**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**RAHU calls on** **Walshe & Whitelock Brunswick to explain their relationship with a business owner who physically and verbally assaulted a RAHU member.**

On Saturday 29th of October, while protesting multiple and severe breaches of tenancy law at the Brunswick offices of property manager Walshe & Whitelock, a RAHU member was threatened with death and other violence by a local Walshe & Whitelock business tenant. This tenant is also a sponsored business of Walshe & Whitelock. After the incident he took refuge in Walshe & Whitelock offices.

RAHU demands Walsh & Whitelock publicly explain their business relationships with this tenant, and if they condone this violent and abusive behaviour. Walsh & Whilelock must explain if they plan to issue a breach of contract to the tenant, and if they will continue to sponsor their business.

In addition, RAHU demands Walshe & Whitelock respond to the multiple serious issues their tenants are experiencing. Further, RAHU calls on the state government to establish a Rental Tenancies Ombudsman to allow tenants to have complainants investigated and disciplinary action taken. Bad agents like Walshe & Whitelock must be held to account.

**Details**

Walshe & Whitelock is an agency located in Brunswick, owning and managing many properties in Brunswick and surrounding suburbs. Last Saturday, RAHU members visited the Walshe & Whitelock agency on Sydney Road handing out flyers after a number of our members had reported systemic severe breaches by the agency.

During that time, a local business owner approached one of our members. He identified the business as being a tenant to Walshe & Whitelock. The business owner failed to mention that the business was also sponsored by Walshe & Whitelock.

After suggesting that we shouldn’t be there and to move on, he tapped a RAHU member on the shoulder to encourage them to move on. After being told to not touch them, the business owner began shouting violent threats of killing and sexually assaulting the RAHU member. After our member walked away, the business owner moved on to harass and threaten the rest of our members. He retreated into the office of Walshe & Whitelock to continue intimidation from inside the building.

RAHU is concerned with Walshe & Whitelock’s practices after a number of renters have come forward with cases of hazardous negligence, uninhabitable property listings, and destruction of valuable personal property of renters.

**RAHU members’ reported experiences with Walshe & Whitelock:**

* After evicting a renter, Walshe & Whitelock illegally disposed of chemotherapy medication and medical records. After an eviction, medical records must be preserved for 90 days, and medication must be preserved for 14 days before disposal.
* A renter reported hazardous mould yet was forced to live with a mould infested bathroom for months. It was only fixed when an emergency plumber discovered a termite infestation. W&W refused to give our member a copy of the lease and the original condition report. W&W also gave them an invalid eviction notice.
* Another renter reported moving into a property before seeing it, and before signing a condition report. The member had already paid a month's rent and bond. During the first inspection, it was discovered that the entire kitchen was infested with mould and had to be fully replaced.

This is a clear breach of the minimum standards required by law. The renter rightfully backed out of the lease and would not sign the condition report. Walshe & Whitelock are refusing to return the renters’ bond and rent, stalling reimbursement to the renter through forcing them to go to VCAT.

Walshe & Whitelock continue to advertise the property online for lease, using misleading footage of the property without the damage, and a different property entirely.

RAHU asks Walshe & Whitelock to publicly respond to whether they condone violent abuse and assault to members of the Brunswick community, and if they will continue to sponsor this business?

Further, we ask for Walshe & Whitelock to publicly respond to their treatment of renters leasing with their agency.

RAHU will not back down on supporting our members who are being punished by real estate agencies and landlords who blatantly break the law.

Legislated rental protections are only as good as their enforcement. RAHU calls on the Victorian State Government to adopt a Residential Tenancies Ombudsman to regulate the real estate industry, and apply proportionate penalties to agents found breaching renters rights.

If you’ve had a bad experience with Walshe & Whitelock, or any other agency, let us know

<https://airtable.com/shrdyr21gDUS4u4L4>

**Media contact:** Ellise Bourne: 0468 474 526 or email **media@rahu.org.au**

*The Renters And Housing Union (RAHU) is Australia’s largest member-run Union of renters and people in precarious housing. We collectively organise for the right to safe and secure housing through self-advocacy, education, and frontline eviction defence.*

**Find out more and join RAHU** [**https://rahu.org.au/**](https://rahu.org.au/aboutus/)

media@rahu.org.au | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rentersandhousingunion) | [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/rahunionvic) | [Twitter](https://twitter.com/rahunionvic)