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ARC Justice research reveals flood-hit renters face difficult choices

New research from ARC Justice shows renters in regional Victoria are being forced into difficult choices after climate disasters such as floods, with many having to leave their homes or stay in unsafe conditions.

Launched in May, the research report *Where do we go now? Renters' experiences of housing precarity and climate disaster* examines the experiences of renters affected by the October 2022 floods in north-central Victoria.

ARC Justice runs community legal centres across regional Victoria and worked directly with renters affected by the floods, supporting people through legal issues during recovery.

Funded by the Victoria Law Foundation, the report draws on interviews with renters and support services to show how housing precarity shapes disaster recovery.

ARC Justice CEO Damian Stock says the findings show renters face a distinct set of risks during and after disasters.

"Renters often have very little control over what happens next," he says. "They don't decide if a home is repaired, rebuilt or even made safe. But they live with the consequences."

The report found renters were frequently displaced, sometimes for extended periods, while others remained in damaged or unsafe homes because they had nowhere else to go.

In tight regional rental markets, that leaves some renters effectively trapped in high-risk housing.

"I feel like I'm stuck and there's nothing I can do about it," one renter quoted in the report says.

The research highlights that many of the challenges renters face are legal in nature, including issues around repairs, rent obligations and whether a property is safe enough to continue leasing. Renters don't always recognise these as legal issues.

"When renters can access legal help, outcomes improve," Stock says. "But too often, people don't realise what they're dealing with is a legal issue until much later, if at all."

Stock says the findings point to gaps in how renters are considered in disaster response and recovery. "This isn't just about disasters. It's about housing systems that aren't working for renters."

ARC Justice will use the report to inform its advocacy and work with governments and partners to improve how renters are supported before, during and after disasters.

Read the report: <https://arcjustice.org.au/where-do-we-go-now/>

About ARC Justice

ARC Justice is a rights-based, social justice organisation incorporating the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre in Bendigo, the Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre in Shepparton and Housing Justice, a specialist renter support program. ARC provides legal and tenancy support services across 13 local government areas in central and northern Victoria, with a team of almost 70 staff working to advocate for and uphold the rights of rural and regional Victorians.

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