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TENANTS UNION OF NSW
CO-OP LTD
68 Bettington St.
Millers Point 2000

tenant

NEWS

NO. 42 JUNE 1991

QUEENS BIRTHDAY EDITION



The Tenants Union of NSW represents tenants against unfair treatment by property owners and real estate agents.

We help tenants to work together for decent affordable and secure housing by:

- * Resourcing tenants advice services
- * Lobbying Governments on tenancy issues.
- * Publicising tenants' problems and rights.

We believe that good quality housing is a basic human right... This means security of tenure, houses in good repair and protection against excessive rents for all.

Solidarity in numbers is the only way that our rights can be fought for and won.

Join the Tenants' Union, and help fight for tenants' rights in NSW.



TENANT NEWS is produced by the
Tenants' Union of NSW,
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MILLERS POINT NSW 2000
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Katrina Shlunke cartoons
reproduced with the kind
permission of the Tenants
Union of Victoria.

NEW TENANCY AGREEMENT

Don't let the landlord make all the decisions don't be sucked into signing an agreement with illegal clauses

BUY YOUR OWN AGREEMENT

WESTS have produced a real **Rip-snorter** of an Agreement which excludes all the clauses the Real Estate Institute added to the basic document.

The Agreement is available from the TU, or WESTS for a \$5 donation. This gets you the whole package, including condition report.



THE ELECTION: WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Paul Mortimer

It is not yet clear how the election result will effect tenants in NSW. But there are many possibilities.

In one sense, Greiner and the Coalition are in a better position than before the election. They now have a majority in both houses, even though it is very narrow.

Until now, Labor could block the Liberals in the Upper House with the support of the Democrats and Marie Bignold.

This forced the Government to compromise on some of its more outrageous ideas. This happened with the Residential Tenancies Act.

At present, Greiner and Schipp are able to force through any laws they desire. So the potential is there for more regressive laws which would take away rights from tenants.

Doubtless, the Real Estate Institute will make a few suggestions.

Therefore the Tenants Union and other organisations will have to keep a very close eye on things. And quickly alert the public of any government moves against tenants.

On the other hand, Greiner is in a much weaker position in the Lower House.

He is just one bi-election away from losing his working majority there. One retirement or illness could cost the Coalition government.

Most governments in this position would tread very carefully to keep the electorate on side.

In theory, this should protect NSW from dramatic moves. Such as major cuts to services or Thatcherite 'reform' programs.

But Greiner has been saying that he will not change his direction or plans. It sounds like he is going to 'go for it' even without a safe majority.

Which means he could do a lot of damage to tenancy laws and public housing while he's still in government. However long that may be.

This makes it even more important that maximum publicity is given to any government moves in this area.

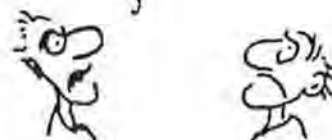
If the Coalition sees that there is an electoral cost, they may be deterred from eroding tenants' rights.

Otherwise, they will presumably pay the price when they next go to an election.

The possible silver lining is that a gung-ho approach by Greiner makes it more likely that he will lose the next election.

And that could be a very early bi-election or general election.

(Cont p.4)





WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO GIVE PHONE ADVICE

If you are interested in helping the Union (and other tenants), we will train you.

The Tenants Union has commitments from the Labor Party about funding community-based Tenancy Advice Services. It is expected these commitments will be honoured when Labor next forms a government in NSW.

Naturally, this will dramatically improve the position of tenants when they need help with renting problems.

The black cloud in the silver lining is that the Coalition will still control the Upper House. Even if Labor somehow wins an early government in the lower house.

So the Coalition could still block any reforms to tenancy laws put up by Labor, Democrats or Independents.

Unless the Niles decided to back tenancy reforms. And they're not talking to Labor very much these days.

There are unpredictable and important times ahead. Stay watching for what happens next.



ILLEGAL LOCKOUTS

Sue Creek

Decided:

Newcastle Court 10.1.91

Parties

Landlord: Barbaras
Policeperson: Johnston
Tenant: Cominos

The most serious offence one can commit under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 is to illegally evict, or to assist in evicting, a tenant without a Tribunal order.

Under S. 125, this risks a \$20,000 penalty plus compensation.

Unfortunately, the Police Force do not know of this provision, or do not believe it applies to them.

In January, the Tenancy Commissioner's Investigation Unit achieved the first successful action against a policeperson for this offence.

In this case, a Newcastle landlord tried to illegally evict a tenant.

