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www.tutas.org.au

# TENANTS' UNION OF TASMANIA

## Rent Rant



### News Briefs

#### Tenants' Union AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Tenants' Union will take place on Monday 21st October at 12.30pm at 166 Macquarie St, Hobart.

#### Smoke Alarms Compulsory from May 1st

Tasmanian residential tenancies are now required to have working smoke alarms. For more details check our [Factsheet on Smoke Alarms](#).

#### Our Services

Statewide Telephone Advice Line operates Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4pm. Call 1300 652 641 or 6223 2641

Drop-In Service available at 166 Macquarie St in Hobart on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9.30am and 12.30 pm

We also can see tenants in Launceston and

## Residential Tenancy Act

# REVIEW

### Tenancy Bill Gets Through Upper House

Tasmania will be the first state or territory to have legislated minimum standards for residential tenancies, following the successful passage of the [Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill](#) through the Upper House last Thursday.

The proposed minimum standards listed below went through unscathed but not without much discussion and some dissent. The standards require all tenanted properties to be:

- Weatherproof and structurally sound
- Clean and in good repair
- Equipped with bathroom and toilet
- Serviced with a kitchen sink, hotplates and an oven (which can be a microwave)
- Supplied with electricity and one fixed form of heating
- Provided with curtains (except properties owned by Housing Tasmania)
- Adequately ventilated

Other improvements to the legislation include:

- that a landlord/agent must not require a tenant to pay fees to lodge rent (eg transaction charge)
- increases in rent may only occur every 12 months, up from 6 months (except properties owned by Housing Tasmania)
- longer notice periods for most evictions, for example, there must be at least 42 days notice for an eviction at the end of a fixed term lease, rather than the present 14 days
- clarification that landlords/agents may not take photos of properties that identify the tenant

Several amendments also passed that are advantageous to landlords of which the most important are 1) the ability to evict tenants on a non-fixed lease if a family member of the landlord wants to move in and 2) that tenants must give notice when they want to end the lease. The latter of these was changed by the Upper House, requiring tenants to give 21 days notice at the end of a fixed term lease, up from the 14 days that was originally in the Bill. The Tenants' Union was disappointed with the late amendment because some tenants will now suffer 3 weeks of prospective tenants inspecting the house prior to vacation.

Devonport. Call 1300 652 641 for appointments.

The Tenants' Union also provides legal representation and community legal education.

### [About Us](#)

The Tenants' Union of Tasmania Inc. a not-for-profit organisation run by a [management committee](#), [staff](#) and [volunteers](#).

Another aspect of the Bill that the Tenants' Union disagreed with was the introduction of income and asset tests for ongoing Housing Tasmania (HT) tenancies. Although some concessions were gained, the Tenants' Union believed the best option was to scrap the income and asset tests due to the many downsides including further stigmatisation of HT tenants, potential disincentives to work, further entrenchment of disadvantage in suburbs that are predominantly HT properties and evicting tenants who have done a great deal to improve their properties.

The proposed income and asset thresholds can be found [here](#).

The TUT also believes that the asset thresholds are too low, especially for single people under the age of 55.

The changes to the Bill from the Upper House still need to be ratified by the Lower House and that could be done as early as this week. It is likely the new amendments to the Act will commence on July 1st 2014, with some of the minimum standards coming into force as late as 2017.

## Tenant Pride Campaign



We won't go into detail about what many of the Upper House members thought of tenants - you can read Hansard yourself [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) - but suffice to say our plans to run a tenant pride campaign could not be more well timed. For many tenants, renting is not a rite of passage on the way to buying a home, nor an invitation to treat them like second-class citizens.

Being a tenant is a valid choice for your housing and instead of pushing tenants into the real estate bubble, governments should be expanding state and community housing for those who need and want it. For Australians in general, there must be an attitudinal shift away from home ownership to home occupation, particularly as the proportion of renters increases.

Above and below this article are two photos we are going to use for our Tenant Pride campaign. As you can see they feature tenants doing what everyday people do in their homes. And that's the point. The photos will feature on the website and in poster form from later in the year.



### International Tenants' Day



International Tenants' Day falls on Monday 7th October and the Tenants' Union will be using the day to celebrate the introduction of minimum standards in Tasmania. We'll have more information on it soon, but even though some of the standards will not take effect until 2017, it's important to get the word out now.

Internationally, this year's theme is [tenure neutrality](#), meaning that there should be no financial difference between renting and owning a home.

### New Training & Development Officer at the Tenants' Union

*Rent Rant* welcomes our newest staff member, Teresa Clonan, to the Tenants' Union. In her role as Training & Development Officer, Teresa will be updating our staff training and developing our new online training program for tenancy workers and other workers assisting tenants (see below). If you require training or wish to have input into our education programs, please [contact Teresa](#) at the Tenants' Union.

### TUT Online Membership and Training Commencing Shortly



We've had some hiccups but the TUT will shortly be launching its online training programs and online membership sign-up.

Online training will allow tenants, members, housing workers, and anyone with an interest in Tasmanian residential tenancy to access Tenants' Union training that we provide to our volunteer telephone advisors, staff and through our Community Legal Education program.

Online membership will allow tenants to join the TUT online and keep up with the latest information from the TUT through the internet. We also plan to have regional meetings and advice sessions that will be announced through membership emails.

Keep an eye on our [website](#) for details of the launch and links to the membership sign-up and training pages.



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