



Media release – 7 September 2018

Peak applauds new rental laws which will reduce homelessness

The homelessness sector is celebrating new rental laws which passed through the Victorian Upper House late on Thursday night, with votes of 21 to 17.

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) says that the reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act will protect vulnerable tenants from eviction into homelessness, with removal of no-reason notices to vacate, stronger protections for victims of family violence and more support for people who fall behind on rent to avoid eviction.

“Losing your home, whether you rent or own, is [traumatic and destabilising](#), and until today it’s been too easy for landlords to evict. Today common sense and fairness has prevailed in our political system, and the scales have been tipped to make renting fairer,” said Kate Colvin, Acting CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

“Last night’s vote shows that people in parliament having been listening to the concerns of Victorians, and the services that help them, and agree that renters deserve more protections, not less.”

“Getting into private rental and keeping it is hard enough for many people struggling on low incomes, or who’ve experienced family breakdown, job loss or mental illness. The new rental laws will protect, rather than punish, tenants who are already disadvantaged.”

CHP [has previously released data](#) showing that the number of Victorians evicted from their homes into homelessness has more than doubled in five years. In the 2016-2017 financial year, 43,751 people sought assistance from homelessness agencies because they had recently been evicted from rentals.

CHP has outlined the [10 major reforms in this blog post](#), and a one-line explanation of some below

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Some of the reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act that passed through Parliament:

No-reason notices to vacate will be gone

All evictions will now have to come with cause and, where the cause is not a fault of the renter (ie. renovations), with proof.

A suite of protections for victim-survivors of family violence

Protections against evictions, debts, or blacklisting because of damage done to a property by a perpetrator of family violence, and protections for victim-survivors when they're not on the lease, and stronger abilities for victims to break a lease if they are in danger.

A "reasonableness test" for all evictions

When deciding if an eviction is reasonable, VCAT must consider; if the breach is recurring, if it is trivial, if it's been fixed, if it can soon be fixed, and what the landlord's behaviour has been.

Stronger protections against eviction for late payment

A new breach process will mean that a tenant may be late on their rent up to five times within a 12 month period before facing certain eviction. Currently, a landlord can give a 14-day Notice to Vacate if tenants are 14 days late.

Minimum standards for rental properties

New standards will include absolute essentials: locks on doors and windows, heating, energy efficiency, and the absence of mould, damp and pests.

Centrepay must be accepted by landlords

Landlords must allow tenants to nominate Centrepay to pay their rent – meaning it is automatically deducted on payment day.

VCAT can refer a tenant to a financial counsellor

If a tenant comes back from a financial counsellor with a workable payment plan, this will stop an eviction for arrears.

VCAT may dismiss an eviction if the tenant has a need for social support or alternative accommodation

Those who are at risk of homelessness because of unmet needs will have a new opportunity to stay housed while they get those needs met.

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