FAIRER SAFER HOUSING

Get involved, have your say about Victoria's renting laws

The Victorian Government's *Plan for Fairer, Safer Housing* outlined a vision for ensuring that all Victorians have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

As part of this plan, the government is undertaking a comprehensive, evidence-based review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to ensure it provides a fair balance between the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords now and in the future.

The Residential Tenancies Act is the main source of consumer protection for Victorians living in rental housing, while also outlining the rights and obligations of landlords and agents.

Since it was introduced, there have been many changes, both in the rental market itself, and in the characteristics, needs and expectations of tenants and landlords.

An increasing number of long-term tenants, those who have rented continuously for over 10 years, are either older people on fixed incomes, or families with children, for whom stability is important.

The reasons why people become and remain landlords have also changed significantly, with rental property becoming an important investment and a key feature of many people's retirement plans.

The review will include:

- in June 2015, the release of a consultation paper, *Laying the Groundwork,* outlining the Victorian rental market and seeking public comment on the effects of different trends in the sector. View the consultation paper at fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting
- over the second half of 2015, public consultation on a series of issues papers exploring a broad spectrum of rental housing issues, while also drawing on submissions on the *Laying the Groundwork* paper
- a public options paper in early to mid-2016, outlining the outcomes of the public consultation for final discussion, with the aim of developing reform proposals for introduction into the Victorian Parliament in 2017.

It is anticipated that the review will be completed by early to mid-2018.

FAQs

What will the review cover?

The review is broad-based and encompass wide-ranging themes, such as:

- security of tenancies ("security of tenure") and the viability of longer term leasing;
- protections for people who are older, living with disabilities, and who live in caravan parks and residential parks;
- issues arising before, during, and at the end of, a tenancy;
- standards of property maintenance; and
- the ability of tenants and landlords to manage their relationship and resolve problems that arise.

It is anticipated that these themes will capture issues that come up in the course of public consultation on the paper, *Laying the Groundwork*, released during the first phase of the review.

How can I get updates about the progress of the review or other Fairer Safer Housing initiatives?

You can register at fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting to receive email updates, including overviews of the results of online discussions and polls.

Will I get a reply to my online feedback?

You won't receive an individual response to your comments or submission, but we will listen to your concerns and keep you informed of the progress and outcomes of the different stages of the review.

How do I ask a question or make a complaint about my current rental arrangement?

If you are a landlord or tenant in Victoria, you can get free information and advice from Consumer Affairs Victoria. Visit consumer.vic.gov.au/renting for more information.

Where can I get advice on housing or housing assistance?

For information and advice on public or community housing, as well as housing assistance, visit the Victorian Government's dedicated housing website housing.vic.gov.au.

Submissions

Until **5 August 2015**, you can make a submission outlining your views on the consultation paper:

Online, by registering at:
fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting

By email:
yoursay@fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au

Or by mail:
Residential Tenancies Act Review
Consumer Affairs Victoria
GPO Box 123
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Unless you label your submission as confidential, your submission or its contents will be made publicly available in this and any subsequent review process. We reserve the right not to publish information that could be seen as defamatory or discriminatory.

For more information, visit the Fairer Safer Housing website, fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting.

Other ways to have your say

Over the next three years, the Fairer Safer Housing website will be an important community engagement hub. You can get involved by making a submission and participating in online discussions and polls.

If you would like to participate or have your say, please register at fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting.