

## Greater Protections for Tenants

Peninsula Community Legal Centre has welcomed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, which came into operation on September 1, 2011, however believes additional amendments are still required to further improve the standards of private rooming house accommodation and protection for vulnerable tenants.

Gillian Wilks, General Manager of Projects and Development says:

“As an organisation offering free assistance and advocacy support to vulnerable tenants and residents, we trust these amendments will go some way to redressing the power imbalance between landlords and tenants in the private rental market, especially for those residing in private rooming houses and caravan parks.

The changes to the legislation particularly related to site agreements in caravan/residential parks, are complex and the finer detail of the practical impact of the amendments may require clarification through VCAT determinations. We strongly encourage tenants and residents to seek appropriate informed advice and assistance on these matters.”

Peninsula Community Legal Centre has a dedicated tenancy advocacy service, which includes a caravan and rooming house outreach worker.

Ms. Wilks highlighted the need for further reform saying:

“Peninsula Community Legal Centre awaits further announcements on the introduction of increased standards for the private rooming house industry and encourages the Victorian Government to consider the adoption of the Queensland State Government model of a ‘fit and proper’ person test for rooming house operators”.

The current changes to the legislation include:

- the regulation of commercial tenancy databases
- alterations to the maximum amount of reimbursement for urgent repair costs
- improved protection via the regulation of site agreements for owner/renters in caravan (residential) parks
- the expansion of inspection, investigation and compliance powers and actions in relation to rooming houses, including obligations on real estate agents to report suspected rooming houses
- An increase in penalties for all offences under the RTA.

Peninsula Community Legal Centre has been providing free legal services for more than thirty years. For further information or to obtain free advice, please contact Peninsula Community Legal Centre on 9783 3600 or visit [www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au).

END.

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