

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 17 April 2020**

### **Housing Justice welcomes State Government support for renters**

Housing Justice welcomes the short-term rental relief measures announced by the Victorian Government for tenants affected by COVID-19, while also urging the government to focus on measures to stabilise the housing market and protect tenants in the long-term.

The \$80 million-dollar rental assistance fund announced by the Victorian Government this week is welcome relief for tenants experiencing rental stress due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Housing Justice Manager Kirsty Waller praised the government for the protections unveiled in the plan that will help to ensure renters remain safe and in their homes during this crisis.

“We are particularly pleased to see that the Victorian Government will ban landlords from evicting people in acute financial distress and put a pause on rent increases for the next six months. The financial assistance for tenants struggling to pay the rent, and tax incentives for private landlords to reduce rent, are also welcome features of the relief package” said Ms. Waller.

Now that critical steps have been taken to stabilise housing in the short-term, Housing Justice urges the government to think about the impact of this crisis on long-term housing security, with the economic and social disruption caused by coronavirus projected to continue beyond the next six months.

According to Ms. Waller, “Paying the rent is a week by week struggle for people experiencing financial hardship. While a \$2,000 one-off payment will provide some relief, it may not be enough to sustain a tenancy long-term”.

Long-term recovery from COVID-19 depends on a national housing strategy with more low-cost rental homes available to meet the demand for affordable housing, and an increase in Commonwealth Rent Assistance. State and federal governments must prioritise these reforms as we move into the recovery phase of the COVID-19 response.

Housing Justice is a program of ARC Justice and provides tenancy advocacy services throughout Central Victoria. If you need help negotiating with your real estate agent or landlord, please call Housing Justice on (03) 5445 0990 or email [info@housingjustice.org.au](mailto:info@housingjustice.org.au) for assistance.

#### **For media comment:**

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