

Media release

JOINT STATEMENT

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

The Honourable Jackie Trad

Minister for Housing and Public Works, Minister for Digital Technology and Minister for Sport

The Honourable Mick de Brenni



Thursday, April 09, 2020

Special COVID-19 Protections for residential tenants and owners

The Palaszczuk Government has unveiled a package of measures to implement the freeze on evictions.

Deputy Premier Jackie Trad is encouraging tenants, property owners and agents to work together to sustain tenancies during this public health emergency.

"We've all heard of stories of too many Queenslanders who are doing it tough right now, and the Palaszczuk Government recognises the hardship they are suffering.

"It's not in the interest of anyone to have tenants left without a place to go when we are fighting to prevent the spread of a deadly disease.

"We will not allow anyone to be evicted because they can't pay their rent as a result of this crisis."

Housing and Public Works Minister Mick de Brenni said that Queenslanders would always rally to support each other when times were tough, and that he was encouraged by the already high number of people resolving issues and supporting each other.

"Neither landlords nor tenants are to blame for this, and now is the time for them to work together to get through this pandemic" Mr de Brenni said.

"The Palaszczuk Government has launched an online rental hub at www.covid19.qld.gov.au/the-hub (<http://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/the-hub>) to provide all of the information and resources to support discussions between property owners and renters.

"For those that can't reach an agreement, there will be compulsory conciliation for COVID-19 related disputes between tenants and landlords through the Residential Tenancies Authority.

"In asking tenants and property owners to find a solution that works for all parties, the RTA will have clear guidelines that prohibit a requirement to draw on superannuation, or sell basic personal assets."

Freeze on evictions

Mr de Brenni said the Palaszczuk Government will implement the National Cabinet decision to freeze evictions due to rent arrears for Queensland tenants impacted by COVID-19.

"We're providing certainty by implementing a retrospective freeze on evictions, as of Sunday 29 March 2020.

New protections now mean that property owners will be prohibited from evicting a tenant if their lease expires during COVID-19 public health crisis.

“This means that a property owner must offer an extension to the lease for at least a further 6 months,” said Mr de Brenni

“Alternatively, if a tenant cannot pay rent due to impacts of coronavirus and wants to end their lease early, they will be allowed to do so.

“Tenants will still be required to demonstrate respect for their property and neighbours by maintaining their home in accordance with their tenancy agreement.”

Rental Support

The Deputy Premier said the Palaszczuk Government had also introduced failsafe measures to support tenants experiencing hardship and unable to access or waiting for other financial support be there for Queensland tenants if all else failed.

“New eligibility criteria is now in place for rental grants of up to four weeks rent, or a maximum of \$2,000.

“This is a last resort for Queenslanders in need of support while they are waiting for federal government support to prevent homelessness.”

DFV Protections

Mr de Brenni said the Palaszczuk Government would also implement legislative protections that would allow Queenslanders experiencing domestic and family violence to leave a rental property in a hurry.

“We want all Queenslanders to be safe at home, but for some people this is just not the case.

“If you need to escape in a hurry, we won’t allow paperwork to stand in your way.

“Immediate support to end tenancies quickly, change locks without seeking approval, access bond and separate from co-tenancies will be introduced.”

ENDS

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