

Tenant

Spring Edition

NEWS

Free newspaper for NSW tenants

Issue 71 October 2002

Tinkerbell's gone to Neverland

A tale with a not-so-happy ending

By Dianna Evans
Parks & Village Service



Tinkerbell Caravan Park residents rally to save their homes

Residents of Tinkerbell Caravan Park in Ballina, have watched their fairytale lifestyle turn into a nightmare. For over 12 months they have lived with the fear, stress and uncertainty of not knowing where their home will be in the future.

On September 27 last year, the residents of Tinkerbell Caravan Park, Ballina, hit the headlines of the local paper and featured on the television news. The local community was exposed to unforgettable images

of residents demonstrating outside Ballina Council offices. In a witty and comical gesture, children had dressed up as Tinkerbell fairies and in a mock performance chased after an evil Captain Hook developer.

Residents, some in wheelchairs and others on walking frames held placards. The demonstration was part of the residents' campaign to per-

suade Ballina Council that people's homes are far more important than a proposed million dollar shopping complex development.

"The park houses more than 80 families, and more than 100 residents, in 35 relocatable homes and 51 caravans", said the residents' spokesperson Betty Reynolds.

If Queensland-based company, First State Developments Pty Ltd, gets the go-ahead on their planned multi-million dollar shopping complex, where are these people supposed to go? There are few available

sites in Ballina, and none close to public transport.

Many of Tinkerbell's residents are over 60, the oldest being 92. "They invested in buying homes they thought were permanent and can't believe someone is trying to take that away from them..." Miss Reynolds said.

"Imagine being over 80, losing your home and being forced to move to a place where you know no-one."

Being situated close to medical facilities, transport, shops and their families has provided a sense of security and comfort that the residents of Tinkerbell Caravan Park were not willing to give up easily.

With the aid of tenants' advice workers, the Tinkerbell residents developed strong and committed support from services and community members in their struggle to save their homes. Residents took their concerns to decision makers, articles were written and support was sought from local businesses who saw the proposed development as a threat to their viability.

Continued on page 3

Developers dream - a nightmare for tenants'

With a growing sense of exasperation, the Tenant's Union has been following the Department of Housing moves to reform the delivery of public housing in NSW. As the infrastructure is further eroded revenue raising seems to take precedence over the well being of tenants. In this issue we examine the current state of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and hear from public tenants around the state who contributed to the consultation sessions hosted by Shelter NSW (see page 5 & 6). We wonder at the Department of Housing's punitive plans for 'reforming public tenants' and now, as we go to print an historic public housing estate in Erskineville is to be re-developed in a private-sector trade off, displacing around 146 households.

Erskineville public housing estate tenants are outraged to find that their homes are threatened by Department of Housing plans to 'redevelop' the site bounded by Ashmore, Binning, Swanson and Fox streets. In a deal with private developers the Department of Housing is obviously hoping to raise funds from the deal by replacing the existing 146, two-bedroom, one-bedroom and bed-sit units with a development claimed to 'integrate, public, aged and private amenities'.

The Save Erskineville Estate Action

Group (SEEAG) is appalled at the lack of consultation and transparency surrounding the development and believes the department have no regard for the tenants or other residents in the area. Over 200 people expressed their concern at a public meeting held Erskineville Public School on September 7th.

The community of tenants and other residents in the area are rallying with regular meetings for those who are opposed to this project and are concerned about the impact

further development will have on Erskineville.

The next meeting is scheduled for

4.30 pm Sunday 13th October at St Mary's Church next to Erskineville Public School.

A community picnic will be held at the Housing Estate on Sunday 20th October from 12 - 3pm.

Contact SEEAG through the Tenants' Union
PH: 9247 3813 or Newtown Neighbourhood Centre PH: 9516 4755

New tenancy services CTTT six months on Squatters news DoH reforms

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Tinkerbell photographs courtesy Northern Star

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Aims of the Tenants' Union

The Tenants' Union aims to represent the interests of all tenants in New South Wales, both private and public, including boarders, lodgers and residential park tenants by:

- Raising awareness about tenants problems and rights.
- Providing high quality advocacy and advice for tenants through the tenants hotline and legal practice.
- Lobbying for improvements in residential property laws
- Promoting secure and appropriate housing solutions
- Supporting training and resourcing local independent statewide tenants advice services.

The Tenants' Union is a community legal centre that has been active in promoting the rights of more than one and a half million tenants in NSW since its formation in 1976.

Over this time we have advocated on behalf of tenants, to government and developed policies for equitable law reform to protect the rights of renters in NSW.

We have also produced numerous resources that provide information to tenants and their advocates, about their rights and current tenancy laws in NSW.

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War of the worlds

Harvey Volke is a Policy Officer at Shelter NSW. He was one of the first staff members of the Tenants Union in the 1970's, and as a current Director on the TU Board, holds the position of Tenant News Editor.



You could be forgiven for thinking we live on two separate planets. In the mainstream media we're getting stories about how the federal government plans to help home purchasers by introducing a shared-equity scheme between purchasers and the banks and other investors.

Given that investors presumably will be getting only long-term capital gain out of it (and then only when the property is sold!), it's hard to see how it will benefit anybody but investors of one kind or another. It might be great for properties in the eastern suburbs, but don't hold your breath for Mt Druitt.

With this kind of thinking, you could be forgiven for imagining home ownership is the only housing problem there is, but, then, of course, there are two State elections coming up, and we all know where the swinging voters live.

We're also getting stories about over-supply in the private rental market, with rents dropping like lead, and people getting rent holidays - 'pretty please, would you move into my investment property?' No doubt that's true at the top end of the market, but these are not the people who turn up on the doorsteps of tenants' advice services - there's been a 28 percent drop in rental stock at the bottom end of the market in the last

decade, and a nationwide shortage of 150,000 low-cost properties.

There's good evidence that rents are unaffordable right across the Sydney metropolitan area for low-income earners, but you could be forgiven for thinking private tenants are having a ball with a tight grip on the landlord's family jewels - at least that's the way it's coming across in the media.

Well, for our part, we find ourselves stuck with stories like the feds pulling out of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, which provides finance for public housing (and in any case they've been slashing their funding for years); the closure of low-income caravan parks to make squillions on valuable land; and public housing tenants being pushed around so a cash-strapped Department of Housing can flog off some of its land to developers to make a buck to stay in business.

And then, of course, there's the perennial problem of boarding houses, where boarders have no legal rights, and the long-promised legislation is lost somewhere in the dustbin of history.

Stop the world, I want to get off. Which way to the other one?

'RV'

Aboriginal tenants get a better deal

By Ruth Simon - Dtarawarra Aboriginal Resource Unit

Increased funding for Aboriginal tenancy services - ranging from 57 percent to 240 percent - will mean new services, additional workers, and improved outreach.

