

Part 3: Renting, Tenancy and Ongoing Rental Reform Issues

Evicted! The New South Australian Survey Tracking Evictions, Bonds and More!

Dr Alice Clark, Executive Director, Shelter SA

Shelter SA was pleased to see the States and Territories responding to the pandemic by recognising that people living in private rental who suddenly became unemployed faced difficulties in paying their rent. In South Australia, the State Government introduced an emergency bill to address aspects of the pandemic that included the Residential Tenancies Act.

The emergency bill made it illegal for landlords and property managers to evict tenants for non-payment of rent due to the income loss related to the pandemic. However, unless tenants took their eviction to the Tribunal there was nothing to prevent evictions occurring. Shelter SA would have preferred that all evictions were banned, especially no cause evictions. We also became aware that some tenants became trapped within private rental agreements that they could no longer afford. With restrictions easing, we are now wondering if we will see a tsunami of evictions because of rent arrears that tenants are unable to repay.

The States and Territories do not routinely collect data on evictions that do not go to tribunals and certainly will not have data on evictions during and after the pandemic. Responding to the gap in data and the pandemic, Shelter SA launched a rental exit survey called *Moving On* on 26 May for South Australian renters. We are excited to be working on this project with South Australia's Consumer and Business Services who have agreed to share the survey through their Residential Bonds Online service to assist us to collect data.

We are asking tenants, landlords and property managers to use the quick

the reasons why evictions occurred. We are also asking for some basic demographic data to see if there are any trends among tenant groups who are older, younger, or from different cultural backgrounds, including people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The survey is for tenants in private rental, public housing and community housing and is open to all South Australians.

We are also asking questions about tenancy bond claims and the reasons for them, involvement with the Tribunal, other reasons why tenants have moved on, rental bidding and the pandemic. Open text answers are also available if survey participants wish to describe their experiences in more detail.

We will advertise the survey to our networks through our mailing list and use mainstream media and social media to call for renters to participate, targeting specific groups of renters over time. We will collate and analyse the data every six to 12 months and be able to show trends over time. We will publish a written report, which will be available on our website and shared across our social channels. We are looking forward to shedding light on the important issues that affect renters including evictions and bonds, while recommending policy solutions to problems that are identified. The survey report will assist Shelter SA to conduct systemic advocacy to improve the safeguards and legal rights of renters.

