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tenants union of victoria  
annual report  
2002-2003



TENANTS UNION  
of Victoria Ltd





# Contents

<b>Mission</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Major Achievements</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chairperson’s Report</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chief Executive Officer’s Report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strategic Plan</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Legal Services</b>	<b>7</b>
Advice Service	7
Casework	7
Rooming House Service	8
Specialist Legal Work	9
<b>Regional Services</b>	<b>10</b>
Western PHAP Service	10
Northern Consumer & Tenant Advice Service	12
<b>Specialist Services</b>	<b>13</b>
Community Education	13
Publications	14
Training	15
Policy and Research	16
<b>Administration Services</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	<b>18</b>
Staff	18
Volunteers	19
<b>Financial Statements</b>	<b>20</b>
Directors’ Report	20
Consolidated Statement of Financial Performance	22
Consolidated Statement of Financial Position	23
Notes	24
Statement of Cash Flows	25
Statement by Directors	26
Independent Auditor’s Report	27

# Vision

**Genuine housing choice without social or economic disadvantage**

# Mission

**To promote and protect the rights and interests of all residential tenants in Victoria**

# Major Achievements 2002/2003

- **30,000+** clients statewide
  - 8,000+ public tenants
  - 22,000+ private tenants
  - 1,040 consumers
- **870** clients assisted through casework
- **191** VCAT (Residential Tenancies List) representations
- **1,160+** organisational clients statewide
- **50+** education activities to a total audience of more than **1,500** tenants and services
- Publication of:
  - The *Tenant Worker's Survival Kit* a comprehensive problem-solving manual for tenancy and housing workers
  - The *Tenant Handbook* an information guide for residential tenants
  - The *Public Housing Survival Kit* an information guide for public housing residents
  - The *Rooming House Survival Kit* an information guide for rooming house residents
  - The *Caravan Park Survival Kit* an information guide for permanent caravan park residents
  - *Tenants Rights* a multilingual information guide for residential tenants
  - *Public Housing* a multilingual guide for prospective public tenants
  - *Tenancy Quarterly* a journal for housing and tenancy workers
  - *Tenants News* a newsletter for Victorian tenants
- **76,000+** user sessions on the TU Web Site
- **200+ hours** of training to tenancy workers across the state
- **150+** articles in statewide and local media
- **7,600+** clients assisted by the TU Western Region Public Tenant Service
- **10,600+ hours** of community facilities use for the benefit of public tenants in the Western region
- **650+** clients assisted by the TU Rooming House Service
- **1,040** consumer clients assisted by the TU Northern Consumer and Tenant Advice Service

## Chairperson's Report

On behalf of the Board of the Tenants Union of Victoria I take great pleasure in presenting the Annual Report for 2002/03. The report documents the work of the organisation throughout the year and highlights the vital role the Tenants Union plays promoting the rights and interests of residential tenants in Victoria.

This past year has again illustrated the considerable challenges facing the organisation into the future. We have continued to implement our strategic direction and to focus on making an abiding difference for low income and other marginalised tenants in the private rental sector in particular. Whilst we have seen significant oversupply of rental accommodation at the high cost end of the rental market with commensurate windfalls for some higher income tenants the situation for low income tenants at the low cost end of the market shows no signs of easing.

The long decline in alternative housing options to the private rental market has continued. Concerns regarding affordable home purchase for first home buyers have seen the establishment of a Federal inquiry, the terms of reference of which are unfortunately narrow. In addition, there is unlikely to be any growth in public housing stock and opportunities in the foreseeable future under the proposed Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. All this indicates an increased reliance on the private rental sector to provide affordable and appropriate housing, even though this strategy appears to have not worked well to date.

Whilst the situation for tenants has remained difficult, the organisation also faces many challenges in the face of government funding limitations and increasing accountability. We have commenced work on plans for income diversification that we hope will facilitate a better alignment between our activity and our aspirations and look forward to developing this work over the next twelve months.

Whilst we focus on our strategic direction we should not forget the important work undertaken on day-to-day basis to assist so many individual tenants to solve their everyday problems. The management and staff of the organisation are to be commended on their continuing efforts to improve our services and for their many individual successes.

I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their substantial commitment and effort they have given throughout this year, particularly in light of the additional time required to implement the strategic direction. We are blessed with a fine range of interests and skills across the Board. Our CEO, Mark O'Brien, should also be mentioned for his tireless efforts to keep the organisation on the front foot, always ready to embrace the opportunities that arise from a changing world. It has been a highly productive year for the Tenants Union resulting in some very tangible benefits to the organisation and the people we represent.



David Hayward  
Chairperson

## Chief Executive Officer's Report

Over the last twelve months we have continued to refocus on contributing to social justice through implementation of a social change agenda for residential tenancies. This social change agenda and action plan form the back-bone of a long term strategy for improving the housing outcomes for low income and other marginalised households in the rental sector.

We have also undertaken a significant amount of additional work in preparation for amendments to residential tenancies legislation in Victoria that came into effect on 1st July 2003.

The review of residential tenancies legislation was a commitment made by the then ALP opposition prior to the 1999 State election. Following the election a broad based Steering Committee was established including representatives from across the spectrum of stakeholders in the rental sector. The review addressed a number of areas of the legislative framework including the operations of the Residential Tenancies List of VCAT.

