



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 11/08/2021

Locked down and at risk of eviction: RAHU continues to urgently call on state and federal governments to support renters

Lockdown in Victoria looks set to continue and it seems unlikely to be our last. RAHU acknowledges that COVIDsafe measures are integral to curtailing community transmission and maintaining public health. However, renters in unstable work, those who are already in rental stress, and those ineligible for the Federal Government's emergency relief payment are at growing risk of being unable to pay rent, and—following a recent VCAT ruling—at real risk of eviction.

Unlike previous lockdowns, when JobKeeper was in effect, those in 2021 have seen people lose work with no safety net. People can't pay rent or buy food, while \$80 million in relief goes to commercial landlords. 2020 showed us that state and federal governments have the financial and political ability to keep Victorians in their homes—now they are picking and choosing who gets help and who is left in the cold.

On top of this, VCAT has yet again ruled it lawful to evict a renter who could not pay rent during the state's moratorium on evictions. The likely impact of VCAT's decisions can't be overstated: they expose thousands of Victorian renters to eviction during a deadly pandemic.

During lockdown the Victorian government has offered one-off relief payments or food packages to some people, but this isn't enough to secure access to safe shelter, food, and medical care when renters are losing their income from work on a regular basis. The government needs to provide more than paltry relief payments—Victorians urgently need comprehensive financial relief, and immediate rental protections, in order to continue weathering the dangerous COVID-19 pandemic.

In May 2021, RAHU started [a petition calling for urgent relief and assistance for everyone affected by lockdowns](#). Nearly 1500 signatories have joined us, and we won't stop until the government does their job.

RAHU urgently demands the Victorian State Government:

- Immediately reinstate COVID19 Rental Protections
- Immediately enact an amnesty on rental payments for renters affected for any reason by COVID-19 for the length of Stage 4 Restrictions
- Provide a \$500 stimulus support payment for every rental household in Victoria

RAHU demands the Federal Government immediately:

- Reinststate JobKeeper payments
- Reinststate the JobSeeker COVID-19 Supplement
- Double Commonwealth Rent Assistance payments and fast track applications
- All rental debts accrued due to the impacts of the pandemic are to be forgiven with no fault or penalty

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The Renters And Housing Union (VIC) is a member-run Union of renters and people in precarious housing, formed out of the rent strike as a response to the COVID19 crisis.

Find out more and join RAHU <https://rahu.org.au/>
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What RAHU members have to say:

Snap lockdowns are now a routine public health measure, so it doesn't make sense that we don't have comprehensive and abiding policies and legislative frameworks in place at both state and federal levels to keep people safe.

My sense is that attitudes toward public health orders are shifting in no small part because people can't realistically shelter in place, without warning, over and over (or indefinitely, in the case of NSW) when their basic needs aren't met.

Alvis, RAHU member

Rents haven't changed since we got out of the last lockdown, and also there's not even a moratorium anymore to protect us. Casual workers have been hit hard and are now losing work at a moment's notice, but they're still expected to pay rent for the week. If we are going to be constantly going in and out of lockdowns, we need protections, a moratorium, and support.

Additionally, the messaging is highly confusing about where support is available. No idea where to go if you lose money, especially because it's means tested to hell.

Rent reductions are also something we want to have, especially because the commercial renters have managed to get one.

Members of RAHU Inner Melbourne branch

It's a bit rich for endless politicians and media pundits with secure homes and incomes to be smug about those angry about lockdown. Really easy to lecture others about staying home when you're not faced with poverty and homelessness if you don't go to work.

Nick, RAHU member

What petition signatories have to say:

I signed because my daughter who is sixty Y/O and can only obtain casual work which does not pay enough to pay rent on suitable accommodation. This worries me greatly. I never thought my children would have to suffer like this.

- Judith W

Rinsing the savings account, burning the super to pay rent - had 1 job offer in the last 6months (suitable for my needs & skills) since i lost my 'gig' role last year. Do not qualify for further assistance.

- M M