

For immediate release
17 September 2010

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Government tenancy law reforms welcomed

The Tenants Union of Victoria welcomes legislation passed in the Victorian Parliament today that ensures improved standards for rooming house residents, introduces regulation of tenancy blacklists and increases penalties for breaches of the Residential Tenancies Act.

“The Tenants Union has campaigned for many years along with other housing and social justice organisations to improve the regulation of the Victorian rooming house sector. This legislation implements the first tranche of legislative reform recommended by the Government’s Rooming House Standards Taskforce in 2009. This is a great step forward but cleaning up the unscrupulous operators who have come to dominate the provision of housing to vulnerable households in many parts of Melbourne will require further reform” said Mr Archer.

Residential tenancy databases are electronic databases that contain information about tenants and their rental history. The absence of regulation has resulted in many tenants being unfairly excluded from rental housing. Until the introduction of these laws there were no regulations specifying what information can be listed, the reasons for making an adverse listing and how long a listing can be stored. “After March 2012, tenants will know when they have been listed, why they have been listed and be able to challenge an unfair or out of date listing” said Mr Archer.

The legislative changes:

- Regulate residential tenancy databases or blacklists for the first time in Victoria
- Empower Consumer Affairs Victoria to investigate tenancy law breaches without the requirement to receive a formal complaint from rooming house residents
- Require rooming house operators to comply with prescribed privacy, safety, security and amenity standards
- Require landlords and estate agents to inform local government if they have reason to believe their property is being used as a rooming house but is not registered
- Protect rooming house residents from eviction where a rooming house manager is operating under a head tenancy.