The outcomes of the review were some modest improvements in the legislative protections offered to residential tenants including extension of the period for no reason notices to vacate from 90 days to 120 days and limiting rent increases to once every six months.

Whilst preparing for the 1st July changes, the staff have also been able to continue to deliver the high quality services and programs for which the Tenants Union is well known. Overall client assistance remains high and we are effectively targeting our limited but necessary casework assistance to those clients most in need or those cases that have the biggest potential impact on tenants as a whole.

During the past year we also undertook a major internal project to improve evaluation of our services and activities. During this project, evaluation measurement and methods were examined for all services and activities and we have commenced implementation of a number of improvements. Implementation will continue over the next twelve months as we move towards renewal of our major funding and service agreements next year.

We were fortunate to secure an overall increase in recurrent funding in this financial year and wish to acknowledge the contribution of the following funding bodies in enabling the Tenants Union to work towards its objectives.

- Consumer Affairs Victoria – Fair Trading Program
- The Office of Housing – Public Housing Advocacy Program
- Victoria Legal Aid
- The Department of Legal Aid and Family Services (Commonwealth)

Throughout this year, as the Annual Report makes evident, the staff of the Tenants Union has delivered highly professional and effective services to Victorian tenants and a wide range of organisations that work with tenants. The details of the range and complexity of activities undertaken by the Union are a credit to the commitment and skills of all staff who should be commended for another excellent year's work.

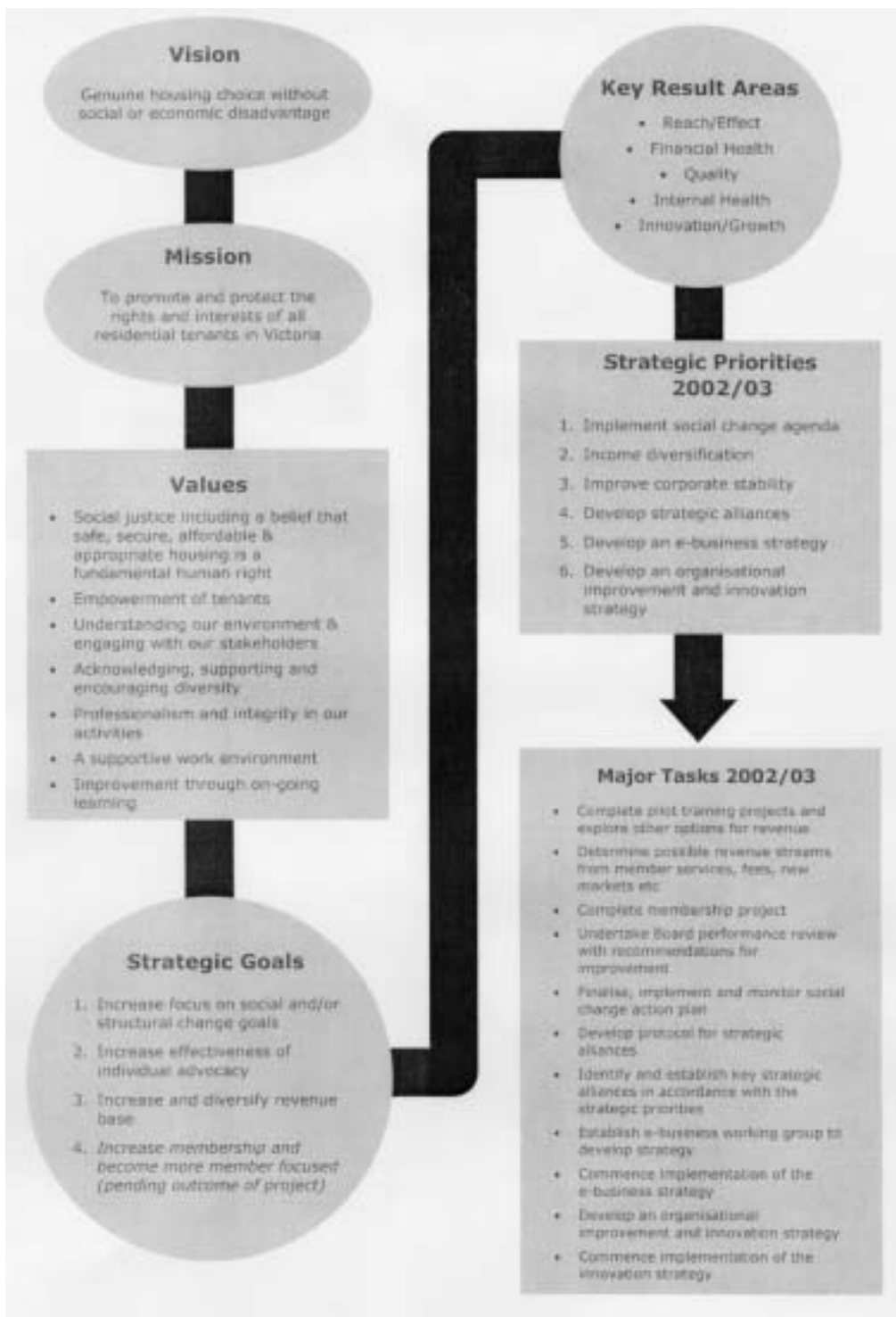


Mark O'Brien  
Chief Executive Officer

# Strategic Plan

During this financial year the Board has again reviewed the Tenants Union’s strategic plan. The current Strategic Plan and a status report against the Key Result Areas and are outlined below.

