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www.tutas.org.au

# TENANTS' UNION OF TASMANIA

## Rent Rant



### Latest News

#### 2010 West Coast Roadshow

The Tenants' Union will be on the road again this winter. This time we'll be in the North West and on West Coast. If you're a community organisation from these regions that would like us to provide free legal education on residential tenancy then [call or email us](#).

#### Tenancy Database Review

The Federal Government called for submissions into Residential Tenancy Databases late last year. The databases, which are used by agents to make background checks, are presently unregulated in Tasmania.

Databases are not widely reported by tenants to have caused problems in Tasmania so far, but they cause significant injustice interstate. The Tenants' Union submitted to the State Government that such databases should not be allowed to operate in Tasmania, but if they do operate that regulated that there be strict safeguards to prevent retaliatory and unfair listings, with time limits on listings.

### Tenants' Union calls for minimum housing standards

The Tenants' Union has recently completed its submission to the Tasmanian Government on the Residential Tenancy Act with the key recommendation being the introduction of minimum accommodation standards for rental housing.

Presently Tasmania has the lowest standards of any state or territory in Australia, simply requiring landlords to maintain the house as near as possible to the condition at the beginning of the lease apart from wear and tear. All other jurisdictions require premises to be maintained in a reasonable or good state of repair.

Tenants' Union Principal Solicitor, Sandy Duncanson said "At the moment in Tasmania, a house can be let with mould throughout and the Residential Tenancy Act condones it. With low vacancy rates in all Tasmanian cities, desperate tenants have to take substandard properties as is."

The Tenants' Union submission also called for mid-lease rent increases to be capped at the inflation rate and recommended the end to arbitrary evictions, instead requiring landlords to have valid reasons for ending a tenancy.

#### Summary of Tenants' Union Recommendations:

- To evict a tenant a valid reason must be provided.
- Extension of the notice period to evict a tenant on a non-fixed lease because premises are to be sold, renovated or used for another purpose.
- Mid-lease rent increases be capped at the inflation rate unless there are special circumstances.
- Rent may only be increased every twelve months.
- Steps be taken to end the practice of rent banding (advertising a price range rather than a fixed price) and rent bidding.
- Create a Residential Tenancy Tribunal that makes dispute resolution easier, cheaper and less intimidating than the present Court system.
- Residential tenancy dwellings to be maintained by the owner in a reasonable or good state of repair.
- The introduction of prescribed minimum standards for residential tenancy dwellings.
- Expansion of the role of investigation officers with greater power to issue infringement notices for breaches of the legislation.

## 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

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

## About us

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

- At least one rental payment option that has no-cost to the tenant and is reasonably convenient and accessible.
- Caravan parks, educational institutions and emergency accommodation to be covered under the Residential Tenancy Act (with exemptions and implementation to be discussed further through community consultation).
- Repeal of sections allowing financial institutions to evict tenants renting foreclosed properties.
- Introduction of a 'Notice to Remedy' that allows tenants and landlords to fix problems prior to eviction proceedings beginning.
- Tribunal or Court determined termination of agreements due to hardship.
- Tightening of Right to Entry provisions such as the extension of notice periods for routine inspections.
- Allowing pets on the property unless there are reasonable grounds for exclusion.
- Changes to the Rental Deposit Authority to allow the collection of incremental bonds and the extension of the time to appeal a decision.
- Uniform tenancy application forms that comply with the Privacy Act and Anti-Discrimination Act.
- Maximum rent in advance to be two weeks rather than the present four weeks.

The full submission can be found [here](#).

## New website has more tenancy information

The Tenants' Union relaunched its website in September 2009 with more [factsheets](#) about tenancies, details on campaigns and a publications library. You can also view our [advertisements](#) that were aired last August. Check it out and if you have any ideas about how we can make the website better, [contact us](#).



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