

Residential Tenancies Stakeholder Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Context

The role of the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (the Commissioner) is to champion the rights of renters in Victoria and to be their voice to influence change to rental policies, laws and programs. To facilitate this role, the Commissioner is consulting widely with renters, advocacy groups and other stakeholders across the private rental sector to identify and act on systemic and community-wide issues.

While the Commissioner will continue to hold face-to-face meetings with stakeholders on an individual basis, the establishment of a formal mechanism through the Residential Tenancies Stakeholder Reference Group (RT-SRG) allows the Commissioner to meet collectively with a range of rental sector stakeholders to learn about and explore the issues and concerns they have identified for renters. The RT-SRG also provides a forum for the Commissioner to work with stakeholders, and for stakeholders to work together, to find solutions to issues and problems for renters.

With respect to the Commissioner's role, 'renters' include tenants and residents under *the Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (RT Act). This includes tenants of general tenancies (Part 2), residents of rooming houses (Part 3), residents of caravans and moveable dwellings (Part 4), site tenants of residential parks (Part 4A), and residents of specialist disability accommodation (Part 12A).

In terms of social housing, the role of the Commissioner includes community housing but not public housing, although an awareness of public housing initiatives and trends in the context of their potential impact on the private rental sector is desirable.

Roles and responsibilities

The RT-SRG brings together tenancy advocates, community agencies and industry bodies to identify and discuss issues, signal and explore potential solutions, and advise the Commissioner.

In particular, the role of the RT-SRG is to provide a forum for stakeholders to:

- raise issues and exchange feedback and views in a confidential setting
- explore identified issues including the causes and impacts for renters
- reach comprehensive and mutually agreed views on issues and potential solutions, where possible, and
- receive reports on the matters discussed by the Renters Advisory Group, and any communities of practice established by the Commissioner.

Additionally, the RT-SRG enables the Commissioner to draw on the expertise of stakeholders

Membership

The RT-SRG comprises representatives from the following stakeholder groups.

ARC Justice	Peninsula Community Legal Centre
Aboriginal Housing Victoria	Real Estate Institute of Victoria
Anika Legal	Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria
Community Housing Industry Association Victoria	Study Melbourne
Consumer Policy Research Centre	Tenants Victoria
Council to Homeless Persons	Victoria Legal Aid
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria	Victorian Caravan Parks Association
Housing for the Aged Action Group	Victorian Council of Social Service
Justice Connect	WEstJustice Community Legal Centre

Details of these stakeholders are set out in the appendix to these Terms of Reference (ToR).

Working groups may be established on a needs basis to explore and report on particular matters referred to them by the RT-SRG.

Frequency of meetings

The RT-SRG will have meetings in a hybrid setting up to four times a year, ideally every three months. Meetings are expected to be approximately two hours in duration.

Meeting procedures

Operating principles

The key operating principles for the RT-SRG are that:

- members attend meetings as expert representatives of their respective organisations, as identified in these ToR
- discussions are undertaken in the spirit of professional enquiry and cooperation, and
- the contributions of members are not to be used against them, or any organisation they belong to.

Confidentiality

It is important that members feel free to contribute honestly and that there is a level of trust between members.

Group members will advise RT-SRG attendees if an item discussed is confidential. Meeting contents will remain confidential amongst group members and their respective delegates.

All electronic and written documents are for RT-SRG members with the expectation that they will distribute these documents responsibly and only to obtain feedback from the groups they represent. The views, information and documents associated with the meetings are not to be provided to the media.

Secretariat

The office supporting the Commissioner will provide executive support to the RT-SRG. This includes preparing and circulating agendas, meeting outcomes and action items, and distributing supporting documentation and papers. Meeting papers will be circulated at least five business days before meetings, except in unforeseen circumstances.

The office supporting the Commissioner will also provide secretariat support for any working groups operating on behalf of the RT-SRG.

Meeting records

A record of the outcomes and action items for each meeting will be prepared and circulated to RT-SRG members for comments.

The meeting record for the previous meeting will be endorsed as final at the next meeting.

Chair

The Commissioner will chair meetings, or where she is unavailable an officer from the office supporting her will chair that meeting.