## Tenants Union of Victoria, Strategic Plan 2002-03



## Tenants Union of Victoria, Key Result Areas 2002-03

Area	Indicator	Target	Comment
<b>Reach</b>	Achievement social change goals	<b>Report</b> to Board of x <b>6</b> monthly	Achieved. Refer to Policy & Research section of the Annual Report.
	Participation in policy reviews	Active participation in all relevant reviews	Participation in the following major policy reviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act Review</li> <li>• Ministerial Housing Council</li> </ul>
	Campaign involvement	<b>1</b> major statewide campaign	Achieved. Refer to Policy & Research section of the Annual Report
	Joint project involvement	<b>Document</b> joint projects x <b>quarterly</b>	Participation in the following joint projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMES legal curriculum + SCLC</li> <li>• Discrimination project + EOCV &amp; REIV</li> </ul>
	No. of media releases	<b>1</b> per month (statewide)	<b>20+</b> media appearances
	No. of media articles x type	<b>1</b> per month (local) x <b>1</b> per month (statewide)	<b>50+</b> media appearances
	No. of clients overall	<b>34,100</b> tenants x <b>1,000</b> consumers p.a. Central Phone <b>22,000</b> Inner <b>2,000</b> West <b>8,000</b> North (tenants) <b>2,100</b> North (consumers) <b>1,000</b>	Total clients for 2002/03:  Central Phone <b>18,513</b> Inner <b>1,938</b> West <b>7,627</b> North (tenants) <b>1,661</b> North (consumers) <b>1,040</b>
	No. of advocacy clients	<b>80%</b> of clients advice & information assist only	<b>79%</b> of clients advice and information assistance only
	No. of research projects	<b>2</b> research papers per annum	Research papers prepared on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth Rent Assistance</li> <li>• Submission to Federal Poverty Inquiry</li> </ul>
	No. of education forums	<b>34</b> minimum (+<10) forums per annum Inner <b>12</b> North <b>22</b> (+<10)	Community education activities for 2002/03: Inner <b>15</b> North <b>35</b>
	No. of days training provision	<b>30</b> days per annum	<b>32</b> days in 2002/03
	Distribution of publications	All targets per annum: Leaflets <b>100,000</b> Handbooks <b>20,000</b> Tenants News <b>4 x 2,500</b> Update <b>4 x 150</b> Web (user sessions) <b>30,000</b>	Total distribution for the last quarter: Leaflets <b>48,662</b> Handbooks <b>6,800</b> Tenants News <b>4 x 5,000</b> Tenancy Quarterly <b>4 x 250</b> Web (user sessions) <b>76,313</b>
	<b>Financial Health</b>	Budget for social change work	% increase annually
Proportion of discretionary funding		<b>&gt;1%</b>	No change
Proportion of non/government funding		<b>&gt;1%</b>	No change
Minimise accumulated deficits/surplus		<b>&lt;+4%</b> surplus, -0% deficit	All project balances in surplus of <b>&lt;5%</b> .
<b>Quality</b>	Document service trends	Service Area <b>reports x quarterly</b>	Service Area reports provided. Service trends shown in Annual Report.
	Abandoned call rate (Fitzroy only)	Average <b>&lt;20%</b>	Average abandoned call rate = <b>19%</b>
	Client satisfaction: advocacy	<b>&gt;80%</b>	Survey conducted in May 2003. Satisfaction rate = <b>96%</b>
	Client satisfaction: training	<b>&gt;90%</b>	Survey conducted for each session. Average satisfaction rate = <b>90%</b>
	Client satisfaction: publications	<b>&gt;90%</b>	Survey conducted in May 2003. Satisfaction rate = <b>96%</b>
	Compliance with service guidelines	No exceptions	<b>No exceptions</b>
	No. of client complaints	No exceptions	<b>No complaints</b>
<b>Internal Health</b>	Level of unplanned turnover	<b>&lt; 5%</b> per annum	4% total turnover app. <b>2%</b> "unplanned"
	Level of absenteeism	<b>&lt; 3%</b> average per annum	App. <b>3%</b> absenteeism
	Staff satisfaction	<b>+75%</b>	Staff satisfaction level based on previous survey conducted = <b>65%</b>
	Compliance with Workplace Diversity Policy	No exceptions	<b>No exceptions</b>
	Compliance with EEO, OHS Workcover etc.	No exceptions	<b>No exceptions</b>
	Achievement of staff development goals	No exceptions	Goal formulation requires further refinement.
	<b>Innovation</b>	New alliances developed	
New services implemented			No new services. Improvement in service evaluation.
Service innovations implemented			Focus on service improvement. No service innovations



## Legal Services

### Advice Service

The aim of the Advice Service is to provide accessible and effective assistance to residential tenants across Victoria but particularly focusing on metropolitan Melbourne.