As a result of the review and re-structuring of the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program, Aboriginal Services will now be able to offer outreach tenants advice to other rural areas.

The workload and the huge demographic area that Aboriginal workers had to endure will now be improved by further outreach services and more Aboriginal Tenant Workers throughout NSW. The new services will be located at Newcastle and Broken Hill.

The Broken Hill service will be conducted by the Maari Ma Regional Aboriginal Health Corporation.

This organisation has been established for a number of years and is an essential service used by most of the Koori community in the region.

Koori people can now gain access to the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Program, which is also a vital service within the Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal people living in the Hunter area will now be able to get assistance from a tenancy worker based at the Aboriginal Legal Service in Newcastle.

For further information about the Koori tenancy services, contact the Aboriginal Resource Unit PH: 02 9589 1839.



Tinkerbell's closure

From Page 1

A number of local government councillors were enthusiastically on side with residents.

The initial struggle to keep their homes was won! The Queensland based development company withdrew from the proposed deal in the face of a huge community backlash. The victory was short lived.

A local development company, The Condon Group Pty. Ltd. negotiated a deal to purchase the land that the Tinkerbell Park sits on. Residents have been told that the park will close and they will have to find somewhere else to put their homes.

Despite losing the battle, Tinkerbell residents have not lost the war. The park owner and the developer have teamed up and are currently in the process of developing a new park named Southern Cross that will be situated on the outskirts of Ballina.

The location of the new park is not as ideal as the current site but Tinkerbell residents will have first option of moving into the new park and will, at the very least, have somewhere to put their home.

The developer has assured residents that the company is prepared to enter into individual agreements with them that will fully cover all costs associated with relocation to the new Southern Cross Park or a different park of their choice.

The first of these relocations have now been successfully negotiated. Residents whose homes are too old to be moved will be compensated for their loss.

In a gesture of goodwill the developer has agreed to treat all park residents the same whether they are legally entitled to compensation for relocation or not. In addition, he has agreed to provide a number of services for the residents that are not required under current tenancy legislation.

These include packing materials and workers to assist residents pack; workers to help move plants and trees, payment of additional costs such as electricity bonds and the provision of a minibus that will be staffed and maintained for 12 months.

The development company will also cover the cost of wages for a worker whose job it will be to ensure the relocations run smoothly with as little disruption to residents as possible.



Photograph courtesy of Northern Star

Residents with disabilities are very dependent on accessible medical services as Tinkerbell is within walking distance of doctors and the local hospital

Residential Park closures all over NSW

Tinkerbell is not an isolated case of a threatened or actual closure. As the value of land continues to rise in coastal areas and on the fringes of Sydney, park closures are becoming more of an issue.

Park owners have seen the value of their asset skyrocket. Land taxes affect their profits as lucrative offers from developers increase. An initial survey by the members of the Residential Parks Forum indicated that residents of parks in areas such as Miranda, Parklea, Leppington, Terrigal, Central Coast, Raymond Terrace and Tea Gardens are faced with impending relocation and an uncertain future.

The biggest losses are in the Sydney area where accommodation for 1,000 – 2,000 people in parks which house a majority of renter/renters (residents who rent both their dwelling and the site) are faced with closure within the next two years.

A report outlining the issues associated with park closures has been produced by the Park and Village Service [PAVS], in association with Shelter NSW and the I.B. Fell Housing Research Centre at the University of Sydney. The report was launched at the annual conference of the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association held on October 1-3.

If you would like a copy of the report, please contact:

Parks & village Service PH: 9281 3588
or it can be downloaded from the CPSA Website www.e-bility.com.au/cpsa/ and from www.tenants.org.au

Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW (CPSA)



invites you to receive a copy of
No Place For Home

**An in depth look at the loss of
Permanent Accommodation on NSW Residential Parks**

launched by The Rev. Harry Herbert
Executive Director of Uniting Care NSW.ACT
on 3rd October 2002 at the Transport Workers Club

Contact Parks & village Service
Telephone: 9281 3588. - Fax: 9281 9716. - Email: cpsa@acay.com/cpsa

The Consumer Trader & Tenancy Tribunal - is it working for tenants ?

On 25 February, 2002, the new Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) commenced operations, replacing the Residential Tribunal (RT) as the forum for resolving disputes between landlords and tenants in New South Wales.

How are things working six months on?

By Chris Martin - Policy Officer Tenants' Union

The establishment of the CTTT marks the end of a specialised forum dealing with residential tenancy matters. An amalgamation of the Fair Trading Tribunal and the RT, the CTTT has jurisdiction over a range of consumer disputes, including strata schemes, home building and motor vehicle complaints. Residential tenancy applications, however, comprise the large majority of matters coming before the Tribunal – more than 70 per cent of the estimated 63,000 applications expected this year will come from landlords or tenants.

After six months of operations, the fairest thing that may be said of the CTTT is that most landlords and tenants probably will not have noticed a difference from the old Residential Tribunal (but see box for some noteworthy exceptions). Most of the Tribunal venues remain the same; so too, does the membership of the Tribunal. As in the Residential Tribunal, the procedure of the CTTT is less formal than that of a court, with an emphasis on conciliation and settlement and the range of landlord-tenant disputes dealt with by the CTTT is the same as previously covered by the Residential Tribunal.

However, the legislation governing the CTTT, the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal Act 2001 ('the Act'), introduces a number of changes that will have an impact on significant numbers of tenants. Some improve the operation of the Tribunal for the benefit of all parties: for example, where one party (whether landlord or tenant) conducts proceedings in such a way as to disadvantage the other – such as by causing delays and not complying with Tribunal directions – the Tribunal can rule in favour of the disadvantaged party.

There are other changes, however, that make the new Tribunal's processes less accessible for tenants, and allow for unfair procedures that are already causing injustice to tenants.

Procedural unfairness and injustice

The most worrying aspects of the CTTT's legislation are provisions relating to tenants receiving proper notices of hearings and their right to a rehearing of unfair decisions. In both regards the CTTT is failing to provide procedural fairness – and the law allows it.

It is a fundamental principle of natural justice that a person should have proper notice of proceedings and decisions that affect their interests. The CTTT Act undermines that principle in cases where there is more than one person in a tenancy. Under the Act, the Tribunal will deem that serving a notice of a

hearing on just one of the persons is sufficient to notify all the other co-tenants on the agreement. The Tribunal will then go ahead and make decisions affecting all the co-tenants. This provision, which will catch many couples and share households, is particularly a problem where the tenancy is ending as a consequence of households separating or where one person's interests may be different from those of their co-tenants.

'Teething problems' means eviction for some tenants

The amalgamation of two systems of tribunals and registries produced obvious teething problems for the first two months of the new CTTT's operations.

