

**Submission  
No 3**

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (PROHIBITING NO GROUNDS  
EVICTIONS) BILL 2024**

**Organisation:** Uniting NSW.ACT

**Date Received:** 24 June 2024



Ms Shanshan Guo  
Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment  
(Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024

Via email: [nogroundsevictionsbill@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nogroundsevictionsbill@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

21 June 2024

Dear Ms Jenny Leong and Committee Members

### **Submission to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024**

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to the [Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Agreement \(Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions\) Bill 2024](#).

Uniting NSW.ACT contributes to the work of the Uniting Church in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, through social justice advocacy, community services and spiritual care. We provide services for all people through all ages and stages of life, and drive solutions to systemic issues that hold disadvantage in place. We aim to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice. We value diversity and always welcome everyone exactly as they are.

In this submission, we focus primarily on matters relating to housing and the private rental market. In so doing, we draw on our experience as a provider of low-cost housing to older people, primarily through our retirement living villages. This includes some 900 affordable properties, with 600 provided through the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF). In addition, over the next few years Uniting will improve access to retirement living by transitioning more than 40 of its retirement villages to a rental model. We also provide residential aged care services that specialise in caring for older people with lived experience of homelessness.

Uniting also provides homelessness and accommodation supports to young people through assertive outreach services, youth homelessness supports, a Youth Foyer, to people living with mental illness through the Housing and Accommodation Initiative (HASI), and accommodation for people escaping domestic violence.

Of our clients:

- 55% are single women over 55; 30% identify as culturally and linguistically diverse;
- 3% identify as First Nations peoples;
- 86% are unable to work, not looking for work or retired;
- 6% are working full- or part-time;
- 20% experienced homeless prior to their housing placement;

We attach a submission responding to the provisions of the Bill as outlined in the Terms

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of Reference. Our main recommendations are:

- For the Labor government to uphold its commitment to end no grounds eviction of renters in both fixed term and periodic leases, and provide and facilitate access to wraparound supports;
- To make provisions for landlords to evict on reasonable grounds;
- To support fairer rentals and radically boost the supply of social and affordable housing;
- To ensure that any new social and affordable housing delivered through development partnerships continue indefinitely;
- Applying a whole-of-system approach to working with individuals and households as an early intervention strategy, by providing people experiencing social and economic exclusion with housing and wraparound supports.
- To boost the supply of social and affordable housing and funding, and ensure the rental housing system is meeting people's needs by developing targeted community engagement plans for people experiencing social and economic exclusion, including First Nations people, single women over 55, women and children leaving domestic and/or family violence, LGBTIQ, young people leaving the out-of-home care (foster care) system, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and intersections of all the above.

For additional information or comment, please contact [REDACTED], Head of Research and Social Policy, at [REDACTED], or on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

**Emma Maiden**  
General Manager Advocacy and External Relations  
Uniting NSW.ACT

## **Submission to the Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Agreement (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024**

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Agreement (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024, as a provider of affordable housing, youth homelessness services and accommodation supports for a range of people experiencing disadvantage and other forms of social exclusion. We are also one of the largest providers of residential aged care.

As a partner organisation of Sydney Alliance, we strongly support its recommendations to:

- For the Labor government to uphold its commitment to end no grounds eviction of renters in both fixed term and periodic leases and provide and facilitate access to wraparound supports;
- To make provisions for landlords to evict on reasonable grounds;
- To support fairer rentals and radically boost the supply of social and affordable housing;
- To ensure that any new social and affordable housing delivered through development partnerships continue indefinitely.

We would like to provide the following additional insights and recommendations for this Select Committee to consider and include in their report.

### **Renters/tenants often have complex and challenging life circumstances**

The NSW Government should support the introduction of prohibitions on no-grounds evictions, by providing wraparound supports for at-risk tenants. Uniting NSW.ACT acknowledges that no grounds evictions are sometimes currently used by landlords to manage difficult tenants or extreme situations, and that this can sometimes allow them to protect other people living within the same property who may be experiencing disadvantage and other forms of social exclusion.

