

A FAIR GO FOR TENANTS

BUILDING BACK GREENER & FAIRER: A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR LUTRUWITA/TASMANIA

The Greens' plan will deliver a fair go for Tasmanian tenants through evidence-based reform that recognises having a secure, affordable place to call home is a human right.

BACKGROUND

Access to secure, affordable housing is a fundamental human right. In a healthy economy, no one should be left out in the cold. In a global pandemic, even more so.

Yet in Tasmania, the severe undersupply of affordable housing and underinvestment in public housing over the past seven years has driven people into housing insecurity, homelessness and poverty.

The housing crisis shows no sign of abating. For tenants, soaring rents and the threat of eviction are causing deep housing insecurity and driving more people towards poverty.

We can do much better by Tasmanian tenants. The Tasmanian Greens' plan gives a fair go to tenants, strengthening their rights and bringing down their cost of living.

Rent Controls

Rent controls empower individuals to ensure their rents are reasonable. Tasmania's laws currently allow for the challenging of rent increases on the grounds of 'unreasonableness'. They put the burden on a tenant to establish that a rent increase is unreasonable – only applying to the increase, not the resulting rent amount.

The ACT's rent control provisions set a threshold (CPI + CPI/10). Anything over that, and the onus is on the landlord to establish the rent is reasonable.

We will establish rent control laws modelled on the ACT's Residential Tenancy Act.

Tenant Security

Under current laws, tenants can be evicted solely on the grounds that their lease has expired. Removing the ability to evict tenants solely on the grounds of lease expiration would not prevent the non-renewal of the lease for legitimate reasons, including intent to sell the property or use it for another purpose, or for non-compliance with lease conditions.

We will remove provisions allowing tenants to be evicted solely on grounds of lease expiration.

Standardised Tenancy Agreements

Some current leases and application forms contain a range of provisions that are unlawful or unreasonable.

Tasmania is currently the only Australian jurisdiction without a standard tenancy agreement, aside from the NT. Implementing standard forms and agreements will increase the likelihood of agreements being legally compliant and provide a valuable reference point for tenants.

We will develop standard forms and tenancy agreements.

Right to own pets

Animal welfare organisations confirm people will feel forced to give up their much-loved pets in order to secure a tenancy. Current laws allow for the automatic exclusion of pets in tenancy agreements.

In 2017, Victoria passed laws to remove clauses that automatically exclude pets from leases.

We will make it unlawful to prohibit assistance animals in rental properties, and institute the Victorian model for refusing a request for pets.

Funding for law changes

Reforms to tenancy laws will require additional resourcing for communication to the public and for compliance. Rent control changes will require communication, and likely result in additional applications to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner.

We will resource the Residential Tenancy Commission to deal with a higher volume of applications and provide further public information.

We will also fund the Tenants' Union of Tasmania to establish a dedicated office in Northern Tasmania, increase their base funding levels, and extend the duration of funding contracts.

The Tasmanian Greens acknowledge and pay respect to the palawa/pakana people as the original owners and ongoing custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We are committed to Truth, Treaty, Justice, and the return of lands.