

BOARDERS AND LODGERS: All renters need basic legal protection

If the government is serious about ending the legal discrimination against people in 'low cost' accommodation – residents of boarding houses, students and those in share housing – it must make sure its laws do the following:

Have broad, general coverage: The law must cover everybody who is not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. Coverage must be unconditional – there cannot be loopholes that allow dodgy landlords to circumvent the law.

Set fundamental minimum standards: the law must ensure that every renter who is not protected by the current Act has basic rights. These must include:

1. Minimum periods of notice to leave;
2. The right to housing that is clean, functional and not exposing residents to danger;
3. The right to have disputes resolved at the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal;
4. The right for residents to get their bonds back.

End the worst rip-offs of residents by landlords, including:

1. Exploitation of people with intellectual, physical or mental disabilities, or those with inadequate understanding of the English language or Australian law;
2. Practices like withholding residents' passports or other vital documents;
3. Dodgy agreements like those that demand residents find a replacement tenant before they are allowed to leave or get their bond back;
4. An end to "bond harvesting", where landlords routinely top up their profits by keeping residents' bonds.