



27 August 2020

TENANTS' UNION OF TASMANIA
The Specialist Legal Service for Tenants



To the Premier
11th Floor, Executive Building
15 Murray St
Hobart TAS 7000
attn: Peter Gutwein

via email: peter.gutwein@parliament.tas.gov.au

To the Honourable Peter Gutwein MP,
Re: Extension of Rental Protections during COVID-19

We thank you for ensuring that during COVID-19, Tasmania continues to have some of the strongest protections for residential tenants in Australia.

Ensuring that residential tenants are largely protected from eviction and that their rent cannot be increased has meant that they have not had to worry about whether they have a roof over their heads.

However, if protections for residential tenants are not extended beyond 30 September 2020 there is a high likelihood of evictions for people who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs and are struggling to pay the rent. It will also result in rent increases for tenants who simply cannot afford any rent increase at this time.

Many residential tenants will find themselves in increased financial stress at the end of September 2020 when JobKeeper is reduced from \$1500 per fortnight to \$1200 per fortnight. Despite the best efforts of the government, people that work in industries like tourism, hospitality and agriculture are going to be struggling for some time to come.

As well, Tasmanians on JobSeeker are also very vulnerable, with the \$300 reduction in Coronavirus supplement in September also applying to recipients of this payment. This means 39,500 Tasmanians currently receiving JobSeeker will soon be on an income that is below the poverty line and in increased financial stress as the attached data demonstrates.

We also note that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has recently released the COVID-19 Economic Vulnerability Index (CEVI), a predictive model of the economic impact the coronavirus crisis is having on regions across Australia.¹ The Executive Summary notes that:²

...the most vulnerable areas tend to be located in capital cities and areas reliant on business from tourism and holidaymakers. These areas tend to feature higher proportions of people employed in industries such as cafes and restaurants and accommodation services. In addition, these areas also tend to have higher proportions of recent migrants, and/or people that live in rented dwellings.

¹ Drawn from an unpublished series prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020), *COVID-19 Economic Vulnerability Index*. The Index is currently "regarded as 'experimental' pending the implementation of broader consultation and feedback".

² Drawn from an unpublished series prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020), *COVID-19 Economic Vulnerability Index* pp. 1, 8.

and

The most vulnerable SA2s within Tasmania were located in Launceston and north-west Hobart.

The most vulnerable SA2s within Tasmania were Mowbray (ranked 1), Invermay (ranked 2), Ravenswood (ranked 3). These areas were ranked 14, 154 and 181 within Australia respectively.

The most vulnerable areas within Tasmania had much higher proportions of people born in Australia, single parent families, people employed in café, restaurants and takeaway food industries, renters, households in rental stress and/or household income of less than \$650 per week.

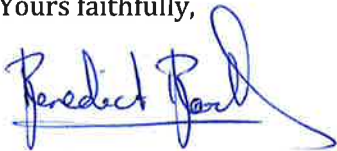
We are concerned that if protections for residential tenants are not extended there will be an avalanche of eviction orders as landlords attempt to evict tenants or raise rents for tenants who are already in financial stress.

We therefore call on you to extend the moratorium on evictions and rent increases until the end of the year as has recently occurred in Victoria.

If these measures were to be introduced, we also strongly recommend that residential tenants who can demonstrate financial hardship should be able to re-apply for funding through the Residential Rent Relief Scheme. A further payment of up to \$2000 or four weeks rent will act as an important protection for residential tenants in their continued efforts to keep up with their rent whilst ensuring that landlords are assured continued rent payments.

In summary, we call on you to extend the moratorium on evictions and rent increases until the end of December 2020 and to extend the Residential Rent Relief Scheme for those tenants who can demonstrate ongoing financial hardship.

Yours faithfully,



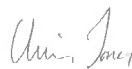
Benedict Bartl
Acting Principal Solicitor
Tenants' Union of Tasmania



Pattie Chugg
Executive Officer
Shelter Tasmania



Jane Hutchison
Convenor
Community Legal Centres Tasmania



Dr Chris Jones
CEO
Anglicare Tasmania



Adrienne Picone
CEO
Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc

Recipients of Jobseeker after paying Median Rent by Suburb

Suburb	Median rent* (house)	Median rent* (unit)	Jobseeker (JS) remaining after rent (house)	Percentage of Income paid on rent (JS in house)	Jobseeker remaining after rent (unit)	Percentage of Income paid on rent (JS in unit)
Hobart	\$520	\$495	(\$42)	109%	(\$17)	104%
Glenorchy	\$420	\$360	\$58	88%	\$118	75%
Kingston	\$495	\$405	(\$17)	104%	\$73	85%
Sandy Bay	\$600	\$430	(\$122)	126%	\$48	90%
New Norfolk	\$360	\$280	\$118	75%	\$198	59%
West Hobart	\$560	\$400	(\$82)	117%	\$78	84%
Rose Bay	\$500	\$360	(\$22)	105%	\$118	75%
New Town	\$533	\$373	(\$55)	112%	\$105	78%
Huonville	\$385	\$320	\$93	81%	\$158	67%
Moonah	\$463	\$330	\$15	97%	\$148	69%
West Moonah	\$435	\$345	\$43	91%	\$133	72%
Bellerive	\$505	\$385	(\$27)	106%	\$93	81%
Howrah	\$478	\$395	\$0	100%	\$83	83%
Rosny	\$530	-	(\$52)	111%	-	-
Lindisfarne	\$495	\$395	(\$17)	104%	\$83	83%
Launceston	\$365	\$300	\$113	76%	\$178	63%
St Helens	\$280	-	\$198	59%	-	-
Longford	\$325	\$310	\$153	68%	\$168	65%
Newnham	\$330	\$250	\$148	69%	\$228	52%
Mowbray	\$320	\$260	\$158	67%	\$218	54%
Burnie	\$280	\$200	\$198	59%	\$278	42%
Devonport	\$320	\$255	\$158	67%	\$223	53%
Zeehan	\$200	\$165	\$278	42%	\$313	35%
Ulverstone	\$320	\$250	\$158	67%	\$228	52%

*Median rent as compiled by realestate.com.au, accessed on 5 August 2020