Incoming calls went unanswered for hours, applications were listed late, correspondence from the Tribunal – including notices of Tribunal directions and orders – were often received after the date of the required action. The CTTT has apologised for the inconveniences caused.

For a number of tenants, these problems were very much worse.

The Tenants Union is aware of one case in which a tenant received a copy of a landlord's application and a notice of hearing for a completely different tenant in a completely different tenancy, and missed his own hearing. In another case, a tenant did not know that there were proceedings against him until he was notified by letter that the Tribunal had already ordered the termination of his tenancy in his absence.

The tenant applied for a rehearing, and got the Tribunal to suspend the termination order, but was evicted anyway when the Tribunal failed to inform the sheriff and issued a warrant authorising the tenant's eviction.

For example:

- Unknown to A and B, their flatmate, C, has not been paying his share of the rent. The landlord can apply to the CTTT to terminate the tenancy and get an order, enforceable against A and B, to pay the debt. If C gets the notice of termination and the notice of hearing, A and B may never know of the proceedings and orders against them.

The CTTT Act also curtails tenants' rights to appeal unfair decisions at a rehearing of the Tribunal, in particular for the most serious type of decision the Tribunal can make: the termination of a tenancy. Under Regulations made under the Act, once a decision to terminate a tenancy is enforced –



that is, once a tenant is evicted by a sheriff's officer on orders of the Tribunal – the tenant's right to seek a rehearing is extinguished. This is even the case where the decision is manifestly unfair, such as when the tenant can prove that they had no notice of the Tribunal hearing.

Fees, fees, fees

Like the old RT, the CTTT requires an 'application lodgement fee' – now \$27 – to be paid with any application by a landlord or tenant, except where the applicant is in receipt of a benefit or pension. Under the RT, the fee was routinely waived for benefit recipients, who paid nothing to apply. The CTTT, for the stated purpose of 'discouraging frivolous applications', now charges pensioners \$5 to make their applications.

The real cost is even higher. 'To pay the fee, the tenant also has to pay for a money order or bank cheque – that's another \$2 to \$5 on top of the fee' says Denise Steele, Tenants Advocate at the Older Persons Tenancy Service. 'It doesn't sound like much but \$10 can make all the difference to someone living on the pension week to week.' Ms Steele advises tenants on benefits or pensions to include with their applications a letter asking that the whole of the fee be waived because of the hardship caused by paying it. [See next page]

The CTTT has also introduced fees for the issuing of summonses for witnesses. Previously, if you needed to summons a witness to attend and give evidence at a hearing, you were liable to pay the witness expenses, known as 'conduct money', within limits laid down by the Supreme Court. Now, the CTTT charges its own fee of \$31, payable in addition to any conduct money required by the witness. The CTTT has said that it cannot waive this fee, even if it causes financial hardship.

Considering that the CTTT is funded from interest earned on bonds lodged at the Rental Bond Board – that is, tenants' money. It is logical that tenants might expect a system of fee waivers that provides more equitable access to justice for low-income tenants.

The Tenants' Union has raised these issues with the CTTT resulting in positive discussions about how to solve any problems and perceived inequities for tenants who appear at the CTTT. While there have been some problems for some tenants - hundreds more have had successful resolution of their tenancy disputes.

Pensioners rule, OK?

Equal before the law... as long as you can pay

The introduction of a \$31 fee to cover the cost of obtaining summons documents will severely disadvantage pensioner tenants seeking relief from the CTTT, according to Denise Steele from the Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association (CPSA), Tenancy & Housing Unit.



It could also be construed as a form of discrimination as, when faced with a fee, many pensioner tenants will either withdraw their applications to the CTTT and abandon what few tenancy rights they have left to them; or, alternatively, find themselves lacking important evidence in support of their claim.

Older people comprise one of the most vulnerable groups of tenants. They are often intimidated by their landlords as well as the legal system, and have often spent many years in their tenancy. The protection of their rights is of paramount importance in terms of keeping them housed and free from intimidation. For them to abandon these rights for lack of a \$31 fee smacks of a complete ignorance of the financial realities of aged tenants, and adds further to the vulnerability of this group.

Where some working tenants may find the \$31 fee affordable, aged tenants will not. The basic Single Aged Pension now stands at \$210.90 per week.

A private tenant would be lucky to find accommodation in Sydney for less than \$150.00 per week. Commonwealth Rental Assistance would contribute \$45.30 to this sum leaving the grand sum of \$106.20 per week to live on, including all those non-essentials, such as food and medical expenses.

It is neither feasible nor affordable to build a \$31 fee into this equation. It is at this point that pensioner tenants will make the decision to either abandon their application to the CTTT or, because of the lack of funds, leave themselves without the necessary documentation to support their case.

The introduction of a \$31 fee for summons documents will mean additional expense to the pensioner tenant in that the vast majority do not possess a chequebook. Pensioner tenants will have to purchase a money order from the local post office at a cost of \$2.50. This will increase the fee to \$33.50.

As most suburbs have lost their post offices to the relentless push of privatisation, older tenants will be forced to make excursions to surrounding suburbs to purchase a money order.

Travel expenses will become part of the original fee, which has now ballooned to \$34.50. This represents nearly one third of the pensioner tenant's weekly income.

The charging of a \$31 fee to pensioner tenants seeking relief at the CTTT will severely disadvantage this most vulnerable group.

It will mean that because of the costs involved many will withdraw their application to the CTTT or, by not requesting a summons, severely reduce their chances of having their tenancy rights recognised.

A waiver of fees for pensioner and other disadvantaged tenants is urgently called for as a means of ensuring justice for all, not simply for those who can afford to pay for it.

A tenancy service hits the road to Campbelltown

By Carol Hannaford

South Western Sydney Tenants' Service has relocated from Liverpool to Campbelltown and tenancy worker Brij Dat is happy about it despite the fact that he lives just across the road from the old location.

"The most important thing is that our service has been funded for the next three years and tenants will still be able to get assistance. NSW tenancy services have recently gone through a fairly onerous review period so it's good to know we can just get on with the job now."

South West Sydney tenancy service is now housed at the Macarthur Community Legal Centre.

Macarthur CLC specialises in the legal issues of discrimination, credit and debt, family law, domestic violence and unfair dismissal. Brij Dat and his colleagues Dianna Evans and Douglas Lee can now add tenants' advice and advocacy to this list.

Brij discovered tenancy law while he was at University. He attended a training course provided by the Tenants' Union and volunteered as part of his legal studies.

"Before I knew it I was a tenancy caseworker," he grins. "This part of the Sydney region has a huge tenant population and many need the help that South West Tenancy Service provides," he says.