The landlord contacted the police, but the policeperson who attended informed the landlord that he could not force the tenant out in this way and

reinstated the tenant in the premises.

The next day the landlord tried again, and this time the police assisted in the illegal eviction.



At the court hearing, although the offence of unlawful possession was proven, the case against the policeperson was dismissed due to his prior good behaviour.

However, he was ordered to pay \$ 2,506.66 in costs, and the landlord was ordered to pay \$2,960 (fine plus costs).

This outcome clearly shows that the police are not above the law. **Anyone** assisting with an illegal lockout risks heavy penalties.

STATE RENT ASSISTANCE :ONLY IF YOU'RE HALF HOMELESS

Christine Bird

There are so many anomalies in Dept. of Housing assistance that homeless people are regularly being turned away from the Dept. offices.

For some time, I have been concerned at the increase in referrals of people seeking Emergency Relief financial assistance, because they have not been able to get help from the Rental Bond Assistance Scheme.

The Dept. is now only providing half the required bond and one weeks' rent.

As they have no way of coming up with the remainder, people seeking help are no better off than if they hadn't applied.

I have been told to avoid duplicating services, especially those provided by Government agencies.

It is frustrating and puzzling, therefore, to have referred clients returning with half the help they should have received.

Recent cases have shown that as well as people receiving partial assistance, the poorest may receive none at all.

The situation that caused most anger involved a seriously ill young man, recently left hospital after brain surgery.

His invalid pension and small savings had been used to cover his specialist treatment and ongoing medical costs. His grossly incompassionate parents had evicted him for non-financial reasons.



HERMOINE the Modern Girl gets evicted



I bet this sort of thing never happens to Jessica Lange. Even if it did, she'd still be married to Sam Shepherd.

WARNING:
LACK OF HOUSING CAN
DERANGE A PERSON
AND MAKE ONE GRUMPY.



The Dept. of Housing told him that his income was too low for him to qualify for assistance. They suggested he combine his income with his girlfriend's (recently made unemployed) and re-apply, with written proof of her income.

This proof was found, and after two weeks of constant pressure, his application was approved.

At this stage the young man, too sick for a refuge, is living in a caravan park. I have spent considerable time counselling him as he often questions the

value of his survival after his operation.

The lack of concern displayed by some Dept of Housing staff was incredible. Despite proof of his illness, income and debt, nothing was done to help him.

They blamed his distress on my challenging their inhumane guidelines!

What really worries me is how people who meet the same indifference, and do not know where to turn, will cope.

B.L.A.G BAGS BOARDERS AND LODGERS BILL

Sue Creek

The **Boarders and Lodgers Action Group (BLAG)** has long argued that boarders and lodgers are amongst the most vulnerable on the private rental market.

They can be evicted or have their rent increased overnight. Their privacy is often totally ignored and they can have great difficulty in getting even basic repairs carried out.

In a word, they currently have no tenancy rights at all.

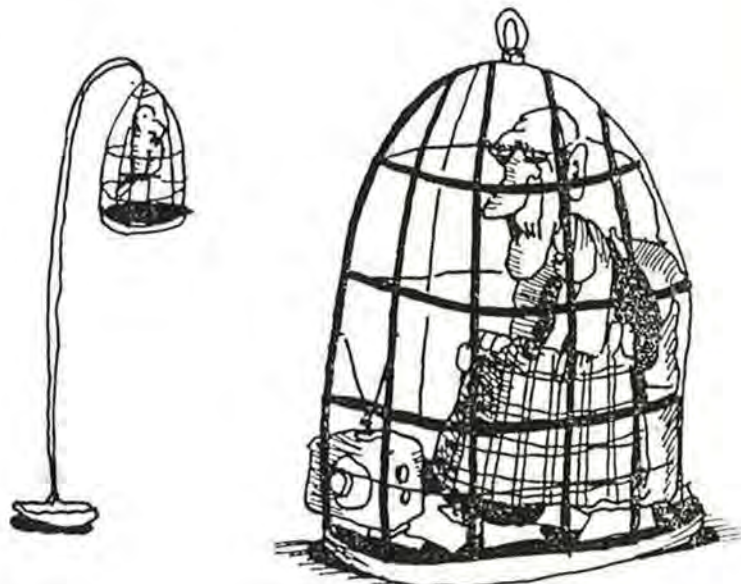
The Government has promised to address this problem. But what have they done?

Just before the election was announced, the Minister for Housing tabled new laws covering boarders and lodgers.

The Bill is pitifully inadequate. If it goes through in its current form, it will give boarders and lodgers much less rights than other tenants.

