

A BETTER DEAL FOR RENTERS

THE GREENS' PLAN TO IMPROVE RENTAL AFFORDABILITY AND COMFORT

Not everyone can afford to buy a house, but we all deserve somewhere to call home. However, renting has become incredibly expensive and it's only getting worse. The Greens will stop unfair rent hikes, increase comfort and ensure disputes with landlords can be resolved quickly and cheaply without the courts.

The property market has been driven by the interests of big developers and speculative investors looking to make profits, and it's more difficult than ever for people to find affordable rentals or save to own their own home.

When you do secure a rental home, it can be cold, damp and draughty in winter, and have no or inefficient heating and hot water, costing the renter a bundle. Often renters are too afraid to raise repairs or minor improvements required for fear that reminding the landlord they are there will lead to a rent increase.

Recently, after many years of campaigning, we achieved some crucial improvements for renters, including limiting rent increases to once a year, ending no grounds evictions and rental bidding, and creating the power to set minimum standards in rental properties.

But there is still more to do to stop unfair rent hikes and ensure the increasing number of lifetime renters have the ability to make their home comfortable.

OUR PLAN

To improve rental affordability, comfort and reduce barriers to renters getting a fair deal in their home, the Greens will:

- **Cap annual rent increases at 2.5per cent, the Reserve Bank's long term inflation target.**
- **Create a Housing Ombudsman to resolve disputes and complaints in rental properties in a free, fast and fair manner without having to go to the courts.**
- **Ensure rental standards require homes to have ceiling insulation, low flow showerheads and other energy and water saving measures that keep homes affordable and renters comfortable.**
- **Support renters to be a part of the solar revolution by providing \$1000 grants for renters and people living in apartments to buy solar panels in solar gardens on public buildings, like train stations. Read about the Greens' Solar for Everyone plan [here](#).**

We will also build more public housing and invest in community and other affordable housing so people on low incomes don't end up homeless.

A BETTER DEAL FOR RENTERS

THE GREENS' PLAN TO IMPROVE RENTAL AFFORDABILITY AND COMFORT

Federally, only the Greens we will remove unfair negative gearing and capital gains tax hand-outs that benefit super wealthy investors and lock out people who want to buy their first home.

RENT CAPS

In 1985, a home in Melbourne cost 3 times the median wage. Now, it's 9.7 times. So home ownership is moving further from the average Victorian's reach, but at the same time, rental prices have also skyrocketed.

According to research by Anglicare Victoria, in 2018 only 1 per cent of private rentals in Melbourne, and 3 per cent statewide, are affordable for people on welfare benefits. More than three quarters of homes are out of reach for households on a minimum wage.

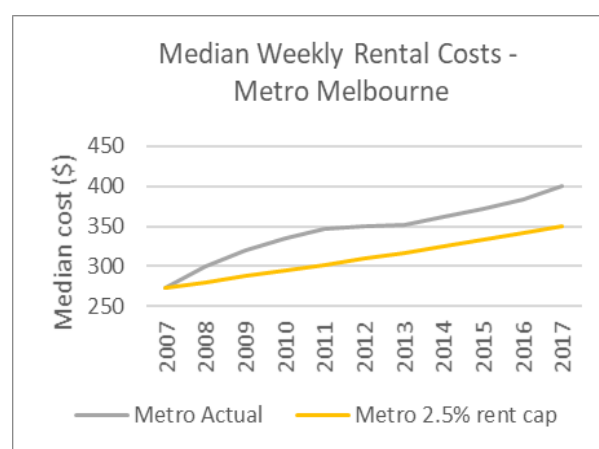
The spiralling cost of renting in the private market provides strong evidence that the market is not achieving satisfactory outcomes for low and middle-income renters. Renters have little power to dispute unaffordable rent increases. Tenants on low fixed incomes, such as pensioners and other income support recipients, are particularly disadvantaged because they generally cannot increase their income to cover higher rents. As a result, they forego other basic goods and services to cover housing costs.

The property market has been driven by the interests of big developers and speculative investors looking to make profits, and it's more difficult than ever for people to find affordable rentals or save to own their own home.