Brij Dat, Dianna Evans and Douglas Lee from South West Sydney Tenants Advice & Advocacy Service

"Many tenants need help due to problems with speaking English, difficulties with literacy or they may simply need some guidance or information on how to deal with tenancy issues that can range from basic repairs to avoiding eviction."

A number of the tenancy matters that Brij handles are resolved in the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) formerly known as the Residential Tribunal.

"Often people are hesitant of authority and think of the CTTT as a court and so are

intimidated. We help support them and overcome their fear.

Tenants can get good resolution to their tenancy problems through the CTTT and we can help them through it."

Many people do not know the extent of their rights until they have a problem with their tenancy. Like the South West Sydney office, the NSW network of tenants' advice and advocacy services is committed to empowering tenants to know and exercise their rights.

Tenancy advice is initially offered by phone and then if necessary appointments can be arranged. The advice is free and available to all NSW tenants.

(See back page for local service details)

South West Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service can be contacted at the Macarthur Legal Centre from 14 October 2002.

PH: 02 46281678 or
1800 631993

The Commonwealth and States are now entering a key period of negotiation over the future of the Commonwealth-State Housing agreement (CSHA), and it is vital to campaign hard for more and better funding for public housing.

People in the community sector – and the people most affected, tenants themselves – are alarmed at the direction public housing has gone in recent years.

They want to see a proper social housing sector with guaranteed funding, and one that is not reduced to individual welfare hand-outs so people can exercise some mythical choice between public and private rental housing.

That was the emphatic message from a series of consultations held by Shelter NSW around the State during July.

The Department of Housing agreed with Shelter that it was important for people to

understand the issues, and to provide feedback that could be fed into the negotiation process. Accordingly, the Department funded Shelter to do the consultations.

The timeline was very tight, because the federal and State Ministers were due to meet again on 6 August, and it was important to get the consultation feedback in time for it to be reported to that meeting.

During July, a total of eight consultation sessions was held in Sydney city, Liverpool, Wollongong, Newcastle, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Coffs Harbour and Lismore, involving about 150 people.

Participants represented community

housing providers, tenants, housing and tenancy advocacy bodies, government and local government service providers, and non-government organisations like family support services, neighbourhood centres, churches and charities.

On the broad major issues there was a good deal of unanimity, while there was a diversity of specific suggestions and recommendations.

In some cases, also, while there was clear opposition to some proposals currently under discussion, responses also indicated preferences if, in fact, the Commonwealth and States went down that particular path.

The responses from the consultation process indicated:

1. There was near-unanimity that the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program should be available in remote, rural and urban areas on the basis of need, and not just in remote areas.

2. A large majority called for the development of a National Housing Strategy in which the Federal Government, State and Territory Governments, and community representatives should participate.

3. In relation to avoidance of poverty traps, a large majority called for Centrelink and Department of Housing (DoH) regulations to be made more flexible so it was easier to obtain work and not lose income or rental rebate.

4. A majority wanted the formula for social housing rents to remain as a percentage of income, although a substantial minority was prepared to consider another rent-setting formula, provided rents remained affordable for low-income people.

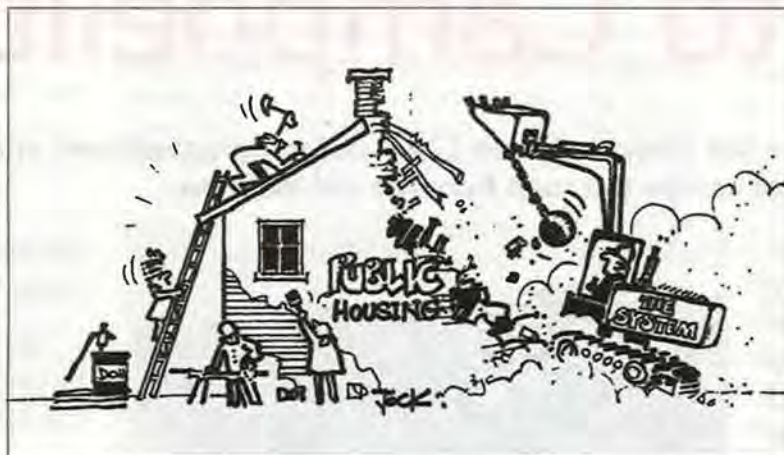
5. A majority said the DoH should vary its products to ensure a greater flow of income by increasing stock, broadening eligibility, and cross-subsidising higher rental payments. Substantial numbers also wanted increases in Centrelink and/or Rent Assistance payments, and the development of joint ventures with the private sector.

6. A majority said State Housing Authorities should broaden their client base (without penalising people in need) by increasing the size of the social housing sector. A large minority said it was impossible under present circumstances.

7. In terms of the balance between maintenance and upgrading and asset sales, and the construction of new housing, responses called for more funding for the DoH, as its funds were insufficient for both maintenance and new housing.

8. To encourage private investment in social housing, the majority of responses called for Government to give incentives to the private sector. A substantial minority called for Government to legislate to require superannuation funds to invest in social housing, and a somewhat smaller number called for Government to use its own resources.

9. To enable social housing providers to enter financial arrangements with private enterprise the preferred options were (i) to set up a body holding equity in housing stock; (ii)



to give equity in stock to all housing providers so they can borrow against it; (iii) a substantial minority was unsure or did not know, or rejected the private financing option.

10. In terms of eligibility requirements, a large majority said they should be relaxed to address a wider constituency; but substantial numbers who said either that eligibility should remain the same (or be tightened further), or that they did not know, were clearly concerned to ensure that the people in the highest need should be housed as a priority.

11. In terms of identifying other revenue streams the preference was overwhelmingly for adjustments and/or use of the taxation system. In order of preference these were (i) use land tax and stamp duty, or a percentage of them; (ii) introduce capital gains tax on

luxury homes; (iii) increase taxes on high-income earners; (iv) increase company taxes.

12. People were concerned about the proposed shift from CSHA to CRA funding for social housing, and often called for much wider consultation and detailed analysis before any such shift was made. A large majority said the CSHA should remain as a special purpose program drawing Commonwealth and State funds into capital construction of social housing. A substantial minority said they did not know, and a smaller minority said that CRA should replace capital funding as it provided an assured income stream and was indexed.

13. If such a switch was made, a large majority wanted guarantees of at least the same level of funding as currently.

14. There was a similar response to the question of what should be in any transitional arrangement: There was a virtually unanimous demand for no reduction in Commonwealth funding as a result of the switch. Indeed, many called for growth funding in any interim period.

15. If CRA were extended to public housing tenants, more than half of respondents said it should be paid in a block to State Housing Authorities, with a quarter reporting they did not know, and a smaller number saying CRA should be paid directly to tenants.

