

**For immediate release**  
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## **Warning: Rent fee rip offs**

The Tenants Union of Victoria has today issued a warning to tenants to be wary of paying unnecessary fees to estate agents or landlords.

The *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* states an estate agent or landlord cannot charge a fee for consenting to the assignment of a tenancy agreement or sub letting. They may charge a fee for the preparation of a written assignment of the tenancy agreement.

Assignment is when a tenant transfers their interest in a rental property to another person. The most common example is where a tenant in a co-tenancy or share house decides to leave and asks another person to take over their lease, assuming all the rights and responsibilities of the original tenant. Tenants must obtain the landlords consent and consent cannot be withheld unreasonably.

The Tenants Union has recently received a rash of complaints from tenants being asked to pay fees of up to \$420 before consent will be given. Some estate agents have also refused to lodge bond transfer forms until the unlawful fee has been paid.

“Many tenants have been asked to pay a fee of one week’s rent before consent will be given. For many tenants this is a significant financial imposition, simply for moving house” said Toby Archer, Policy and Liaison Worker.

The Tenants Union has successfully opposed fees for consent in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on behalf of a number of tenants in the past 6 months.

“There are some estate agents in Victoria who appear to be taking advantage of tenants lack of awareness. Essentially these unscrupulous agents are holding tenants to ransom simply for making a reasonable request. Many tenants mistakenly believe they have no option other than to pay the fee. We strongly urge all tenants to seek advice before paying these unfair and unlawful fees” said Mr Archer.

We recommend that all renters seek independent legal advice before paying an assignment fee. Renters can contact the Tenants Union of Victoria on its advice line **9416-2577** or drop in to its offices at 55 Johnston Street, Fitzroy 3065.