Evaluation of the RT-SRG

From time to time, the operation of the RT-SRG will be evaluated to ensure that it continues to deliver value for its members. The method that the Commissioner uses to undertake the evaluations will be guided by the views of the RT-SRG members.

Any amendments to these ToR and the operations of the RT-SRG arising from the evaluations will require the mutual agreement of the members.

Appendix

Residential Tenancies Stakeholder Reference Group Members

Stakeholder	SRG Member	Representation	Role
ARC Justice	<i>Mr Damian Stock, Chief Executive Officer</i>	Renters	ARC Justice, provides legal help and tenancy advocacy services to people in Central and Northern Victoria.
Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV)	<i>Andrea Levey, Manager Sector Development</i>	First Nations Renters	AHV is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation managing rental properties and providing homelessness support for First Nations people.
Anika Legal	<i>Zoe Chan, Principal Lawyer, Anika Legal</i>	Renters	Anika Legal is a free online legal service that helps Victorian renters.
Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIAVIC)	<i>Mr Jason Perdriau, Deputy Chief Executive Officer</i>	Community housing providers	CHIAVIC is the peak housing body representing community housing organisations (including housing associations and registered housing providers).
Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC)	<i>Ms Erin Turner, Chief Executive Officer</i>	Consumers	CPRC is a not-for-profit organisation works with policymakers, regulators, and the community sectors to improve consumer wellbeing.
Council to Homeless Persons (CHP)	<i>Mr Thomas Johnson, Director Policy and Communications</i>	Vulnerable and disadvantaged renters	CHP is the peak advocacy body for organisations and individuals with an interest in ending homelessness.
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)	<i>James Houghton, Senior Policy Advisor</i>	Culturally and linguistically diverse renters	ECCV advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of ethnic and multicultural communities in areas of human rights, access and equity, improving services, racism and discrimination.
Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG)	<i>Ms Fiona York, Executive Officer</i>	Older renters	HAAG represents the housing interests of older Victorians with a strong focus on tenancy matters and alternate tenure types.
Justice Connect	<i>Mr Cameron Lavery, Manager & Principal Lawyer</i>	Vulnerable and disadvantaged renters	JC is a community legal centre providing advice and representation for renters.
Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC)	<i>Ms Jackie Galloway, Chief Executive Officer</i>	Vulnerable and disadvantaged renters	PCLC is a community legal centre providing advice and representation for renters.
Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV)	<i>Mr Jacob Caine, President</i>	Estate agents - property managers	REIV is the peak industry association for estate agents and their staff in Victoria. Its membership includes estate agents and agents' representatives who arrange the sale and lease of property on behalf of property owners.
Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria (RAAV)	<i>Mr Ross McKenry, Chief Executive Officer</i>	Rooming house providers	RAAV works with owners and operators of registered accommodation to represent the views and interests of the private rooming house industry.

Stakeholder	SRG Member	Representation	Role
Study Melbourne	<i>Ms Emma Last, Partnership and Engagement Coordinator</i>	International Students	Study Melbourne is a Victorian Government initiative providing support and information to international students.
Tenants Victoria	<i>Ms Jennifer Beveridge, Chief Executive Officer</i>	Renters	TV represents the interests of renters of residential premises in Victoria with respect to legal and policy issues.
Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)	<i>Ms Samantha Sowerwine, Program Manager, Economic & Social Rights Program, Civil Justice</i>	Vulnerable and disadvantaged renters	VLA provides legal advocacy, advice and assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged Victorians.
Victorian Caravan Parks Association (VCPA)	<i>Mr Sam Cohen, Head of Operations Leisure Parks</i>	Caravan and residential park providers	VCPA is the peak body promoting the interests of the caravan park industry in Victoria.
Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)	<i>Ms Debra Fewster, Director Policy and Advocacy</i>	Renters	VCOSS is the peak organisation for the Victorian non-government social and community services sector.
WEstJustice Community Legal Centre (WCLC)	<i>Mr Joseph Nunweek, Legal Director, Economic Justice Program</i>	Vulnerable and disadvantaged renters	WCLC is a community legal centre providing advice and representation for renters.

Reviewed and updated, October 2024