16. A large majority called for the continuation of tied housing programs like the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, the Crisis Accommodation Program and the Community Housing Program, while accepting that some of these could be reviewed and made more flexible. Some suggested there should be additional tied programs for group with specific needs, like refugees and people of non-English-speaking background.

The future for public housing: no swings and roundabouts – just a downhill roller coaster

There have been plenty of indications that the federal government is looking at radical changes to the way housing assistance is delivered. What they are looking at is a massive switch from capital funding for public housing through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement to using Commonwealth Rent Assistance as the answer to all low-income housing problems.

By Harvey Volke

At the moment public housing tenants are not eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance. The Commonwealth is looking at making them eligible and forgetting about direct grants to State Housing Authorities.

The problem for State Housing Authorities is that there has been a long-term run-down in Commonwealth funding – and this at a time when more and more people have been seeking public housing as literally the only housing they can afford. In addition, the pressure to build ever more public housing as cheaply as possible has meant cutting corners on issues like keeping up with maintenance, repair and upgrading costs, and the Department of Housing is now paying out massive sums to catch up.

Add to that two further issues: First, the Commonwealth has required the States to target public housing ever more tightly to people with the highest and most complex levels of need. In its turn, this has led to the second issue – the costs of maintaining troubled estates have escalated, as have the costs of providing services as distinct from housing; and with more than 90 percent of tenants now on pension or benefit and consequently on rebated rents (an almost direct reversal of the situation of say 30 years ago) has meant rental returns have dwindled to a trickle, and the shortfall is not being taken up by increased grants.

And what that means is two things (at least). First, new public housing construction has shrunk to a trickle – now below 500 new starts a year, the lowest number since the CSHA began in 1945. And second, it means the Department of Housing is interested in making what it can out of the deal the Commonwealth is proposing.

The risk from this is that rents will be set at market levels (as they currently are), but the only subsidy will be CRA rather than the present rebate. And CRA is considerably less than the rebate, which could present serious affordability problems for tenants.

But it would also give the Department an assured and indexed source of funding more predictably long term than what might or might not arrive in a CSHA which is likely to disappear once the GST funds start flowing back to NSW in 2008.

Little wonder the Department of Housing is interested in the new deal, especially since one of the fringe benefits is it will get a bigger percentage of CRA, since it's obviously based on the number of beneficiaries, and NSW has many more public tenants than any other State.

For its part, listen to what the Commonwealth Government itself has to say, in the person of the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Amanda Vanstone (there hasn't been a federal Minister or Department of Housing since the current government came to office):

I think it's the Govt's Public Housing Policy...



"... We don't think we should be discriminating between the two [low income people in the private and public rental markets] and predominantly helping people who go into State housing.

"If you're in the low-income sector and you need help, we should be offering both types of help... It is correct to say that we're shifting the balance of our money into what we think is better mix.

"If you get a public housing spot and you're a low-income person, and you're look-

ing for work and your work is way on the other side of town, this is a real problem with public housing, but all of the State Housing Ministers agree we're going to try and fix because public housing isn't where the jobs are...

"... We have been working with the States on making sure that the people on their lists are the most in need, that they are the people who need... more secure housing, as opposed to those who could be better served by being in the low-income rental assistance market.

"Now each of the States have got varying problems about managing their waiting lists and managing a situation where they get someone a house who then perhaps in a few years' time doesn't need it. And that's our common problem: Moving people out of housing who no longer need it."

[Extract from an interview on 4QR Brisbane on 21 August.]

Of course, among the many criticisms that could be made of these statements, the most glaringly obvious one is that Commonwealth Rent Assistance simply does not address the affordability problems – or, for that matter, the supply problems – of low-cost private rental housing, in, say, the biggest rental markets of all in Sydney and Melbourne. It is also clear that this whole issue is locked into the federal government's "welfare reform" agenda, particularly in relation to getting rid of work disincentives and poverty traps.

There has to be a better way, and some of us, at least, would argue that expanding public housing and encouraging affordable housing provision in the social housing sector for the low-income people trapped in the private market would be that better way.

But that is not what is on offer. And that is the hard message Shelter NSW had to take to the community sector in its consultations around the State during July.

(see page 6)

Law & Justice Foundation
OF NEW SOUTH WALES
Independence and Innovation

As part of the Legal Needs and Access to Justice project the Law & Justice foundation is conducting a study into the legal issues older people encounter and their access to legal information, advice and services.

Contact: Julia Perry PH:9221 3900
Email: jperry@lawfoundation.net.au

What are the legal needs of older people in NSW?

If you are an older person who would like to participate you can:

- ♦ Write to us about your legal problems
- ♦ Attend a group meeting

If you work with older people we are also interested in your experiences with the legal needs of your clients.

There is a way out - Domestic Violence and tenancy

By Sue Thomas - Inner Sydney TAAS



You bow your head to the Magistrate, the court room is full, people's eyes follow you as you enter the court, a black eye, bruised, red eyes from the tears that just will not stop, you feel scared and you know there is no way to hide the reason you are there.

A Clerk of the Court calls your name and the name of the perpetrator, the thought of having to face your partner makes you sick to your stomach, should you continue with this or just leave, go home, pack your bag and walk out?

This is the frightening scene at any Local Court in any part of the country on the days when Domestic Violence Orders are called over for mention. How do you know what to do, can you stay? Can you go? What about the rent? Where can you go?

If tenants had the opportunity of being informed about their tenancy status at this court appearance stage, there may be a different outcome for all those who pack up and leave their homes because it is all just too hard.

How is Domestic Violence defined?

Domestic Violence includes behaviours ranging from direct physical violence to sexual assault, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and threats, psychological abuse, economic deprivation, control and social isolation and occurs across all sections of society, among people of all races, all ages, same sex relationships and all socio-economic backgrounds.

There are many different forms of tenancy and knowing the type of agreement you have can make a big difference to the options available to you whether you want to leave or stay for example:-

If the tenant were a head tenant they can apply for an Exclusion Order at the first mention date which would exclude the perpetrator from the home. However, tenants need to be aware that a Magistrate must take into account a number of issues before granting an exclusion order.

These include:

- That the parties should not be required to live under the same roof.
- The defendant's financial resources.
- The defendant's alternative accommodation options.
- The consequences for the applicant/applicant children if the order is not made.

Exclusion Orders do not affect any legal interest or equity the defendant may have in the premises, including their rights or liabilities as a tenant.

Therefore tenants need to know what their tenancy status is before entering the court. If they are considered the co-tenant they need to know the implications of moving out?

If they are a Department of Housing tenant then they need to find out what the Department's Policy is.

What if they are a sub tenant, or a Boarder/Lodger?

Do they even know what their tenancy status is? All these questions only come to mind as the Magistrate is asking them if they are seeking an Exclusion Order, or where they are presently living and are any children involved, or any proceedings presently before the Family Court.