Some of the most worrying aspects of the Bill are:

- Boarders and lodgers would get only 7 days notice of eviction, and 10 days notice of a rent increase (other tenants must get 60 days notice of both).



- It has exempted landlords from having to lodge bonds taken from boarders and lodgers with the Rental Bond Board.

This means boarders and lodgers will have great difficulty getting their bonds back.

- The intention appears to be to only cover people living in traditional boarding and lodging houses.

This would deny tenancy rights to most of the 100 thousand boarders and lodgers who live in supported accommodation, share households, hostels, group homes, student boarders, and the like.

This shows that the Government has largely ignored a major report produced by the Combined Pensioners Association which recommended that boarders and lodgers should have the same basic rights as other tenants.

BLAG will be working hard to get these recommendations into the new Bill.

It is to be hoped that the next State Government will rethink on this issue and introduce changes which will provide *real* protection for boarders and lodgers.

ANNOUNCING: NEXT ROUND OF 1- DAY TENANCY ADVICE WORKSHOPS

Friday October 19
Friday November 1
Wed. November 13
Friday November 29

Covers evictions, repairs, bond money, privacy, rent increases, Residential Tenancies Tribunal, tenancy agreements, forms, costs and more.

Cost to Community Organisations: \$50.

Phone (02) 247 3813 for details.



JOINT VENTURES HOUSING:

By Doug Boquest

In early May a National Conference was held in Melbourne on 'Joint Venture Housing'.

NSW had representatives from the Department of Housing, Local Government, Co-operative Housing and the church sector.

Joint venture housing usually refers to the community and government co-operating to provide decent, affordable housing.

This is one of the most efficient ways to provide housing.

So many at the conference were bewildered that NSW is so far behind the other states in promoting this area.

In most states Joint Ventures are initiated by the community and produced in partnership with the state housing authority.

But in NSW it usually means the Department involves the business



sector to cut costs. For example, the Crown Street Women's Hospital site.

In that case, private developers built a small amount of public housing. In return, they were allowed to build on public land.

The NSW Department of Housing is strong on financial management. But financial savings have had a considerable human cost.

In this way, the NSW Department is out of step with other State Housing Authorities.

Most innovative NSW joint ventures go through the Local Government and Community Housing Programme (LG&CHP). Other states see this programme as too restrictive and limited.

Some states have designed their own joint venture 'mechanisms' (ways of developing joint ventures), using State revenue.

They recognise that joint ventures need an effective partnership and real dialogue with the community.

The NSW Department does not have a good record in this area. Hopefully, they will see the benefits of a more flexible, state-run programme.

An important step would be to establish a liaison unit in the Department. This unit could begin some real dialogue with the community and help develop new proposals.

PUBLIC HOUSING EVICTIONS SKYROCKET

Susan Helyar

Evictions by the Dept. of Housing increased by 1000% through 1990, with the total number of applications reaching over 1000.

The monthly figures have just been made available (following a request from WESTS) and are alarming - especially given we are in a recession.

In March there were 10 termination applications made to the Tribunal, in April this skyrocketed to 54, by June the monthly total was 105, and in December there were 181 individual applications.

The question asked by Harvey Volke, of WESTS, was "If tenants are thrown out of Dept. of Housing, there is no-where left to go. If the public housing authority won't house low-income people, who will?".

The main criticisms lodged against the Dept. of Housing are : they are not using other actions (rather than evictions)



when disputes arise, and threats of eviction are being used to intimidate tenants.

Furthermore, the Dept. of Housing is frequently giving tenants 60 days notice of termination, which doesn't require any reason.

Tenants aren't being told why they are being evicted. This is surely a denial of natural justice.

THE LONE RANGERS IN THE WEST!

Susan Helyar

On the eve of the first birthday of the Western Sydney Tenancy Service, we decided to give you an overview of their work and achievements so far.

The total number of cases dealt with by WESTS averaged out to 100/ month during 1990, and in 1991 this figure has increased to 150/ month.

Harvey Volke, one of the three staff, said that "Casework is only part of our operation, and we are already dealing with more cases than we can comfortably handle".

Another figure that increased over the year was that relating to use of the service by people of Non

English Speaking Background (NESB).

They are a particularly exploited group of tenants (see article by Stamatia Stamatellis). Migrants speaking Spanish, Chinese or Arabic represented the bulk of these cases.

The major problem dealt with by the service was getting landlords to do repairs, some being as essential as a working toilet.

20% of cases involved terminations, including evictions and 30 instances of lockouts.

WESTS have had a very successful first year. But the workers continue to advocate for the establishment of more advisory and advocacy services.

As Robert Mowbray, another WESTS employee stated, "It is ridiculous that we are the only community agency in the entire western suburbs funded to do this".



FEDERAL RENT ASSISTANCE CUT

By Colin Jones

In March, the Federal Government made changes to the Rent Assistance Scheme.

Rent Assistance is paid to pensioners, beneficiaries and FAS recipients who pay rent, board, or lodging to a private landlord.

The maximum weekly payments are now:

- without children \$30
- 1 or 2 children \$35
- 3 or more children \$40

Recipients get 50c in rent assistance for every dollar they pay in rent in excess of \$25 per week.

For example, if a tenant is paying \$72 rent per week their assessable rent is \$47 per week (\$72 less the \$25 threshold). So they receive rent Assistance of \$23.50 per week.

The threshold figure was previously \$20. So many tenants saw their rent assistance decreased by \$2.50. Even though the maximum levels were lifted by the Federal Government.

Rent assistance applicants and recipients are now required to provide proof of the amount of rent they pay.

Acceptable proof includes current rent receipts, current



"I suppose someone underestimated the crowd again!!"

tenancy agreements, or a signed letter from the landlord.

Where rent is paid into a bank account, deposit slips in the landlord's name are acceptable.

For the first time, rent assistance payments will be indexed, similarly to the half-yearly indexing of pensions and benefits.

The value of rent assistance has been a topic of debate ever since its introduction by the Hawke Government some years ago.

Some argue that payments to tenants only serve to increase housing costs, as landlords believe the tenant has an increased capacity to pay.

However, there is no evidence at all to support these claims.

For low income earners struggling to survive in the Sydney private rental market, rent assistance payments help to make the weekly rent slightly more affordable.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Tenants Union is currently discussing this last point, about the effectiveness of federal rent assistance. We would welcome any views on the subject.



INFORMATION PAMPHLET

Susan Helyar.

An information pamphlet is being produced by the TU, for tenants attending the Tribunal, particularly those of non-English speaking background.

The decision to do this was based on reports received from the Tenancies Legal Working Party, the Tribunal itself, and tenancy workers throughout Sydney.

These sources revealed that only 20% of applications made to the Tribunal were lodged by tenants. The pamphlet both encourages tenants to use the Tribunal, and briefly outlines how to prepare their case.

At this stage, the information will be distributed as part of a series of "Fact sheets" being put out by WESTS.

In the future, it would be good to have the pamphlet available in CES, DSS, and Dept of Housing offices statewide. This is being looked at.

By actively encouraging tenants to enforce their rights through the Tribunal, hopefully tenants interests will be better represented!

If you want to find out more about the pamphlet, contact myself or Paul Mortimer at the TU.

MIGRANT WORKER'S REPORT

By Stamatia Stamatellis.

WESTS received funding this year from **WSAAS** (Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme) for a migrant information and access officer.

They were to provide information and training on residential tenancy law, rights and

knowledge of their legal rights and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act, 1987.

There are few places where they can go for advice following the defunding of the independent Tenant's Advice Services by the Greiner government in 1989.

The newly arrived communities are particularly vulnerable with many people being evicted without the proper procedure being followed.

Other problems include signing away their rights by agreeing to



obligations to NESB (non-English speaking background) people in Western Sydney.

The project was initiated by WESTHIRN (The Western Sydney Housing Information and Resource Network) following information received by WESTS from ethno-specific and generalist migrant agencies in western Sydney.

These agencies found that NESB people have little or no

leases which have special conditions attached, and signing blank bond refund forms at the beginning of a tenancy.

NESB tenants are particularly unaware of the existence of the Residential Tenancies Tribunal and few of those aware can be persuaded to attend, citing language barriers and lack of confidence in preparing their cases as reasons.

To date, the only information collected by the Tribunal on use by NESB people is on those who require an interpreter, and the language used in appearing before the Tribunal.

There has been no attempt to implement the Dept of Housing Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement, sections of which require a more comprehensive collection of data relating to the ethnicity of NESB clients.

WESTS statistics indicate that between 18 - 24% of our clients are persons whose first language is not English.

Currently, the migrant communities using our services most frequently are the Spanish speaking, Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Polish, Greek, German and Vietnamese.

For more information and for advise about organising workshops, contact us on 819 - 2613.



BOOK LAUNCH: AMAZINGLY SUCCESSFUL

The Tenants Rights Manual was launched by Helen Wellings (ABC's Investigators) on February 27. The Tenants' Union office was packed.

The event got very good coverage in newspapers and on radio.

The Tenants' Union has already directly sold 250 copies. Pluto Press now has copies in many bookstores and hopefully they will be popular.

Speaking on the day, Helen Wellings said that tenants, like other consumers, need to know their rights when buying.

And that over a million tenants in NSW spent large amounts of money renting their homes.

The manual was written by Phillipa Bellemore and funded by the Law Foundation. It is available from the Tenants' Union for \$21.95, including postage.

A GUIDE TO REAL ESTATE

The following gem was found on a record by comedian John Clarke, 'The Fred Dagg Tapes'. This is a segment.

If you are going to enter the Real Estate field you will have to adopt a certain physical appearance which I won't bore you with here.

But it's fair to say that if you've got gold fillings and laugh lines around your pockets, then you're through the semis without dropping a set.

But the main thing to master is of course the vernacular, and basically this works as follows.

There are three types of house:

Glorious, commanding, split-level, modern dream homes - which are built on cliff faces;

Private bush-clad eaglenooks - which are built down holes;

And very affordable solid family homes in much sought-after areas. Which are old gun emplacements with awnings.

A cottage is a caravan with the wheels taken off.

A panoramic, breath-taking, spectacular or magnificent view is an indication that the house has windows.

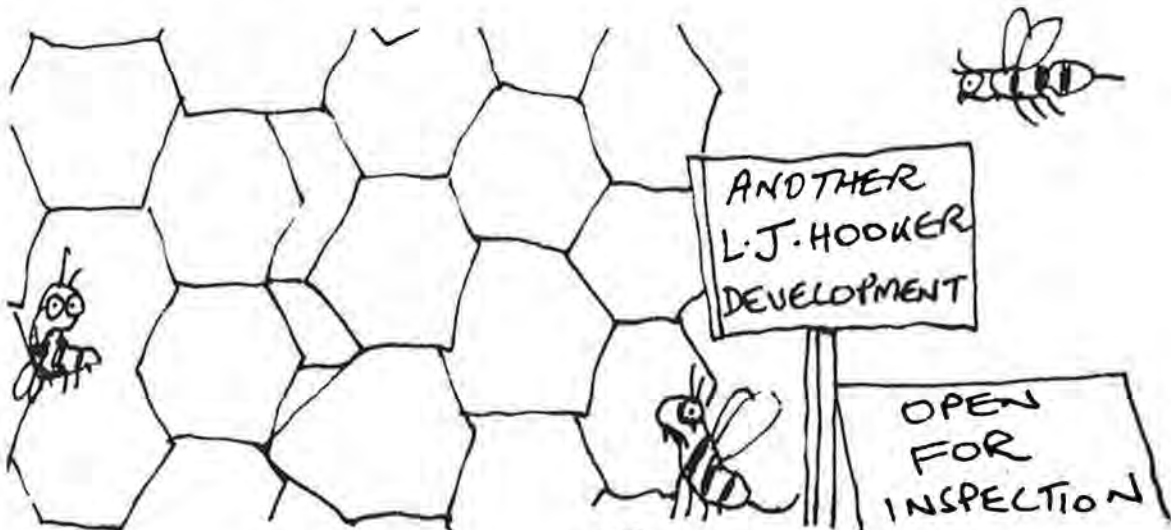
And if the view is unique, of course there's probably only one window.

'Owner transferred, reluctantly instructs us to sell', means the house is for sale.

'Genuine reason for selling'. Means the house is for sale.

'Rarely can we offer'. Means the house is for sale.

'Superbly presented, delightful charmer'. Doesn't really mean



anything, but it's probably still for sale.

'Most attractive immaculate home of character in prime dress circle position' means the thing that's for sale is a house.

'Unusual design with intriguing and solidly built stairs' means that the stairs are in the wrong place.

'Huge spacious generous lounge commands this well-serviced executive residence' means the rest of the house is a rabbit-warren with rooms like cupboards.

'Magnificent well-proportioned large convenient block with exquisite low maintenance garden' means there's no view but one of the trees had a flower on it the other day that we were up there.

'Privacy, taste, charm, space, freedom, quiet, away from it all location in a much sought after cul- de- sac situation' means it's not only built down a hole, it's built at the very far end of a hole.

'A must for you artists, sculptors and potters' means that only an idiot would consider actually living in it.

'Two to three bedrooms with possible in-law accommodation' means it's got two bedrooms and a tool-shed.



"Now, here's a feature you folks would really enjoy ...
Voila! A tree right off the master bedroom."

'Great buy, ring early for this one, inspection a must, priced to sell, new listing, see this one now, all offers considered, good value, be quick, inspection by appointment only, view today, this one can't last, sole agents, today's best buy' means the house is still for sale.

And if you ever see 'investment opportunity' written in the paper, turn very quickly and have a crack at the crossword.

I'll get out of your way now and see you later.

THE PROBLEMS WE'VE SEEN

Sue Creek

In 1990, our Hotline advice service handled 4, 645 enquiries.

Towards the end of last year there was a disturbing increase in tenants seeking help after receiving a Notice of Termination because they had fallen behind in their rent after losing their job.

The impact of "the recession we had to have" is obviously hitting tenants hard.

For tenants in such situations, our advice service can assist by informing tenants of their rights, where to go for rent assistance or how to argue for extra time from the Tribunal before being evicted.

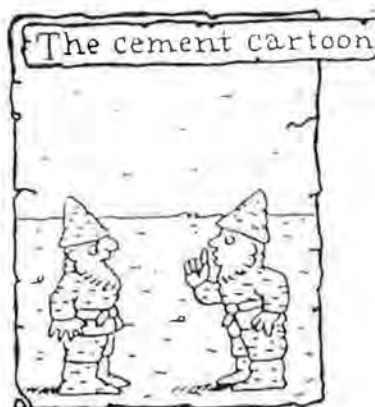
Other major problem areas were bonds, rent increases, repairs and terminations.

Most of these enquiries came through the Hotline. Trained volunteers provide a free phone advice service to tenants.

It normally operates 9.30 - 1pm and 2 - 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone interpreters can be arranged.

Due to limited resources, personal interviews at the Office are by appointment only.

Remember, for advice ring the **TENANTS' UNION HOTLINE:**
(02) 251 - 6590



TENANTS CALLING THE SHOTS IN JOHANNESBURG.

Susan Helyar

It was reported in the Johannesburg *Sunday Sun* that a new tenants' organisation has been set up to address the recurrent problems of seeking repairs, fair rents, and security of tenure faced by black tenants.

The organisation "Actstop" is run by a central committee with representatives in blocks of flats around the city.

When tenants make complaints about their landlord, Actstop firstly organises a meeting between the relevant parties in which they negotiate for solutions.

If this approach is unsuccessful, the tenants pay progressively lower rents (determined on the basis of the cost of similar

dwellings) until this economic pressure produces results.

Actstop explains that "The rentals are paid into an attorney's trust account. The monies will be handed over if there are indications of major repairs.

"But there is not a single instance in an Actstop building where the tenants are not paying rent."

The chairman of Actstop claims that "the tenants are satisfied that their mobilisation under the Actstop banner is reaping dividends".

This claim is disputed by some tenants and landlords who say that Actstop is a paramilitary organisation who force tenants to join and support their projects.

These allegations are denied by Actstop who argue that intimidation is the tactic of landlords, not them.

In a country that is so riddled with violence, it would be major achievement indeed for a tenants' organisation to act effectively without using violence.



ANNUAL REPORT 1990

1. INTRODUCTION

1990 presented the Tenants' Union of N.S.W. with a challenging environment.

In the legislative arena, the residential Tenancies Tribunal commenced full operation creating new factors in tenant relationships with landlords.

In the economy, recession in the second half of 1990, whilst temporarily dampening rental costs, commenced to savagely erode low income tenants' capacity to meet housing costs.

In the political arena, further moves to privatisation, major urban development and home-ownership assistance, put progressive housing policy reform further down the policy list.

2. HIGHLIGHT OF ACTIVITIES IN 1990

The Tenants' Union was able to slightly expand its resources in late 1990 due to increased funds from the Legal Aid Commission/Office of Legal Aid and Family Services.

Three highly competent and committed staff are currently employed - Megan Brooks (our new Administrative worker, part time), Paul Mortimer (Publications/ Training Worker, part time), and Sue Creek (Legal Project Worker, full time).

Demand from tenants and levels of general community expectations of the Unions' services continued to grow throughout the year.



Some of our achievements have been:

- Projects of the Tenancy Legal Working Party (TLWP).

This is a joint sub - committee of the Tenants' Union and the NSW Community Legal Centres network.

It addresses issues of concern to tenants. Some of its key activities over the past 12 months have included:

Tribunal Survey:

Significant media coverage was given to the results of the Survey.

It indicated that most cases are brought by landlords who are 10 times more likely to be represented than tenants before the Tribunal. Many tenants do not attend hearings for a range of reasons.

Over 63% of tenants' cases were to recover their bonds. Most landlord applications relate to terminations and the Survey found that the Tribunal is allowing very quick evictions.

The Survey findings clearly illustrated the need for a properly resourced, independent tenant advice and advocacy service.

*"An environmental impact statement's required, Crawley.
Here! You make the impact – I'll make the statement."*



Tribunal Reporter: This initiative was undertaken because of concern that the Tribunal was reporting very few of its decisions (only 8 in the first 3 months).

The aim was to report interesting cases *and* to encourage the Tribunal to be more accountable.

Following the publication of only two issues of our Reporter, the Tenancy Commissioner undertook to have the NSW Department of Housing Tenancy Service's newsletter on Tribunal decisions and associated information published on a monthly basis plus the Tribunal started to report many more of its decisions.

• Significant case victories before the RTT:

two of the most significant cases brought by tenants before the RTT assisted by the Tenants' Union concerned locks and security and bonds.

Both cases were decided successfully in the tenants' favour, and have broader implications for tenants generally.

• The establishment of the National Association of Tenancy Organisations (NATO)

This body of peak State/Territory tenant organisations was formed following the last National Community Legal Centres Conference.

NATO received \$7000 from the Federal Housing Minister to prepare a community response to the Commonwealth/State Working Party on landlord and tenant legislation across Australia.

The report, 'Leaking Roofs and Legislation' has been widely distributed to community organisations and government departments.

NATO is currently negotiating to obtain assistance to establish a national policy

secretariat so that organisations such as the Tenants' Union can promote input into housing/tenancy policy at the State, Territory and Federal levels.

• Tenants' Union Publication and Resources

Tenants' Rights Manual: With assistance from the NSW Law Foundation and the creative talents of consultant, Phillipa Bellemore, the Union has produced a totally new version of the Tenants' Rights Manual.

The Manual was launched in late February by Helen Wellings of the ABC's 'Investigators' program at a well attended function.

Your Rights as a Tenant: With assistance from the Board for Social Responsibility of the Uniting Church, this booklet was totally rewritten in early 1990 to take account of the new tenancy laws.

Migrant Community Education Kit (videos and associated information): Available in 12 languages, this Kit was completed and successfully launched during 1990.

Tenant News: Two editions were produced last year - three editions are planned for 1991.

T-shirts and Stickers: A marketing strategy has been devised to help promote sales of these items.

• Training for Tenancy Advisors

Two series of training workshops were successfully held during 1990. Over 70 people from community and government agencies attended.

• Privacy Legislation

The Tenants' Union, along with other community organisations, have made several submissions to the Commonwealth on the inappropriateness, and misuse, of credit reference records for vetting applications for rented premises, and the hardship and discrimination which arises as a result of this.

The Union's efforts have assisted in achieving the exclusion of real estate agent's and and landlord's access to credit data files for these purposes under recent amendments to the privacy Act.



• Advice Service

The Tenants' Union has continued to provide a free 5 day/week telephone advice Hotline for tenants in conjunction with a number of trained volunteers and their host community agencies.

In addition, the Tenants' Union has assisted many tenants on cases which require more indepth work. In 1990, the Union handled 4,645 enquiries.

Two areas which are creating an increasing demand for assistance are cases going before the Tribunal and public tenant matters.

Due to limited resources, this work is largely limited to cases which are of a public interest or test case nature.

• Public Information/Media

The Union has managed to provide commentary in the public arena on many issues significant to tenants throughout 1990

Through the concerted efforts of staff and some Board/members, often in association with other community-based organisations.

• Policy development

The Tenants' Union contributes to policy development on tenancy related issues at many levels. This is largely done through representation on or working with a range of organisations and bodies.

3. CONCERNS/ISSUES IN 1990

Whilst the Tenants' Union has through economic necessity been forced to become a "mean and lean" organisation over the past two years, the security of its resource base remains a high priority.

At this time, Community Legal Centre Program funding assistance remains the only direct form of support for our organisation's core activities.

Demands on our case services continue to increase, particularly for tenancy advice and more complex casework.

The capacity of the Hotline service and our employees to meet these increases has reached its realistic limit. A priority will be to identify and obtain further resources for this area in 1991.