Uniting generally does not issue 90-day no-grounds notices, instead allowing our lease agreements to lapse into a periodic agreement without an end date. Instead of relying on eviction to manage difficult tenants, we adopt an early intervention approach. We put wraparound supports in place to strengthen their ability to sustain their tenancies. We also work with individuals and families to find the most appropriate housing arrangements based on their needs and to move them through the system. For example, while our transitional housing program is not designed for long-term housing, we developed support protocols for people experiencing disadvantage and other forms of social exclusion to enter safe and stable accommodation for a period of time, while supporting them to transition to medium-to-long-term housing solutions.

Our wraparound approach and warm referrals to external partner providers allows us to identify and work through complex behavioural (e.g. anti-social) or financial (e.g. non-payment of rent) issues with the tenant, including ensuring that they have access to appropriate supports as they move through the system. This may include referring them

to counsellors/financial counsellors to help them understand or grow their awareness and understanding of services, or to community mediators (e.g. local community justice centres). Individuals and households may experience peaks and troughs in their lives, marked by stable periods, significant life events and more which require deeper and extended interventions. This is when our connection to the support sector is helpful – either internally within our own home and community care teams, or externally with local support services. As part of our Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) Program, we develop tailored support coordination that meets their needs. During the 2022-23 period, in a tenant satisfaction survey, 70% of our clients shared that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with how they were connected to supports or local service. Some of the benefits that clients cited of living in Uniting housing included feeling more settled, feeling more able to cope with life events, feeling part of the local community, having better access to services, feeling more able to improve their job situation, being more able to manage rent or money, and feeling more able to start or continue education or training. We believe that increasing the availability of low-cost/affordable rental housing improves chances of people’s basic needs being met.

*Recommendation: Apply a whole-of-system approach to working with individuals and households as an early intervention strategy, by providing people experiencing social and economic exclusion with housing and wraparound supports.*

### **Health benefits of housing stability and breaking intergenerational disadvantage through regular and meaningful dialogue with communities**

The NSW Government should attempt to mitigate any unintended consequences for any proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Agreement Bill by developing and sustaining regular consultations and other activities with communities. This will allow them to identify and understand issues and unintended consequences on communities, and inform subsequent adjustments.

Our experience as a SAHF provider have given us insight into how the lack of adequate and affordable housing directly impacts homelessness and housing stress, acutely experienced by individuals and families from low-income households. There are physical and mental health benefits in greater housing stability and decreased stress levels<sup>1</sup>. We believe that housing stability and nurturing or facilitating community connections is especially important to allow people to age in place and improve mental health and wellbeing.

Additionally, we strongly recommend that the NSW Government review and reform the rental housing system by ensuring standard rental contracts can meet the needs of older people who need housing stability to age in place, i.e. develop a consistent, standard rental contract that delivers this. Uniting NSW.ACT also delivers the Premier’s Youth Initiative in the mid and far-North Coast of NSW, and operates Foyer Central in partnership with St George’s Community Housing, Social Ventures Australia and the NSW

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<sup>1</sup> Mental Health Commission of New South Wales. (2024). *Housing stress*. <https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/measuring-change-indicator/housing-stress>

Government. Both programs are designed to support young people leaving care and transitioning to independence. As part of the Premier's Youth Initiative Uniting provides head-leasing of private rental market properties and wraparound supports, and Foyer Central consists of a safe and stable accommodation component provided through a local housing partner, and wraparound supports. The wraparound supports provided in both programs aim to support young people in achieving their employment, educational and personal goals. Uniting NSW.ACT is interested and committed to co-develop and further roll out the rental models mentioned above with the NSW Government and the broader sector. Currently, Sydney Alliance, Uniting NSW.ACT and other partner organisations are conducting forums across Greater Sydney by geographical locations (e.g. Southwest Sydney, Northwest Sydney, etc.) to better understand and capture local and broader challenges that private renters face.

*Recommendation: Develop targeted community engagement and consultation plans for particularly economically and socially excluded people and groups, including First Nations people, single women over 55, those who identify as LGBTIQ, and/or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to better understand the determinants of housing stability and how to disrupt intergenerational disadvantage.*