Tenants under such emotional and often physical pain, find it very hard to make the clear decisions under these circumstances.

The Inner Sydney Tenants Service at Redfern Legal Centre is conducting a pilot project involving a Tenancy Worker being available at Redfern Local Court each Friday morning to discuss and be available to all tenants who are victims of Domestic Violence and who are scheduled to appear that day.

So far, the tenancy service has advised some 35 tenants in the past 3 months. The worker provides on-the-spot advice, arranges and advises tenants about options with accommodation, such as refuges. Advice is also provided about gaining entry back into the property, applying for Priority Re-housing with the Department of Housing, and assistance is given with writing to landlords to allow tenants to terminate their agreements early if necessary.

The service has enabled many tenants to gain re-housing in a very short time with the assistance of the Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at Redfern Court. This officer provides us with support letters and refers clients to us who have not taken their orders out as yet. There has been an excellent relationship developed with the Police in these matters and this can only assist tenants in the long term.

It is hoped that the evidence gathered through the pilot study would help to reform the Residential Tenancy Act to make it clear domestic violence acts are a breach of the tenancy. It is also hoped that this pilot project will lead to greater access for tenants in Domestic Violence situations and capture potential tenancy problems before they escalate.

Southern Sydney Tenants Advice Service and the Inner Sydney Tenants Advice service have long had a list of amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act that would help protect victims of Domestic Violence:

These provisions allow people experiencing Domestic Violence to either:

a. exclude the perpetrator from the tenancy, irrespective of whether they are the head-tenant or co-tenant, and have the tenancy given to the person experiencing domestic violence, or

b. end the tenancy by a direct application to the Tribunal, without having to serve a notice of termination. This would allow domestic violence matters to be dealt with quickly.

These provisions also gives the Tribunal jurisdiction to deal with domestic violence disputes between co-tenants, an area where the tribunal has no jurisdiction at present.

So what are a tenant's options when involved in a domestic violence situation?

If the tenant is a head tenant, one who signed the agreement on their own, then they can give 14 days notice to the sub tenant for breach of the agreement and seek an exclusion order when taking out the Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO)

If the tenant is a co-tenant, and has signed a Residential Tenancy Agreement with a spouse or partner, and a Domestic Violence situation occurs, they should leave. They should immediately seek an ADVO and notify the landlord in writing that they have vacated the property and make it clear to the landlord they are no longer legally bound to the tenancy agreement. The landlord may still pursue the tenant through the Consumer Claims and Tenancy Tribunal or the local Court, however, the tenant can at least prove when they left, that the circumstances were dangerous and they attempted to mitigate the loss to the landlord.

If the perpetrator leaves and the tenant cannot afford the rent they should seek to be recognised as a tenant and get another person in to share. Alternatively they should break the agreement with written notification to the landlord.

If the tenant is a Department of Housing tenant they can apply for Emergency Re-housing immediately. The Department takes incidents of Domestic Violence very seriously. If nothing is available immediately the tenant should seek assistance from a Refuge. Of course, if Department of Housing tenants were offered "shared" tenancies instead of "joint" tenancies this would give the victim of Domestic Violence more flexibility under the Residential Tenancy Act to terminate the agreement.

If the tenant is a sub tenant they can either obtain an ADVO with an exclusion order and apply to the CTTT to be recognized as a tenant (This option is not available to public tenants). Or if they want to go they

Continued on page10

Some months ago the Minister for Housing announced "reforms" to public housing. Those changes included two key changes – new public housing tenants will have to pay bonds; and they will not be offered security of tenure. Instead, they will have to sign fixed-term agreements.

At the same time, the Department released a series of factsheets explaining the proposals. The Department claims that these changes will assist to create sustainable tenancies and build viable communities. Bonds will encourage responsible behaviour by tenants and in return for that good behaviour public housing tenants can expect to have their tenancies renewed an unlimited number of times. A carrot and stick approach; a panacea for the problems facing public housing estates.

But are the problems on public housing estates as bad as portrayed on nightly current affairs shows? And are those problems caused by unappreciative and irresponsible tenants?

Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service regularly receives complaints from public tenants and regularly represents public tenants at the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal in matters where the Department of Housing is seeking termination, or where the tenant is seeking orders that the department undertake repairs. Problems include long waiting lists; lack of repairs by the Department and claims of nuisance and annoyance.

In southern Sydney waiting times for housing have ballooned. It is not unusual for applicants to wait at least 12 years before getting an offer. In other areas waiting times are even longer. Whilst waiting for an offer many low income households spend large proportions of their income paying private rents.

Otherwise, if they cannot afford or access the private market applicants are effectively homeless, moving between family members or between refuges. Or they move away from Sydney to find cheaper housing in regional centres or even interstate.

Once in public housing tenants face enormous hurdles in having repairs effected to their premises. SSTAAS's experience is that lack of repairs is common to the entire range of public housing dwellings. We receive complaints whether tenants are residing in newly constructed flats, old fibro houses or premises headleased from the private market.

Lack of repairs is very common for long-term tenants, particularly those living in the older fibro cottages. Tenants' complaints include problems in relation to leaking pipes, mould infestations, electrical problems and poor security. It would not be unfair to say that the Department does not maintain their dwellings to the level expected of private landlords.

The other area of complaints regularly

Reform Public Tenants or Reform Public Housing?

by Rita Wilkinson - Tenant Advocate Southern Sydney Tenants' Advice & Advocacy Service

received by tenant advice services is about claims of nuisance and annoyance. These matters customarily consume huge amounts of time and energy of TAAP services; but also of the Department and the Tribunal. In many of those cases the cause of the dispute is not a bad tenant – rather, the dispute can be traced to poorly-designed-medium density estates; poor allocation policies and stressed communities characterised by socially isolated households living on a financial precipice.



The above description roughly paints a broader picture of the issues facing public housing. Of course, the details will vary in different locations. What is evident is that public housing has become marginalised. It is now nothing more than a safety net for people who fall out of the booming private property market. It is crying out for a desperate injection of funds. If that is the current state of public housing then will the proposed changes as espoused by the Minister bring stability and viability to public housing?

In the factsheets issued by the Department, it is proposed to cap bonds at \$800. It is anticipated that the average bond for a single person household would be in the vicinity of \$620. It is proposed that new public housing tenants will pay an extra five-percent of their income towards the bond. Assuming the incoming tenant receives the Disability Support Pension this means the tenant will pay an extra \$21.50 per fortnight for at least 60 weeks. That represents an immense loss of income for a household living on the breadline, particularly given re-

cent increases to other expenses such as pharmaceutical costs.

