of tenancy services and associated resources across New South Wales. Possibilities for funding of a strategic community based network are to be explored

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Please note that copies of the 1991 Annual Financial Report Tenants Union of NSW are available from the office of the Tenants Union.

They can be posted out on request. Just phone the office on 247 3813.

YES I want to join the Tenants' Union of NSW

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____

First language _____

Please tick

☐ New membership ☐ Renewal

Are you a: ☐ Tenant ☐ Home Owner

☐ Other (specify) _____

FEES

Membership runs from 1 January to 31 December. New members can pay half fees after 30 June. New membership fee includes cost of share(s).

YEARLY FEE

Tick the fee that applies

New Member Renewal

Pension/Benefit/Student ☐ 6 ☐ 5

Waged Worker ☐ 11 ☐ 10

Organisations (by income)

less than \$30,000 ☐ 45 ☐ 40

\$30,000 \$50,000 ☐ 75 ☐ 70

\$50,000 \$100,00 ☐ 85 ☐ 80

More than \$100,000 ☐ 105 ☐ 100

Donation \$ _____

I enclose \$ _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Return to: Tenants Union, 68 Bettington Street
Millers Point 2000

OFFICE USE ONLY

Service Fee _____ Shares _____

Donation _____

Receipt No _____ Membership No _____

TENANT'S HOTLINE
251 6590

for advice and assistance
Monday to Friday 9.30am - 5.00pm

Get Your

Friends

to Join the

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