

# La Trobe Student Union Submission to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee on the inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria.

## Summary

La Trobe Student Union (LTSU) has serious concerns and recommendations for the current rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria. This submission predominantly stems from the impact on students. The lack of legislative protections for students who live on university campuses needs to be addressed with urgency. There also needs to be stronger focus and resources directed to initiatives that inform, young people in particular, of their rental rights.

## About La Trobe Student Union

La Trobe Student Union is the peak representative body representing over 20, 000 students at La Trobe University (LTU), Bundoora campus. Members include domestic and international undergraduate, post graduate and doctoral students. The LTSU provides essential services such as an Advocacy service and Foodbank.

As the university has a large intake of international and regional students, many of the students at LTU are renters. With the rental crisis in Victoria, we have seen further pressure on the Foodbank for essential items and a rise in enquiries for housing advice.

The LTSU understands issues facing students through relationships, in peer groups and through our Foodbank and Advocacy service. The LTSU responded to students' vulnerability in private and university accommodation by introducing our Know Your Housing Rights campaign. The campaign provides advice, support and signposts on all aspects of housing.



## Concerns

A safe and secure home is an essential part for students to achieve their full potential in their studies. However, for students who live in university accommodation these aspects are not guaranteed. If a student gets disciplined or excluded by La Trobe University, they can find themselves being evicted from their home. This could be with only 48 hours' notice. In Victoria, unlike all private rental accommodation, students in university accommodation are not covered by the Rental Tenancies Act. This greatly reduces the legal protections in place.

Due to the lack of legislative protections LTU students have experienced hardships such as the LTU's private accommodation provider retaining housing bonds that could be held by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority like all other Victorian renters. LTU's private accommodation provider has regularly delayed reimbursing bonds when a student has left their accommodation. Such issues only add stress for students at a key time in their life.

With no legal minimum standard for students in university accommodation, there are regular dangerous situations from faulty shower screens, ceiling fans falling on to individuals to problems with utilities. With no service level agreement or guidelines from La Trobe University their response is often slow and dismissive.

## Recommendations

1. All students renting in university provided accommodation, to have the same rights as all other renters in Victoria.
2. For students living in university accommodation, their bond must be held by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA), not the university or its subsidiaries.
3. An increase in resources to organisations that promote information to students surrounding their tenancy rights.



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