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# TENANTS' UNION OF TASMANIA

## Rent Rant



### Latest News

#### Funding for PRTSS

The Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (PRTSS) has had its funding renewed for another two years. The \$800,000 funding from the State Government ensures that thousands of tenants can continue to have excellent on-the-ground advocacy and negotiation support until June 2012. The Tenants' Union and PRTSS often work in partnership to offer advice and ensure that tenants are not left homeless. Whilst happy with the funding, the Tenants' Union urges the State Government to show long-term support for the PRTSS by committing to ongoing funding.

### MyBond Dispute Principles Revealed

The Residential Tenancy Commissioner has released a draft set of principles used to decide bond disputes. Interested people and organisations, like the Tenants' Union, have been asked to comment and propose changes.

The draft guidelines outlining the principles can be read [here](#), but to summarise the main elements:

- Landlords may only claim for financial (ie monetary) losses. Sums paid to another person or organisation may be claimed against the bond but a landlord's own labour is not considered a monetary loss.
- If damaged property is to be **replaced** then compensation is to be determined by the value of the item at the time of replacement not the cost of replacing the item with a new product. If damaged property can be **repaired** compensation is determined by the cost of repair and any loss of value, if applicable.
- It was confirmed that tenants leaving leases early were only responsible for a percentage of re-letting costs and that this percentage is calculated as the number of weeks remaining on the lease divided by the total weeks in the lease agreement.
- Tenants will only be required to get professional carpet cleaning at the end of a lease agreement if a) the agreement states that professional carpet cleaning is required and b) if the carpet was professionally cleaned immediately prior to beginning of the lease. Some leases that have ended early for reasons beyond the tenant's control may not require carpet cleaning.
- Both general cleaning and gardening must be completed to a standard to which a normal person would achieve. A professional standard is not required.
- The maintenance of tap washers is a landlord's responsibility, whereas replacement of light bulbs and tubes is a tenant's responsibility. However, landlords may not claim against the bond for replacement light bulbs or tubes.

The Tenants' Union will be submitting a response to the draft guidelines. If you have any suggestions please [contact us](#) or you can submit your own submission directly to the Commissioner at [rtc@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:rtc@justice.tas.gov.au)

## 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 Tasmania Inc. a not-for-profit organisation run by a [Management Committee](#), [staff](#) and [volunteers](#).

## New Charter of Rights for Tasmania?

The Tenants' Union welcomes the recent decision by the Labor-Greens Cabinet to introduce Charter of Rights legislation to the Tasmanian Parliament.

We have supported calls for a comprehensive rights based Charter both [federally](#) and in Tasmania and in 2008, joined forces with 12 other organisations to demand a Charter of Rights for Tasmania to include [a right to adequate housing](#).

Early indications are that this legislation will go beyond the Victorian and ACT Charters that are based around civil and political rights to include economic, social and cultural rights. We think that these additional elements are vital in converting ideals into concrete outcomes.

Based on the UN's *Right to Adequate Housing*, the TUT wants the Tasmanian Charter to state that homes should be affordable, accessible, habitable, close to employment and services and allow for cultural diversity. Tenants must also be protected from unfair forced eviction.

It is uncertain when the legislation will be brought before the House of Assembly, but the Tenants' Union will be seeking to have input into elements of the Bill associated with housing.



## TUT seeks meeting with Minister for Consumer Protection on Residential Tenancy Act Review.

The Tenants' Union recently met with the advisors for newly appointed Minister for Consumer Protection, Nick McKim, to find out about the progress of the Residential Tenancy Act Review, instituted by the former Minister, Lisa Singh. The TUT told the advisors that attention needs to be given to the Act and that urgent reform of minimum housing standards, rent increases and arbitrary evictions was vital for the rights and wellbeing of many Tasmanians.

We were told that the Minister intended to follow through with the review and that we would meet with him in the next month. After thirteen years without major reform of the Act and a vastly different housing market in that time, the TUT hopes the new vitality of the Labor-Greens cabinet will translate into better housing for Tasmanian residential tenants.

## We Love Our Volunteers at the Tenants' Union

With such a small budget and staff, the Tenants' Union relies on dedicated and talented volunteers to deliver telephone advice and legal research. Tenants' Union Solicitor, Meredith Upchurch, writes about how she believes that our volunteers are our most valuable resource. [Click here](#) for the story.

## Vale Sandy Duncanson (1973 - 2010)

The Tenants' Union is sad to announce the passing of Sandy Duncanson, our Principal Solicitor, on Friday the 25th of June after long and numerous fights with cancer.

Sandy joined the TUT in 2004 and headed the organisation from 2005 where he sharpened our expertise on legal matters associated with residential tenancy law and broadened our policy focus. He was a passionate campaigner for human rights and spearheaded numerous tenancy campaigns in Tasmania.

As many who have been in contact with the TUT will know, he was the heart and mind of our organisation and his energy, inspiration, courage and commitment to excellence will be missed by all.

Our thoughts are with his wife, Mezzie and his family.



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