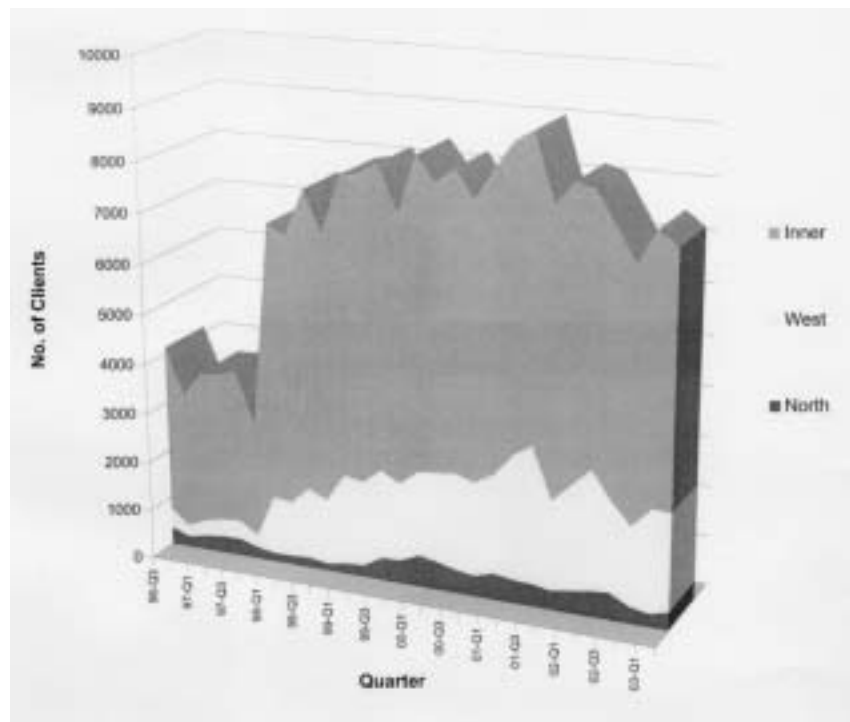
The service is structured to facilitate initial contact through the centralised telephone advice line, with queuing capacity for up to five callers, and where necessary referral to the Union's own regional services or to public and private tenant services across the state.

The structure of the advice service enables clients with simple issues to be efficiently assisted with basic advice and information. Clients with more complex issues or those with problems requiring documents to be sighted can be referred to in person services for follow-up assistance.

About 80% of all clients are assisted with basic advice and information, largely by telephone.

The figure below illustrates the trends in client assistance from 1996/97 to 2002/03.

#### Advice Service Trend x Quarter 1996/97 to 2002/03



(Source: TUV Client Service Data)

The centralised phone service operates with a minimum of two advisers from 9:00am and 4:30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and from 4:30pm to 8:00pm on Wednesday.

As at 30th June 2003 the Tenants Union general tenant advice service (excluding the Western PHAP service) had locations at:

- Carnegie
- Epping
- Greensborough
- St Kilda
- Glenroy
- Preston

Total advice and casework statistics for the general tenant advice service indicated:

- a total of **22,112** client contacts; comprised of 2,838 drop-in advice service enquiries and 19,220 telephone advice service enquiries
- a total of **21,724 new** clients and 388 ongoing casework contacts
- about 25% of all clients were from non-English speaking backgrounds
- **more than 450** clients received VCAT/Office of Housing Appeals assistance or representation

During the period we assisted clients with a vast range of tenancy issues and problems. The most common specific issues raised were:

- repairs (4,088 enquiries)
- bond recovery (2,597 enquiries)
- lease breaking (2,525 enquiries)
- Notices to Vacate (2,117 enquiries)
- compensation (1,913 enquiries)

## Rooming House Service

The purpose of the Rooming House service is to provide effective assistance to rooming house residents across Victoria. The service operates during normal business hours and provides both basic advice and information and casework services as required.

In 2002/03 the Rooming House service:

- provided telephone advice to **476** clients
- provided drop-in advice to **194** clients
- provided casework assistance for **over 100** clients
- undertook **37** representations at the VCAT

The Rooming House service has developed and implemented a highly successful community education program focused on basic resident rights and working with agencies providing services to rooming house residents including local government.

The Rooming House service staff have also conducted training on rooming house issues for a range of community sector workers in both metropolitan Melbourne and country areas.

## Casework

Casework services are provided to those clients who require more than basic advice and information. Casework services include negotiation with landlords and agents, drafting of letters or documents, preparation of submissions and where required representation or support of clients at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The Tenants Union has assisted **more than 870** new clients with casework services in 2002/03. The table below summarises our continued assistance to tenants through casework services.

### Casework Comparison 2001/02 v 2002/03

	<b>2001–02</b>	<b>2002–03</b>
• number of files open at 1 July 01/02	813	722
• number of cases opened	728	391
• number of cases closed	819	509
• total casework contacts	9,516	4,245
• number of files open at 30 June 02/03	722	604

The refinement of our casework assistance guidelines has resulted in an overall decline in casework services over the past twelve months. The service guidelines have assisted us to target our assistance at those clients most in need.