Other issues to highlight are:

- Continuing changes to housing and planning policies at a State and Federal level which impact negatively on tenants;

- the weakness of the draft Boarders and Lodgers bill scheduled to be presented to Parliament shortly;

- the impact of monitoring and possible policy changes to the National Community Legal Centres funding program on small organisations such as ours;

- the need to better market our services and products to maximise our "message", minimise the net cost, but not discriminate against our consumers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Tenants' Union is achieving positive results for tenants in a difficult environment. The scope to do much more is, of course, always evident. The temptation to do it without additional resources is also very real.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1990

Total Current Assets:	\$46,242.09
Non-Current Assests: (Property, plant equip.)	\$13,837.00
Total Assests:	\$ 60,079.09
Total Liabilities:	\$ 1,375.00
Shareholder's Equity:	\$58,704.09

THE JOYS OF RENTING

... A POEM

*

(Found in an old Victorian
Tenant News and slightly
ammended)

*

*Its good to be a tenant, **
And frolic in the rain
That's flooding in my ceiling,
Where a hole's appeared again.

*

The carpet may be rotting,
The paintwork may be peeling,
The toilet may be blocking
(And the smell may leave me
reeling)...

*

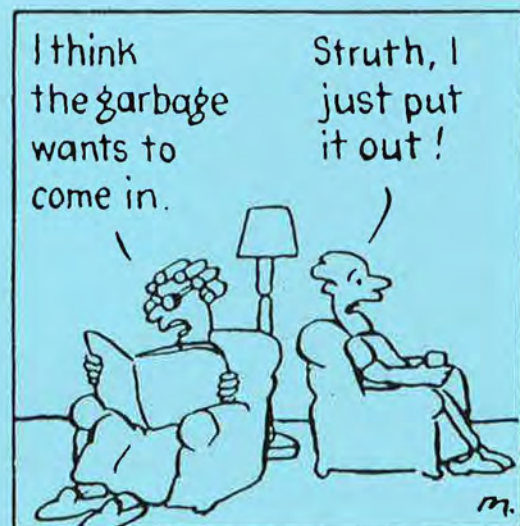
But it's fun to be a tenant
For life's a Big Surprise;
I never know what will go next
Or when the rent will rise.

And I love to be a tenant
When my landlord visits me,
Because I put some rancid milk
In his cup of tea.

*

*

*



YES I want to join the Tenants' Union of NSW

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____

First language _____

Please tick

- New membership Renewal
 Are you a: Tenant Home Owner
 Other (specify) _____

FEES

Membership runs from 1 January to 31 December. New members can pay half fees after 30 June. New membership fee includes cost of share(s).

YEARLY FEE

Tick the fee that applies

	New Member		Renewal	
Pension/Benefit/Student	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Waged Worker	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Organisations (by income)				
less than \$30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 40
\$30,000 - \$50,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 75	<input type="checkbox"/> 70	<input type="checkbox"/> 75	<input type="checkbox"/> 70
\$50,000 - \$100,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 85	<input type="checkbox"/> 80	<input type="checkbox"/> 85	<input type="checkbox"/> 80
More than \$100,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 105	<input type="checkbox"/> 100	<input type="checkbox"/> 105	<input type="checkbox"/> 100
Donation	\$ _____		\$ _____	
I enclose	\$ _____		\$ _____	
Signature	_____			
Date	_____			

Return to: Tenants Union, 68 Bettington Street
 Millers Point 2000

OFFICE USE ONLY

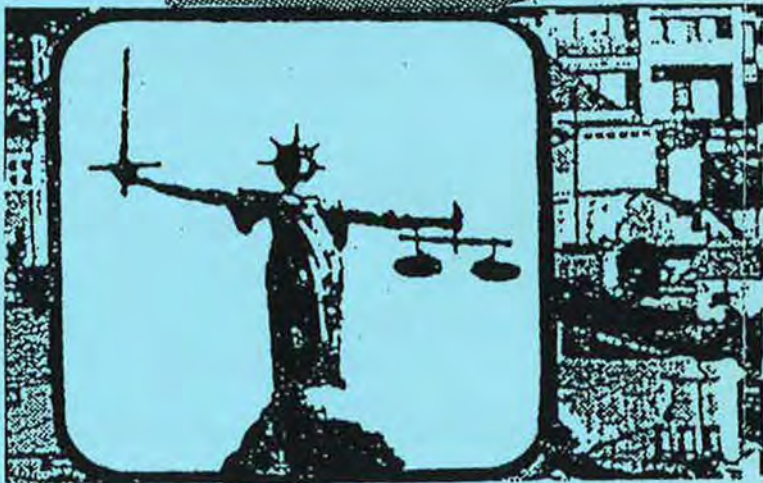
Service Fee _____ Shares _____

Donation _____

Receipt No _____ Membership No _____

TENANT'S HOTLINE
251 6590
 for advice and assistance
 Monday to Friday 9.30am - 5.00pm

Get your Friends to Join the Tenants' Union!



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