

Having written to the Minister for Consumer Affairs when legislative change was before the Victorian Parliament in 2017, I have watched with personal interest to see the legislative changes which were initiated. My chief concern at the time was for the removal of clauses which put tenants' housing stability at risk (notices to vacate); and I am most pleased to see action taken on this issue. Now I write regarding: a) minimum standards for the livability of rental properties; and b) the non-application of legislative changes to exiting residential leases.

As a residential tenant I would welcome legislative measures which require mandatory minimum property standards on matters which effect tenants' energy usage, such as energy efficient heating, cooling and lighting, the provisions of fly screens to allow natural air flow and temperature control, sealing of sources of draughts, provision of window coverings, and adequate insulation. Such measures would positively impact tenants' physical health and finances.

Mandatory energy efficient heating is an excellent first step, and one which I welcome. However, that this is proposal is not mandatory on properties where the lease is signed prior to June 2020 is of concern. This leaves tenants with current fixed term leases or periodic leases to dwell in homes with no heating or inadequate, expensive heating. Moving house is not a viable option for all tenants, whether due to the need to remain in close proximity to schools, public transport or community hubs, the lack of affordable alternative housing, or the simple lack of funds necessary to move house. I would urge that mandatory heating provisions be applied to all rental properties, no matter the beginning date or type of lease. Prior to signing a new lease tenants should be provided with a statement that the property complies with all legislated minimum standards.

Similarly, I would urge that existing legislative changes such as those limiting the frequency of rental increases be amended to apply universality to all tenancies, whether fixed or periodic, regardless of the beginning date of the tenancy; failure to so apply these legislative changes disadvantages those currently in homes in which they intend to remain, but who are unable to sign a new fixed term lease, whether due to the landlord's unwillingness to offer a new lease, or due to the tenant's life circumstances which mean that they may be unable to commit to a new fixed term lease (such as imminent changes to marital status, study, or employment, with the potential relocation these may entail).

As a residential tenant I would also welcome future legislative changes which extend energy efficiency to cooling and lighting, and attention to matters of draughts and insulation, as outlined above.