## Specialist Legal Work

The Tenants Union also provides specialist legal services including:

- organisational assistance to a wide range of government and non-government agencies across the State
- specialist representation and public interest legal work in higher jurisdictions such as the County Court and Supreme Court
- legal research on tenancy and related matters

Organisational assistance has decreased slightly with **1,168** organisational enquiries in 2002/03.

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 also necessitated legal research into areas of ambiguity. Ongoing liaison with senior members of VCAT, particularly through participation in the VCAT Residential Tenancies List Users Group, has assisted with clarification of some issues and improvements in the practice of the List.

# Regional Services

## Western Region PHAP Service

The Western Region Public Housing Advocacy Program (PHAP) Service has two core component services:

- public tenancy advice and referral service
- community facilities management

### Public Tenancy Advice and Referral Service

The aim of the Public Tenancy Advice and Referral Service is to provide accessible and effective advice and referral services to current and prospective public tenants within the Western metropolitan region.

To ascertain and improve accessibility, client statistics from both the regional telephone and drop-in advice services are monitored. Service locations are assessed and where necessary modified.

As at 30th June 2003 the Tenants Union PHAP service has service locations at:

- Ascot Vale
- Carlton
- Flemington (inc. Crown Street)
- Footscray (Gordon Street)
- Kensington
- Moonee Ponds
- North Melbourne
- Sunshine
- Werribee
- Williamstown

In addition we continue to operate a regional telephone advice service 40 hours per week to ensure that all clients have easy and immediate access to basic advice and information.

Advice and casework statistics for the year indicate:

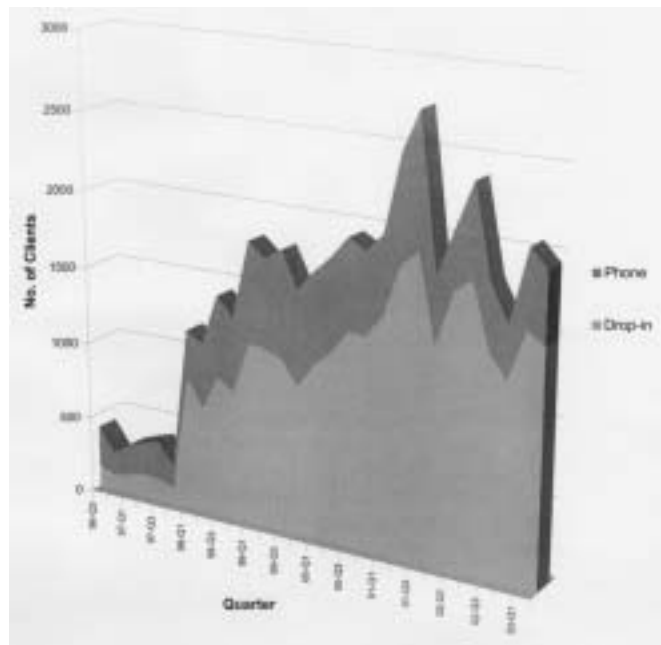
- a total of **7,627** client contacts; comprised of 5,734 drop-in advice service enquiries and 1,666 telephone advice service enquiries
- a total of **6,016** new clients and 1,611 ongoing casework contacts
- an additional **252** contacts from **agencies/organisations** in the region
- over **57%** of clients were from non-English speaking backgrounds
- interpreting services or bilingual TUV staff assisted in more than **1,800** client interviews
- **more than 120** clients received VCAT/Office of Housing Appeals assistance or representation

The graph following indicates the continued improvement in client assistance since the establishment of the service.

During the period we assisted clients with a vast range of tenancy issues and problems. The most common specific issues raised were:

- priority housing applications (2,362)
- eligibility (2,291)
- maintenance/repairs (1,566)
- priority transfer/transfer applications (1,415)
- rental rebates (425)

## Public Tenancy Advice & Referral Service Trend



(Source: TUV Client Service Data)

## Community Facilities Management

The aim of community facilities management is to expand the range and hours of community facilities usage for the benefit of public tenants in the region.

In 2002/03 community facilities statistics indicate:

- **10,634 hours** of specific purpose usage
- Average regular usage of 717 hours per month
- Average non-regular usage of 170 hours per month

The categories of facilities usage were:

- tenant group meetings, social gatherings and administration duties (8,363 hours)
- community agency support services such as health promotion activities, language classes, local government services, educational services (2,012 hours)

## Northern Consumer & Tenant Advice Service

The Consumer & Tenant Advice Service Northern has responsibility for providing an accessible advice service for tenants and consumers and for undertaking community education in the Northern metro region. The service covers the local government areas of Darebin, Banyule, Whittlesea, Moreland, Hume, and Nillumbik.

The Northern region service delivers a total of 87.5 hours of access per week across the region from the central location in Preston and outreach service locations in Glenroy, Greensborough, Epping and Sunbury.



