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Sent: Saturday, 7 December 2019 4:07 PM
To: DJCS-CAV-rentalreforms (DJCS)
Cc: act@tenantsvic.org.au
Subject: My submission on unfair rental application questions

From: Kathy MacKendrick [REDACTED]
Subject: My submission on unfair rental application questions My postcode: [REDACTED]

My submission:

I make the following suggestions for inclusion:

- Formally include Proof of Age card as an alternative to a passport ID

Reason:

Not everyone drives, so this should not be assumed, or be relevant to the application. You cannot provide something you do not have!

- Make the 'Why did you leave the last property?' question OPTIONAL, but state that it not being answered will not disadvantage the applicant

Reason:

In some cases the applicant may wish to include the reason, such as the agent/landlord insisted on increasing the rent unfairly, refused to replace important or damaged fittings or appliances which were their responsibility, or refused to allow them to have a cat (under any conditions), which most owners will permit, as long as they are notified of the tenant having one, and the tenant completes a form with the details of the cat (which must be registered with the council)

- I DISAGREE that applications should not ask if a prospective tenant smokes

Reason:

A persistent indoor smoker can cause the whole house and curtains and soft furnishings to be impregnated with cigarette smoke, and in my experience there is no requirement for that tenant on leaving to remedy this at their expense, which I believe would be a fair requirement! I suggest that any such clause about smoking should be expressed as follows:

- No one is to smoke in any room inside the rental property at any time, but smoking is permitted in any of the outside areas of the property. The tenant is to ensure that their visitors respect this requirement at all times

- The only question about an applicant's finance should be what their total regular income is for whatever period is stated, eg fortnightly, monthly

Reason:

The landlord is entitled to know that the applicant can reasonably afford the rent asked. It is the applicant's responsibility to work out if they can do so, along with their other fixed financial commitments, bills, and living expenses.

- Requiring copies of bank statements can in some cases be considered intrusive

Reasons:

It could show sensitive information which is none of the landlord's business, such as alimony, workers compensation etc. The agency needs to impress upon any applicant that they need to be able to afford the rent they are committing to, before signing any lease agreement.

- There should be no discrimination against any migrants or refugee applicants who have difficulty understanding or completing the application themselves in English, as long as they have an interpreter with them when signing who can verify (ideally in writing on an additional form for that purpose) that the applicant has had the questions explained to them in their language, and clearly understands the conditions of the lease.

- There should be a clause which states that there will be no discrimination against any applicant who receives Centrelink benefits, as many applicants feel very nervous about revealing this, feeling that they may not be considered. Unless there is some reliable adverse information which is known to the agency from prior experience with this applicant, every applicant should be considered equally. It is difficult enough to be a refugee or migrant in a totally different culture with a different language without an automatic bias by an agent or landlord.

Thank you

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