



28 May 2015

Ms Jenni Daniel-Yee
Director, Legal Policy
Department of the Attorney-General & Justice
GPO Box 1722
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Ms Daniel-Yee

Re: The Introduction of a Northern Territory Central Bond Holding Scheme

The Tenants' Union of Tasmania Inc. (TUT) is an incorporated not-for-profit community based organisation representing residential tenants in Tasmania. We have been advocating and representing tenants for more than thirty years and over that time have seen firsthand the change as a result of moving from a system in which bonds were held by landlords and disputes resolved through the Magistrates Court of Tasmania to our current system in which all bonds are held by the Rental Deposit Authority and disputes resolved through a Residential Tenancy Commissioner.

In our experience the move to a Rental Deposit Authority (RDA) in 2009 has proved to be a success, providing an independent dispute resolution process and allowing for a fairer, more transparent and cost effective service.

Whilst we strongly support the introduction of a Northern Territory Central Bond Holding Scheme and endorse the submission of the Darwin Community Legal Service we would emphasise that any change must be accompanied by appropriate funding. In Tasmania, staffing shortages have at times meant that Residential Tenancy Commissioner decisions have not been processed as quickly as they otherwise should have. We therefore support the retaining of accrued interest from the scheme to fund dispute resolution services and organisations engaging in public education programs.

We would also strongly support the introduction of an education and awareness raising campaign around the introduction of a Northern Territory Central Bond Holding Scheme. Whilst we are confident that most bonds are now held by the Rental Deposit Authority, we would stress that it has taken more than five years of education of the Tasmanian community to reach current levels.

Finally, we would like to point out that in Tasmania our public housing body (Housing Tasmania) does not charge its approximately 10,000 tenants bond. In our opinion this model should be considered in the Northern Territory. Tenants in public housing are generally not in a position to pay bond and efforts to introduce payment plans to pay off the bond have proved unworkable with the Rental Deposit Authority.

If we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MBarton', written in a cursive style.

Meredith Barton
Principal Solicitor
Tenants' Union of Tasmania
