Excessive rent increase checker

Renters should be able to negotiate or challenge a rent increase with confidence.

Tenants Victoria is calling on the next Victorian Government to fund and work with renting experts to create an online excessive rent increase checker. This would give renters the confidence to challenge unfair rent increases, turning existing legal protections into accessible rights.

Context

To protect Victorian renters from excessive rent increases, they have the option to apply to Consumer Affairs Victoria for a free rent assessment within 30 days of a rent increase notice. However, before launching a challenge, it is nearly impossible for renters to know if their rent increase is too high and whether they should seek an assessment. With no way for renters to discern whether an assessment might help them, this important protection is underutilised. For many renters, a rent increase triggers weeks of stress and uncertainty – a frame of mind that is not conducive to navigating a maze of complex and opaque factors.

For many renters, a rent increase triggers weeks of stress and uncertainty – a frame of mind that is not conducive to navigating a maze of complex and opaque factors.

Tenants Victoria

Proposal

Tenants Victoria is proposing a practical and fast online process where renters could receive tailored information about their rent increase and get a clear indication of their options. It would be intended as an optional next step for renters who use the Service Victoria **rent increase calculator**, providing an additional layer of insight relevant to a renter's particular circumstances.

After receiving a rent increase notice, the renter would enter the increase amount and basic information about the property and tenancy into the rent increase checker. Examples of this additional information include location, facilities, services provided by the landlord (rental provider), previous rent increases and outstanding maintenance issues. These are some of the factors that Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) would consider, although the rent increase checker would require less detail and would tolerate more information gaps.

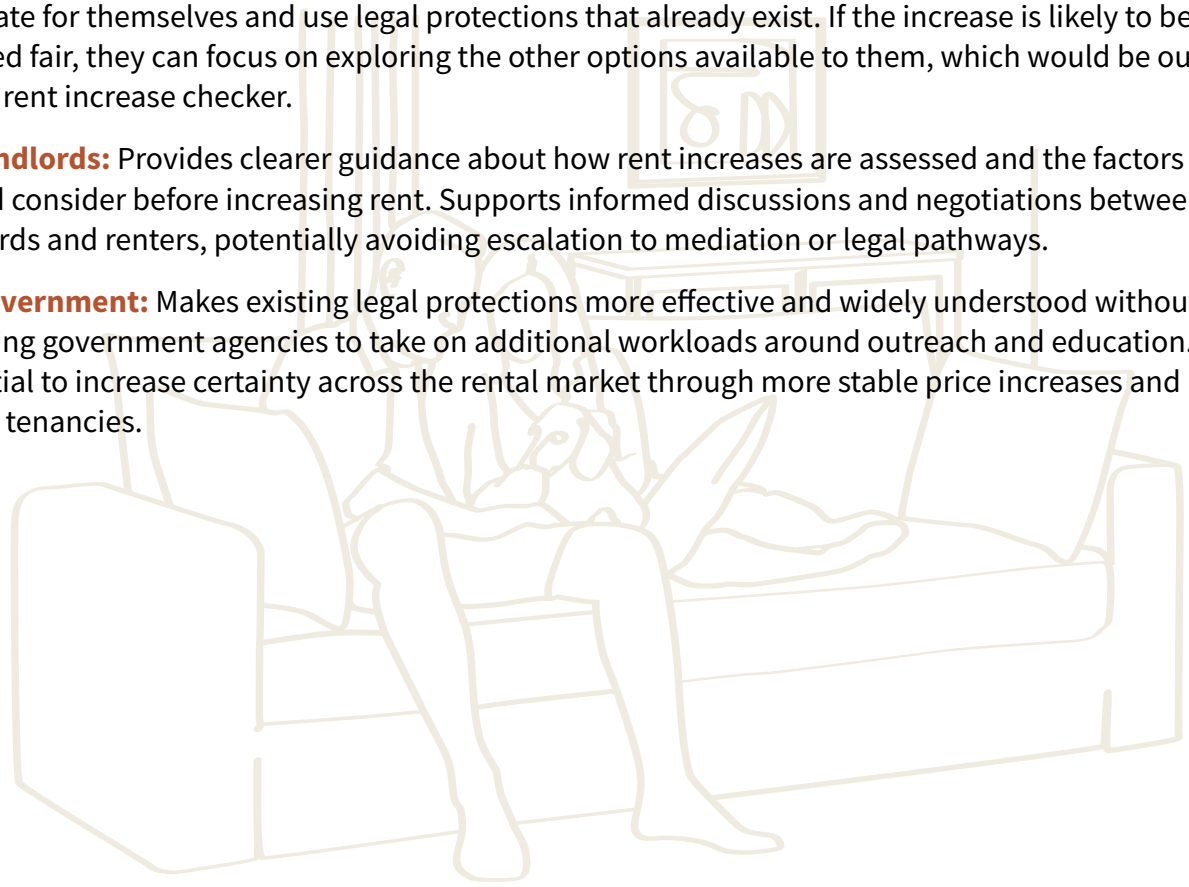
At the end of the process, the renter would receive an assessment of whether the rent increase is likely to be considered excessive, along with a short explanation of how each factor may be considered in the Consumer Affairs Victoria assessment. This would be combined with a tailored set of options, connecting the renter with the appropriate next steps.

Benefits

For renters: Delivers greater transparency that would assist in making informed decisions about their tenancy. In the case of an excessive rent increase, renters would have the confidence to seek help, advocate for themselves and use legal protections that already exist. If the increase is likely to be deemed fair, they can focus on exploring the other options available to them, which would be outlined by the rent increase checker.

For landlords: Provides clearer guidance about how rent increases are assessed and the factors they should consider before increasing rent. Supports informed discussions and negotiations between landlords and renters, potentially avoiding escalation to mediation or legal pathways.

For government: Makes existing legal protections more effective and widely understood without requiring government agencies to take on additional workloads around outreach and education. Potential to increase certainty across the rental market through more stable price increases and longer tenancies.



Tenants Victoria