Putting tenants on to fixed-term leases will not alone encourage commitment to their local communities. What if their housing is of poor standard and the Department does not do the repairs? What if their community is stressed because of social and financial isolation, or those stresses are exacerbated because of poorly designed estates? Removing security of tenure will not create harmonious communities and it will not produce good tenants.

What the proposals will do is create additional work for Department of Housing staff. If the Department intends to claim against bonds for property damages then Departmental staff will have to ensure that property condition reports are completed for each new tenancy and spend additional time preparing for and attending Tribunal hearings. It will also mean an increased workload each time a tenancy agreement is to be renewed. Inadvertently it will put additional pressure on the Department to ensure properties are maintained. The Tribunal assumes landlords repaint premises approximately every seven years and replace floor coverings every five to ten years, allowing for normal wear and tear. This would be contrary to the standards currently seen by tenant workers.

If the Government really wishes to create sustainable and viable public housing communities then an alternative approach should be considered. Rather than reforming how the Department administers public housing perhaps it is time to reform public housing. Rather than being a marginalised safety-net public housing should be seen as an investment for all of society. Good public housing is the foundation block for low and moderate earners and their families to access education, employment and health, and from which to build healthy communities.

Immediate action could be taken to ease restrictions on entry to public housing. Income eligibility guidelines have not been increased since 1995. Yet housing prices, particularly in the greater Sydney region, have increased dramatically since 1995 and in some cases property prices have increased up to 65%. Incomes for low to moderate income earners have not kept pace. Despite being the most expensive State in Australia for housing, NSW has the most restrictive access to public housing. For example a two-person household in NSW can earn no more than \$500 gross per week. In SA and ACT that same household can earn \$800 per week. The only State

Continued over



NSW Tenancy workers meet to share expertise (& funny stories) Nov. 2001

Tenancy Services refunded at last!

By Kiri Hata Co-Coordinator Tenants' Union

The Minister for Fair Trading, John Aquilina, recently approved funding for the TU to continue to provide resources and support to all Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services in NSW.

The positive decision came after much hard work by the Coordinator, Board of Directors and staff in preparing the major 'expression of interest' proposal, and then waiting nervously for the outcome. The process of calling for tenders from any interested organisation or group in NSW to provide services under the Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Program (TAAP) was only introduced this year.

As in other instances where Government has shifted to open tenders for locally based services, the process was nerve-racking and very labour intensive for community

agencies. Many existing services came close to laying off staff and closing their doors as the previous contracts wound down in late June.

Happily for the TU, our expertise, experience and commitment was recognised, and a three-year contract has been signed to provide resource services and support in six areas.

These are legal support, training, resource production, information technology, coordination and secretariat support, and policy development.

Our congratulations to all those locally based TAAP agencies and workers around the state who were also successful in their funding bids, and we look forward to ensuring that the needs of all tenants are better met through our collaborative work.

Improvements to tenancy services have been provided in the following areas:

South Western Sydney;

New location at Macarthur Community Legal Centre in Campbelltown.

Hunter:

Aboriginal Tenancy worker based at Aboriginal Legal Centre in Newcastle

North Western NSW :

Service now operating from North & North West Community Legal Service in Armidale

South West NSW:

Expanded outreach services in Wagga Wagga, Albury, Quenbeyan and Griffith

Broken Hill:

Aboriginal tenancy worker

Park & village Service:

Funding for a Solicitor

Reform Public Tenants or Reform Public Housing?

From page 9

with lower eligibility criteria is Tasmania, where eligibility limits are linked to home ownership affordability.

The excessive stringency of the eligibility guidelines is highlighted when compared to Centrelink payments. The public generally perceive any person receiving a Centrelink payment as low-income or disadvantaged. Yet many part-time workers in receipt of part Centrelink payments are not eligible for public housing.

A single parent on a gross income of \$25,000 and in receipt of a part parenting payment is not eligible for public housing in this State. A single person on a disability support pension but earning at least \$260.00 per week would be ineligible for public housing.

At the same time as lifting restrictive access to public housing the Government could take immediate action to increase the stock of public housing. In doing so the department could target those households who are working but not able to afford adequate and suitable housing.

Key workers such as nurses, teachers, transport and community workers are essential to a functioning city. Overseas countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada are already developing strategies to provide key workers with secure and appropriate housing.

There are many advantages to reforming and rejuvenating public housing. Public housing communities would benefit from an influx of low and moderate income earners. It would bring stability and diversity to estates; and to the Department it would bring in an increased cash flow. With an increased cash flow the Department can attend to much needed repairs and upgrading of public housing stock.

For the wider community there are also benefits. In Sydney and increasingly Newcastle and Wollongong low and moderate income households will have access to affordable, secure and adequate housing close to their places of employment.

The broader public would benefit because key employment positions essential to the city's well being can be filled. Alternatively regional centres can use excess housing stock to attract new residents. New residents, in turn, will attract new services and new services will bring rejuvenation.

Public Housing was introduced so that all in our society could enjoy the benefits of stability and security that comes from home ownership. However, over the last decade the role of public housing has eroded so much it is now nothing more than a safety net for those who cannot survive the private rental market.

That shift is not working and reforming public housing tenants will not turn around the present problems. It is time for a change – let's make housing a basic right for all. Housing is about communities not commodities.

There is a way out - Domestic Violence and tenancy

From page 8

can apply for an ADVO to stop the perpetrator from contacting them, give written notice of termination of the sub tenancy to the head tenant and apply to the CTTT for termination of the tenancy on hardship grounds.

If the tenant is a Boarder/Lodger they can apply for an ADVO with an exclusion order. Or, they can make an application to the CTTT to be recognized as a tenant, (note: Department of Housing tenants cannot do this). Or, they can leave immediately (it is not necessary to give written notice), remove their belongings and apply for an AVO to stop the perpetrator from contacting them.

As indicated, there are many options for a tenant suffering from Domestic Violence. Once information has been absorbed, options examined and they have sought some support, it is then easier to move on and hopefully feel more empowered.

One of the tenants who took out an AVDO recently said, "I have put up with Domestic Violence for all these years and now I knowTHERE IS A WAY OUT."



Squatters News

On 26 June 2002 members of the Sydney Housing Action Collective (SHAC) and the Social Centre Autonomous Network (SCAN) met and spoke with a group of homeless people (Voice of the Homeless) at Bill Crews's Exodus Foundation in Ashfield, Sydney.

The group had specifically asked to hear about the caretaker housing policy that SHAC developed with South Sydney Council in 2001, and the ways that it could be used to provide homeless people with more control over their own housing.

SHAC also handed out copies of the Squatters Handbook from their website [<http://squat.net/shac>] to everyone, while SCAN discussed the Midnight Star Social Centre squat in Homebush, Sydney [<http://scan.cat.org.au>] and the ways that people can get involved.

