



**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire

Our Reference: A7635008

8 November 2017

Community Affairs Committee
Parliament of Australia
Online submission

Dear Sir/Madam

**Mornington Peninsula Shire Submission to Community Affairs Committee
Social Services Legislation Amendment (Affordable Housing) Bill 2017**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to this Bill.

Due to time constraints, this matter has not been reported to a formal meeting of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council however, the views that are expressed are generally consistent with the policy framework of the Council (see relevant policy extracts, below):

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Plan

➤ **Our wellbeing**

- A healthy, happy, inclusive and active community

Health and Wellbeing Plan

- Our community works together to achieve optimal standards of health and wellbeing for all residents
 - Implement community planning, advocacy and support services that build an accessible, inclusive and engaged community
 - In partnership with community stakeholders, improve community services across the peninsula
 - Support and deliver generalist services that build the capacity of community members to achieve optimal health and wellbeing.
 - Support implementation of local emergency food relief and food rescue and re-distribution programs.
 - Participate in and promote local, regional, statewide and national networks, events and campaigns.

Triple A Housing Policy

- To plan and promote housing in the Shire that: is of a good design, quality and standard; is accessible to a range of services and facilities; minimises environmental impact; respects neighbourhood character; complements the natural environment; is affordable; and increases security of tenure.
- To advocate and lobby for more appropriate and affordable housing on the Mornington Peninsula.
 - That Council seek full involvement in the formulation of regional, state and national policy and program development;

It is submitted that the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Affordable Housing) Bill 2017* should be amended so that mandatory deductions are restricted to just those cases where there are serious rental arrears that may justify eviction and where there is opportunity for decisions to be appealed and independently reviewed.

This change to the Bill is considered justified on the following grounds:

- A system of deductions and refunds, as necessary to cope with fluctuating rent and household bills, is likely to have delays that could seriously disrupt the cash flow, and associated wellbeing, of very low income people who are living week to week.
- The above disruption could place additional strain on local emergency relief providers for the provision of food and the like. These services, many of them voluntary, are already experiencing significant strain.
- It is understood that most welfare recipients, are meeting their rental payments on time, and for them any change from the current voluntary system to a mandatory system would be an unnecessary and punitive measure. Such disempowerment could adversely affect their sense of wellbeing, as well as their capacity to properly manage their financial affairs.

Further information is also required to determine whether the proposed fee structure of the mandatory system would be more expensive than the voluntary system. Any additional expense would be unwelcomed by welfare recipients.

It would be appreciated if you could take the above views into account.

Yours sincerely

Louise Wilkins
Manager Family Planning and Community Development