

17<sup>th</sup> March 2017



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*Via email: [com.meetings@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:com.meetings@melbourne.vic.gov.au)*

Dear Mr Williamson,

### **Proposed Activities (Public Amenity and Security) Local Law 2017**

The Tenants Union of Victoria (TUV) was established in 1975 as an advocacy organisation and specialist community legal centre, providing information and advice to residential tenants, and rooming house and caravan park residents across the state. Our aim is to promote and protect the rights and interests of private and social residential tenants in Victoria.

During 2015/16, the TUV handled more than 18,160 enquiries. The TUV provided advocacy on behalf of tenants in more than 940 matters, represented tenants in over 240 hearings at VCAT or other Courts, and attended more than 250 outreach visits to rooming house, caravan parks and services. A large proportion of the tenants that we assist are at risk of eviction and homelessness, often presenting with at least two indicators of vulnerability or disadvantage. We increasingly see tenants struggling to maintain their tenancies due to unaffordable rents. 76% of low income renters in the private rental market are in rental stress paying over 30% of their income in rent.<sup>1</sup>

The Tenants Union strongly opposes the proposed changes to local council laws that would broaden the ban on camping to capture people sleeping rough in the streets, and allow for the confiscation and disposal of people's personal belongings if left unattended. Both of these measures unfairly penalise homeless people.

Victoria is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, with almost 34,000 people on the Victorian Housing Register waiting to access social housing.<sup>2</sup> Punishing people for not having a home will not fix this issue; it will merely push people out of the CBD to areas with fewer services.

A recent statement from the United Nations has indicated that the proposed changes contravene human rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Leilani Farha said; "The criminalization of homelessness is deeply concerning and violates international human rights law."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ABS customised Census data (2015)

<sup>2</sup> December 2016, *Victorian Housing Register transition report* <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/public-housing-waiting-list>

<sup>3</sup> March 13 2017, *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Proposed "Homeless Ban" in Australia cause for concern – UN Expert* <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21357&LangID=E#sthash.m7bscU75.dpuf>

The Tenants Union of Victoria endorses the submission made by Justice Connect Homeless Law to the City of Melbourne on 7<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>4</sup> We urge you to take guidance from the Justice Connect Homeless Law submission and oppose the changes that have been put forward.

Yours sincerely,



Yaelle Caspi  
Policy Officer  
Tenants Union of Victoria

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<sup>4</sup> Justice Connect Homeless Law: Homelessness in Melbourne and the Activities (Public Amenity and Security) Local Law 2017  
[https://www.justiceconnect.org.au/sites/default/files/Justice%20Connect%20-%20Submission%20to%20Future%20Melbourne%20Committee%207.02.2017%20\(edit\)\\_1.pdf](https://www.justiceconnect.org.au/sites/default/files/Justice%20Connect%20-%20Submission%20to%20Future%20Melbourne%20Committee%207.02.2017%20(edit)_1.pdf).