In 2002/03 the Consumer & Tenant Advice Service Northern:

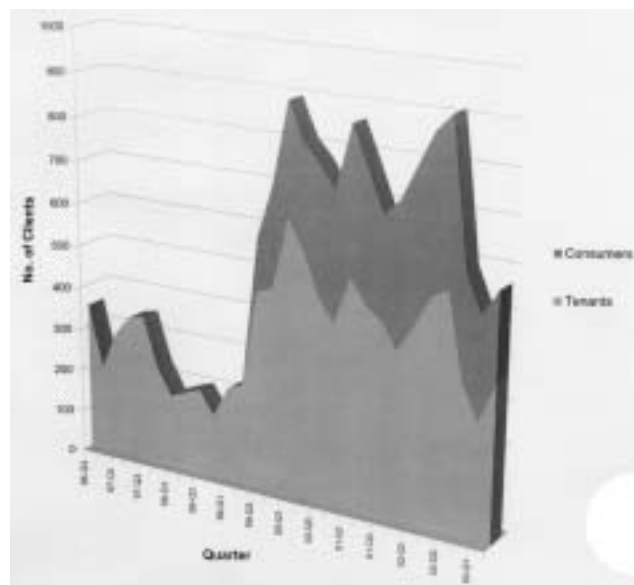
- Provided advice to **1,661** tenancy clients
- Provided advice to **1,040** consumer clients
- Provided advice to **75** organisational clients
- Provided casework services to **160** tenancy and consumer clients
- Undertook **35** representations at VCAT
- Undertook **more than 60** regional community education activities
- Generated or participated in **more than 25** regional media activities
- Published **4** editions of the consumer newsletter, *All Consuming*

The service was also involved in a number of regional networks including the North East Region Settlement Issues Network, the Hume and Moreland Multicultural Workers Networks, the Broadmeadows, Sunbury and Whittlesea Housing Networks, Darebin Aboriginal Support Network and the Consumer Support Workers Network.

In 2002/03 the service has also participated in the following joint projects:

- A joint project with the Smith Family to establish a positive car project for at risk young people in our region. Based on the successful NRMA *Jumpstart program*, the pilot project offers an introduction to basic automotive skills for at risk young people.
- With the (Broadmeadows) Smith Family, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues and Hume local government youth workers we have established an outline of a program to be offered weekly over a 10-week period.
- Participation on a steering committee overseeing an online banking project. The project involved the development of teaching materials about online banking for low literacy adults
- Working with CAV on developing a consumer curriculum for secondary schools.

### Northern Consumer & Tenant Advice Service Trend



(Source: TUV Client Service Data)

# Specialist Services

## Community Education

A core objective of the Tenants Union is:

*To take all reasonable steps to provide equitable and accessible services to individuals from socially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and situations.*

To assist with the achievement of this objective the Tenants Union community education program has two key elements:

- community education activities for tenants from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and for relevant services and agencies, and,
- continued implementation of a comprehensive Workplace Diversity Policy.

In 2002/03 the priority of the program has been to ensure regional community education activities. Accordingly the program:

- undertook more than **60** regional community education activities to a total audience of **more than 1,500** non-English speaking tenants and multicultural service workers
- undertook at least one service promotion activity or meeting each week to a range of relevant services.

To further assist with service referral the Community Education program workers are involved in key regional networks including Migrant Resources Centre groups and Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs Settlement Advisory Committees.

In addition the following joint projects were commenced or undertaken this year:

- A collaborative project with the Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) and the St Kilda Legal Service to address the information needs of newly arrived migrants on legal issues including tenancy
- A collaborative project with the Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) and the St Kilda Legal Service to address the information needs of small and emerging communities on specific legal issues of including tenancy
- Develop and implement a collaborative project with the South-Central and Eastern MRC's to identify "best practice" housing information for newly arrived migrants

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement through ongoing learning we undertook a review of our community education activity during this year. The outcome of the review was a set of strategies to guide the development of our community education program. The key strategies are:

- Establish a statewide role in the coordination, training and linking of community education projects for funded tenancy services.
- Develop alliances and undertake collaborative work with relevant groups to optimise the use of resources.
- Develop and implement an integrated community education program with key messages and identified target groups.
- Develop and implement a range of community education projects and resources that address the specific information needs of the relevant target groups.
- Develop the necessary resources for the effective delivery of the community education program, including information to directly assist tenants in resolving their tenancy issues.
- Evaluation of each project and periodic evaluation of the community education program against the overall objectives and principles outlined above.

## Publications

The Tenants Union Publications Program produces a range of publications and resources for tenants, rooming house and caravan park residents, and tenancy workers.

Publications or other resources distributed in 2002/2003 included:

- **48,000+** Advice Leaflets (covering 29 common residential tenancy problems)
- **2,800** Tenants Handbooks
- **900** Public Housing Survival Kits
- **1,880** Rooming House Survival Kits
- **75** Transitional Housing Survival Kits
- **1,135** Caravan Park Survival Kits
- **60** Tenants Rights multilingual guides
- **595** Public Housing multilingual guides
- **50** Tenant Worker Survival Kits
- **4** issues of Tenancy Quarterly, a journal for tenancy and housing services
- **4** issues of Tenants News, a quarterly newsletter for tenants for **5,000+** readers
- **76,000+** user sessions on the TU website



During this year we published 4 issues of Tenancy Quarterly for tenancy and housing workers with each issue on a specific theme. This year's themes included caravan parks and rooming houses; housing affordability; student housing and tenancy law reform. Contributors included relevant State and Federal Ministers, housing academics and tenancy and housing professionals.



