

Tenants concerned about security, cost and quality of private rentals – National report reveals

Embargoed until 9.00am Wednesday 5th December 2018

Shelter Tas, the State's Peak Body for Housing and Homelessness, and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania welcome new national research on the experience of renters. *Disrupted: the consumer experience of renting in Australia* is released by CHOICE, National Shelter and the National Association of Tenants' Organisations.

This report comes hot on the heels of the latest Rental Affordability Index (RAI) released last week, which shows the dramatic increase in Tasmanian rents and the resulting impacts on people's lives. 1 in 4 households are renting in Tasmania and 40% are staying in the market for over 10 years.

'This report gives a deeper understanding of the rental crisis, it allows us to better understand people's experiences and concerns while in the rental market, as well as the financial implications of being a renter in Tasmania', Shelter Tas Executive Officer, Pattie Chugg said.

The report reveals that many renters are facing major problems:

- Homes in need of maintenance, but tenants too afraid to request repairs
- Insecure and precarious tenancies
- Rental stress and cost of living pressures.

'Renting in Tasmania, and particularly in the Hobart region is becoming increasingly uncertain for tenants. The tightening of the rental market is seeing this uncertainty begin immediately during the application process, with more and more tenants applying for the same properties', Tenants' Union of Tasmania Principal Solicitor, Meredith Barton said.

Key findings for Tasmania:

- Nearly half of all Tasmanian rentals are in need of repairs, but 44% of tenants are concerned that a repair request could see them evicted
- Nearly 4 in 5 tenants have reported repair issues in the bathroom of their current property
- Over a third of Tasmanian tenants report that a 10% increase in rents would be difficult or very difficult to afford (rents in Hobart have risen by around 8% p.a. in the past two years)
- 62% of tenants are worried about the cost of their rent.

This report highlights the plight of tenants who pay thousands of dollars a year, but face more than a 50% chance of problems with their rental. The problem is compounded as many tenants feel unable to request basic repairs, for fear of rent increases, evictions or just being ignored.

'It is clear we need to provide a better standard of rental property and better consumer protections for renters', Ms Chugg said.

'Tasmanian tenants are being pushed to pay higher rents for properties further away from the amenities of the city and then remain on edge, not even knowing whether they will have a home after the initial 12 month lease. We call for law reform so that tenants have the security of knowing that if they pay their rent on time and keep the place in good condition, they will be able to remain in their homes long term', Mrs Barton said.

The report highlights the stress and financial burden of moving house on tenants. 83% of tenants stated that they had experienced stress caused by unchosen moves, with particular impacts on families with children. 56% expressed concern about moving out of their local school's catchment area.

Shelter Tas and the Tenants' Union call for the modernisation of the Residential Tenancy Act in Tasmania and better protections for renters.

'Renting doesn't have to be this way. Renting is no longer just a short term option, when more than 40% of renters remain in private rental for over 10 years. It is time we modernised tenancy laws in Tasmania to better support people who rent their home. No Tasmanian deserves to live in ongoing housing stress and in fear of requesting much needed repairs', Ms Chugg said.

For more information and comment, contact:

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