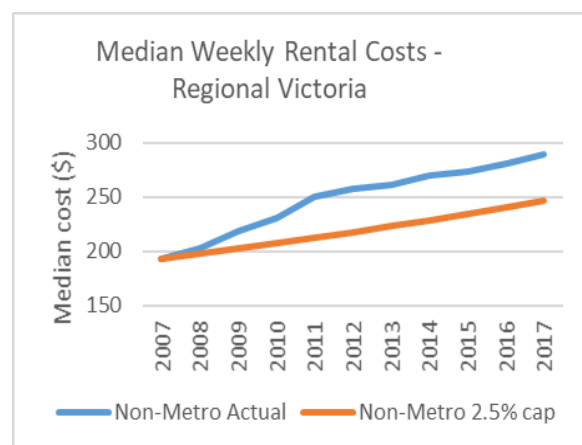
The Greens believe rental properties are more than just commodities, they are people's homes. More needs to be done to ensure renting is more affordable into the future. We will amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (VIC) to cap annual residential rent increases at 2.5 per cent, which is in line with the Reserve Banks 2-3 per cent inflation target. Inflation over the last decade has averaged 2.4 per cent. Tying rent increases to inflation will help stop people who rent from being

priced out of the homes and communities in which they may have grown up, or have lived in for many years.

If rents in metropolitan Melbourne were capped at 2.5 per cent a decade ago, today they would 12.4 per cent cheaper. Instead of the weekly median rent being \$400, it would be \$350. An extra \$50 a week, \$2600 a year, would make a big difference to people on low incomes.



In rural and regional Victoria, this benefit would be greater, with rents being 14.6 per cent cheaper. This will make a meaningful difference to rental affordability into the future.



Coupled with the rent cap, will be the ability for landlords to apply to increase rents above the cap, where it is warranted, for example if they have completed a major renovation on the property. A tenant can dispute an above-cap increase, but the advantage for the tenant is that the onus of proof is on the landlord

A BETTER DEAL FOR RENTERS

THE GREENS' PLAN TO IMPROVE RENTAL AFFORDABILITY AND COMFORT

to justify any rent increase above what is permitted by regulation.

Rent control operates in many jurisdictions around the world, including New York, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and parts of Canada. It works there and it can work here. It will provide tenants with greater security of tenure as well certainty about their future housing costs.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

All too often renters are not prepared to challenge an unfair decision by their agent or landlord because they are fearful to take the dispute to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). They are concerned it will be expensive, stressful and lengthy. They are also concerned about losing if they don't have expensive legal representation and that it will lead to consequences such as inspections, rent hikes, and their lease not being renewed. This means renters feel powerless over their home and circumstances, and often get a bad deal.

There is a better way for renters and landlords to resolve disputes or apply for deviations in normal rental arrangements that isn't so adversarial and doesn't involve having to go to court.

The Greens will create a Housing Ombudsman to resolves issues in a binding manner in accordance with the law. The service provided will be free and prompt. The Ombudsman will not only be responsible for rental housing, it will also provide services to retirement housing and cases of building disputes. This body will be industry funded. To read the Greens full Housing Ombudsman Policy [click here](#).

ENERGY MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Greens have long fought for safety, comfort, energy and water minimum standards in rental homes. As far back as 2009, 2013 and in 2017, we introduced

legislation that would create powers to set minimum standards for rental properties, and that would remove no-ground evictions. At that time these changes were rejected by both major parties. These changes were finally made law in September 2018, with the Greens support, along with a raft of changes to improve renters' rights.

The recent legislation provided about 18 months for the government to conduct a Regulatory Impact Statement to assess exactly what minimum standards will be introduced in July 2020. The Greens will work hard to ensure energy and water minimum standards are included in the new rental minimum standards. According to research by Environment Victoria, measures such as insulation, low-flow shower heads, draught sealing and lighting alone can save people who rent \$850 a year. It will also have a dramatic and fast impact on reducing Victoria's climate pollution.

SOLAR GARDENS FOR RENTERS

Almost two million Victorians rent their home, but right now they are locked out of solar and their homes are often draughty, with no insulation. For too long, people who rent their home have missed out on the opportunity to produce clean energy and reduce their power bills.

The Greens have a plan to create Solar Gardens, so people who rent their home can finally access solar, wherever their home is.

The Greens' plan would give \$1,000 per adult who lives in a rental home, to buy into a solar power station on a nearby roof, such as a train station. The energy your solar panel produces will be credited to your bill, and this credit moves with you, wherever you go.

Power Victoria, the Greens' proposed public electricity retailer, could build and manage Solar Gardens on public and community buildings and in partnership with private businesses.