This year we also produced 4 issues of Tenants News our quarterly newsletter for Victorian tenants, each issue contains legal information and advice, and articles of general interest to tenants. Each issue of Tenants News is also posted to our website.

## Training

The Tenants Union Training Program is designed to provide initial and ongoing training to tenancy workers both within the Tenants Union as well as tenancy workers funded under Consumer Affairs Victoria's *Fair Trading Program*, and the Office of Housing's *Public Housing Advocacy Program (PHAP)*.

The Tenants Union is a *Registered Training Organisation* and we are currently providing one accredited course, Introduction to Tenancy Law. The course is now offered as a two-day course, which includes more training on rooming house and caravan park law and VCAT. Successful completion of the course and its assessment activities will result in participants gaining a statement of attainment in 'Course in Residential Tenancy Law (Victoria)'.

A Tenancy Training Committee, consisting of workers from a number of tenancy services meets at least six monthly to assist us to develop and deliver effective training in line with the National Training Framework.

The following training was offered in 2002/03:

<b>July 2002</b>	Introduction to Tenancy Law CAV Network Training
<b>August 2002</b>	PHAP Worker's Network Training (Melbourne)
<b>September 2002</b>	Regional Advanced Network Training (Melbourne) Regional Advanced Network Training (Morwell) CAV VCAT Training
<b>October 2002</b>	Intermediate Tenancy Law Intermediate Office of Housing Policies & Procedures
<b>November 2002</b>	PHAP Worker's Network Training (Melbourne) CAV Network Training
<b>February 2003</b>	Introduction to Tenancy Law
<b>March 2003</b>	Regional Advanced Network Training (Bendigo) VCAT Training
<b>April 2003</b>	PHAP Network Training CAV Network Training
<b>May 2003</b>	Intermediate Office of Housing Policies & Procedures Rooming House Law
<b>June 2003</b>	Intermediate Tenancy Law Advanced Tenancy Law Residential Tenancies Amendments Training

Based on feedback and evaluation following each workshop, the Training Program has consistently achieved high participant satisfaction, with **more than 90%** of participants rating the workshops **good or excellent**.

Work is continuing on accreditation of other Tenants Union training courses and the development of more flexible training approaches such as on-line delivery.

## Policy and Research

The Tenants Union undertakes research, policy formulation, lobbying and media work to represent the interest of tenants and to highlight the impact of living in the rental sector on tenants' everyday lives.

One of the key goals of the current Strategic Plan is to ensure an increased focus on the social change work undertaken by the Tenants Union. We have developed a comprehensive Social Change Agenda and Action Plan that focuses on four key problem areas in the rental sector:

- **Legitimacy:** to positively promote issues affecting tenants and the rental sector in the public domain and with government and industry decision makers
- **Affordability:** to address the parlous financial situation of many tenants particularly in the private rental sector
- **Appropriateness:** to address the poor standard and location of rental housing and the essentially limited legislative protections for tenants
- **Accessibility:** to address non-financial barriers to housing in the rental sector including discrimination.

The primary purpose of the Agenda is to ensure we stay focused on the areas of most significant impact and reach.

In 2002/03 the Tenants Union:

- Continued to lobby the State government in regard to amendments of the residential tenancies legislation, including caravan parks and rooming houses
- Continued to lobby the State government to improve the policies and procedures for public housing through active participation in policy reviews
- Participated in the Victorian Ministerial Housing Council
- Participated in the VCAT Residential Tenancies List Users Group to identify systemic problems with VCAT processes and practice
- Participated in Quarterly Forums sponsored by the Director of Consumer Affairs to maintain an overview of residential tenancies services
- Continued to provide feedback about the improvement of state and Federal privacy legislation and its impact on private tenancy databases
- Promoted tenancy issues in both local and statewide media
- Lobbied the Federal Government and opposition to ensure federal housing policy is responsive to the needs of tenants in the private and public sectors
- Continued to lobby the State government for funding for a peak consumer housing organisation
- Continued to participate in the National Association of Tenant Organisations

Major achievements in 2002/03 included:

- More than **150** articles or interviews in print or on radio
- Submissions to Federal and State Inquiries including: Commonwealth Inquiry into Poverty & Financial Hardship, Commonwealth Inquiry into Housing Affordability, State Review of Disability Legislation, State Review of Retirement Villages Act
- Completion of a detailed discussion paper on Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- Significant input and lobbying for the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill that was passed by State Parliament in October 2002 and came into effect on 1 July 2003.



## Administration Services

Administration services are fundamental to facilitate the effective work of the Tenants Union.

In 2002/03 Administration Services:

- Provided effective financial reporting and accountability to the Board, funding Bodies and Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)
- Developed and maintained the Tenants Union's information technology network with 50 work stations across 19 sites
- Maintained the Tenants Union library and other information resources with over 1800 catalogued items
- Provided effective reception services for the central office of the Tenants Union handling an average of 120 enquiries per day (excluding advice service calls)
- Handled **more than 420** orders for publications with **98%** of all orders filled and returned within 7 days of receipt

# Personnel

## Staff

Our thanks go to the following staff who left the organisation in 2001/2002 for all their commitment and work during their employment with the Tenants Union; Lyn Dundon, Ed Brew, Fiona McKenzie, Clare McCarthy, Susie Kennedy, Jo Boots, Amelia Taeuber and Mandi Scott.