While squatting continues to be criminalised in NSW, meetings such as these are a crucial way for squatters and other homeless people to meet and exchange information, share skills and build networks of solidarity to assert their right to housing.

Pope Squat – Ontario, Canada

On 25 July 2002 – to coincide with the Pope's visit to the area – squatting and anti-poverty activists occupied an abandoned building in Ontario, Canada.

Now well into its second month of occupation, the Pope Squat has been the base for a renewed campaign by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) for tenants and squatters' rights in a city marked by spiralling rent increases and escalating levels of homelessness.

From the outset, the key demands of the occupation have been to:

- convert the building into social housing
- conduct a city-wide search to locate, inspect and repair all empty buildings in the city of Toronto.
- stop economic evictions by raising the minimum wage to \$10/hr and restoring cuts to social assistance
- restore rent control
- build 2000 units of social housing every year.

THE POPE SQUAT



The Pope Squat has been very successful in advocating for more publicly-funded housing.

It is an exciting example of the ways squatting and tenancy activists can work together with homeless people to create better housing conditions through direct action.

For more information see OCAP's webpage [<http://www.ocap.ca>].



Boarding House research project at Newtown

by Carmen Jauregui Boarders & Lodgers Action Group

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is a community based resource, information and access centre, located in Newtown. It has secured funds from the Department of Aging Disability and Home Care for a new two year research project into insecure accommodation such as boarding and lodging houses.

Dougie Wells is the new Project Officer/Researcher for the research project. He has twenty five years experience in the housing and homelessness sector in Australia and Scotland. He says that what he found most noticeable in NSW was the lack of regulations and rights that existed in the Boarding House sector.

In Scotland, particularly Edinburgh there are strict regulations and monitoring procedures for Boarding House operators managed by local councils.

Unlike the lack of protection in NSW Scottish boarders and lodgers are considered as Residents who have to be given written notices for rent increases and terminations. This gives residents and advocates a more secure position with which to deal with landlords and empowers the residents.

One of the catch cries of the operators in NSW has been that regulations will lead to a serious decline in the Boarding House industry. Dougie's impression of the industry in Edinburgh was that there was no significant impact on the industry. 'The boarding houses that did close in Edinburgh were the 'shabby' operators. If regulation meant residents got a better standard of living, this could only be a good thing.'

This new project funded by the Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care



Gavin Cane, Dougie Wells & Popi Zografakis
Boarding House Project workers

has two objectives. The first objective is a twelve month research phase.

This phase is to document the number of 'insecure accommodation' providers in the Marrickville local government area. This includes unlicensed boarding houses, squats and hotel room style accommodation. It is looking to do a survey with residents who live in this kind of insecure accommodation about their experiences. Dougie knows that these residents are vulnerable to being thrown out. He aims to set up some procedures to minimise any negative impact for residents from participating in the project.

A steering committee will be established to look at issues of privacy, confidentiality and participation. These principles will underpin how the research project will proceed.

The development of the survey is currently underway. Once the survey and steering committee are up and running, Dougie will be out and about, meeting residents or community organisations who can provide information and assist in the project.

The second phase of this project is to look at the specific needs of residents in insecure accommodation. Dougie is particularly interested in talking to residents who are frail aged or have a disability.

This project will document whether residents are receiving any support services, or know of support services in the community. Assessing the needs of these residents will give Newtown Neighbourhood Centre the ability to provide residents with the support or referral they might need.

If you are interested in participating or want more information on this project contact Dougie Wells PH: 9516 4755

Alternatively drop into the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre located at 1 Bedford St, Newtown (across the road from Newtown Station).





Tenants Have Rights!

How to avoid problems

- ☒ **Start by reading your residential tenancy agreement. Get some help if you can't understand it.**
- ☒ **Tell your landlord, or the landlord's agent, about any problems and tell them what you want. You should confirm anything you agree to in writing and send your landlord a copy.**
- ☒ **Remember that the agent works for the landlord.**
- ☒ **Keep a written record of what happens between you and your landlord or agent, including what each of you said and when.**
- ☒ **Keep copies of your:**
 - Residential Tenancy Agreement
 - Condition Report
 - Receipts for rent and bond money, all letters and written records.
- ☒ **Never sign a blank form or any papers you don't understand.**
- ☒ **If you receive notice of a Tribunal hearing you should always attend.**
- ☒ **Remember that if you stop paying rent you can be asked to leave. Rent strikes do not work.**
- ☒ **Contact your local tenancy service**

Your landlord can't evict you - only the Consumer Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) can do this.

For more help

Contact your local Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service. Workers will be happy to call you back if you live out of the area.

Sydney Metro

Inner Sydney	9698 5975
Inner Western Sydney	9559 2899
Southern Sydney	9787 4679
South West Sydney	4628 1678
Eastern Suburbs	9386 9147
Western Sydney	9891 6377
Northern Sydney	9884 9605

Coastal

Central Coast	4353 5515
Hunter	4929 6888
Illawarra/Sth Coast	4274 3475 or 1800 807 225
Mid Coast	6583 9866 or 1800 777 722
North Coast	6622 3317 or 1800 649 135

Western

Nth West. Region	6772 8100 or 1800 836 268
South Western	6361 5307 or 1800 642 609

Specialist

Aged Tenants Service	9281 9804
Parks & Village service	9281 7967
Greater Sydney Aboriginal Tenants Service	9569 3847 or 1800 686 587
Western NSW Aboriginal Tenants Service - 'Gunya'	6884 8211 or 1800 810 233
Southern NSW Aboriginal Tenants Service - 'Murrumbidgee'	4472 9363 or 1800 672 185
Northern NSW Aboriginal Tenants Service	6643 4426 or 1800 248 913

Tenants' Union Hotline

Monday - Friday 9.30am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm

02 9251 6590



Get a new lease on life... join the

Tenants' Union!

**68 Bettington St
Millers Point
NSW 2000**

Membership Application

TAX INVOICE

I would like to apply for membership of the Tenants' Union of NSW Co-operative Limited ABN: 88 984 223 164

Name / Organisation: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (home) _____

Phone: (work) _____

This is a: (please ☒ one)

☐ new membership ☐ renewal _____
(Membership Number)

I am a: (please ☒ one)

☐ tenant ☐ tenant organisation
☐ non-tenant ☐ non-tenant organisation
☐ other (please specify) _____

Annual fee runs from 1 January to 31 December.
New members can pay half fees after 30 June.
First membership fee paid covers cost of share.

unwaged \$8.00 waged \$16.00 organisation \$32.00
(all include GST component)

Please find enclosed cheque / money order to the Tenants' Union for:

Membership: _____

Donation: _____

Total: _____

I am over 18 years of age. I support the objectives of the Tenants Union of NSW.

Signed: _____

Date: _____