

**Submission
No 18**

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (RENTAL FAIRNESS) BILL 2023

Organisation: Country Women's Association of NSW

Date Received: 31 May 2023



30 May 2023

Mr Clayton Barr, MP
Committee Chair
Legislative Assembly Select Committee
Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via online submission

Response to Inquiry: Legislative Assembly Select Committee Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 (NSW)

The CWA of NSW has thousands of grassroots members and hundreds of branches across NSW. Our members have a strong interest in policy decisions that affect communities, families and country people and can be viewed as an important stakeholder of government at both state and national levels. A key aim of the CWA of NSW is to improve the conditions of families especially in country areas, as well as enhance the value of country living.

At the recent CWA of NSW state conference, members unanimously endorsed the following policy position:

"That the policy of the CWA of NSW be to advocate the State and Commonwealth Governments to take coordinated and urgent action to address the national housing crisis facing women."

A Policy Snapshot prepared by Housing for Aged Action Group and Social Ventures Australia in 2020 reports that in Australia: *"405,000 women aged 45 years and over are estimated as being at risk of homelessness. This includes: 165,000 women aged 45-55 years; and 240,000 women aged 55 years and over."*¹

NSW has a shortage of affordable rental housing particularly in rural, regional areas. High demand for available stock has led to low vacancy rates and higher rents. Equity Economics reports that over the past two years *"rents for properties in the cheapest quartile in regional NSW have increased by 13 per cent."*²

The CWA of NSW writes to voice concern that the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022 and the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019* will have no impact on addressing the issues underpinning the current housing crisis.

The legislation in its current form proposes to help ensure more transparency and accountability during the rental application process — so that renters can't be 'secretly' outbid — by putting in place mechanisms that require landlords and their agents to advise other applicants when a renter makes an offer at higher than the advertised rent.

¹ Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) & Social Ventures Australia (SVA) (2020), *At Risk 405,000 older women risk homelessness without urgent policy reform*, Policy Snapshot, Sydney

² Equity Economics (2021), *Rebuilding Women's Economic Security – Investing in Social Housing in New South Wales*, Sydney.

Given that agents are not permitted to use a prior bid to solicit further bids under reforms introduced by the previous government, through the *Property and Stock Agents Regulation (Rules of conduct)*, CWA of NSW is concerned that proposed changes would simply formalise and potentially entrench 'rent auctions' as part of the application process, placing additional pricing pressure on the current tight and competitive rental market.

The CWA of NSW would encourage the government to take a more considered and holistic approach to legislative reform — to take evidence based actions endorsed by community — to improve access to, and affordability of housing in NSW. A good place to start would be to review and respond to the 40 recommendations made by the *Standing Committee on Social Issues - Homelessness amongst older people aged over 55*.

Yours faithfully,



Danica Leys
CEO, CWA of NSW