Staff members as at 30th June 2003 were:

### Specialist Services

Mark O'Brien	Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Marven	Policy and Liaison Worker
Madonna Boman	Research Worker
Loren Polzot	Training Worker
Nona San Pedro	Community Education Worker (maternity leave)
Lyn Dundon	Community Education Worker
Karen Bijerksma	Publications Worker

### Western Region Services

(vacant)	Western Region Manager
Claudia Alvear	Administration Worker
Amrit Crewe	Tenant Support Worker
Amara Chey	Tenant Support Worker
Simon Eramo	Tenant Support Worker
Ray Martinez	Tenant Support Worker
Larry Sutcliffe	Tenant Support Worker
Yvonne Tran	Tenant Support Worker
Angelica Varas	Tenant Support Worker
Ian Rogers	Tenant Support Worker
Annie Paliwal	Tenant Support Worker
Andrew McMillan	Tenant Support Worker
Paul Jenkins	Kensington Redevelopment Project Worker
(vacant)	Community Facilities Worker

### Northern Services

Mandy Walmsley	Northern Region Manager
Peter Mott	Community Education Worker
Ben McCarthy	Caseworker
Marian Prickett	Caseworker
Jill Newton	Caseworker
Ursula Dutkiewicz	Administration Worker
Administration Services	
John Morgan	Finance & Administration Manager
Robyn Simonsen	Bookkeeper
Pam Barden	Reception Worker
Anne Smith	Administration Worker

### **Legal Services**

Sheila Narayan	Legal Services Manager
Cameron Horn	Principal Solicitor
Anna Forsyth	Solicitor
Nicole Kuna	Solicitor
Bill Darling	Caseworker
Bill Grimshaw	Caseworker
Corina Kahan	Caseworker
Tania McKenna	Rooming House Caseworker
Colleen Power	Rooming House Caseworker

### **Casual and Part-Time Tenant Advisers**

Wendy Clancy  
 Brigitte Bailey  
 Neil Farren  
 Lee Hansen  
 Bill Grimshaw

### **Volunteers**

We would also like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance and support of the following volunteers:

Brigitte Bailey  
 Wendy Clancy  
 Neil Farren  
 Bill Grimshaw  
 Lee Hansen  
 Ray Martinez

The Tenants Union would like to express its thanks to its entire staff for their consistent hard work and dedication.

# Financial Statements

## Directors' Report

### Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

Your directors submit the financial accounts of the company for the year ended 30th June 2003.

The names of the Directors in office during the year ended 30th June 2003 are:

Andrew Walker	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 5 Board Meetings
Brigid Henley	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 3 Board Meetings
Heather Holst	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 4 Board Meetings
Bruce Wade	Elected 8/10/01	Attended 5 Board Meetings
David Hayward	Elected 8/10/01	Attended 6 Board Meetings
Jana Culkova	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 4 Board Meetings
Maree Arnason	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 5 Board Meetings
Ross Ferris	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 5 Board Meetings
Natasha Charing	Elected 14/11/02	Attended 3 Board Meetings Resigned 22/3/03
Alison Hardacre	Elected 5/11/99	Attended 1 Board Meeting Resigned 14/11/02
Merrilee Cox	Elected 6/10/00	Attended 1 Board Meeting Resigned 14/11/02
Paulette Awais	Elected 6/10/00	Attended 1 Board Meeting Resigned 14/11/02
Evan Romer	Elected 8/10/01	Attended 0 Board Meetings Resigned 14/11/02
Denise Bett	Elected 8/10/01	Attended 0 Board Meetings Resigned 26/8/02

The principal activities of the company during the financial year were:

- to represent tenants and speak for the collective interests of tenants
- to work towards the improvement of the status and rights of tenants and to promote alternatives to the present forms of rental housing
- to work towards more just and equitable systems of regulating both rental housing and the rights of tenants
- to act with individual tenants and tenants as a group in order to ensure better conditions in rental housing, fairer leases and conditions of tenancy, a more equitable supply of rental housing and the prevention of deceitful, oppressive or unjust practices in the rental market
- to promote the establishment of resource centres, advice and coordination services for tenants and to promote, as far as possible, autonomous local and regional groups of tenants, affiliated with the Tenants Union of Victoria Ltd
- to inform and educate tenants as widely as possible as to their existing rights and of conditions in the rental market, and to conduct research about such conditions and about the specific needs and problems of tenants
- to encourage participation by members and tenants groups in all activities concerning tenants and in the activities of the Tenants Union of Victoria Ltd

- to ensure representation by, and participation of, tenants as far as possible in law and policy making as it affects tenants or housing
- to promote the provision of rental housing that is safe, convenient, and available to all people regardless of gender, age, religious or political beliefs, marital status and family composition, disability or sexual preference
- to take all reasonable steps to provide equitable and accessible services to individuals from socially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and situations

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

The net loss after providing nil for income tax amounted to \$17278.

No options to shares in the company have been granted during the financial year and there were no options outstanding at the end of the financial year.

No director has received or become entitled to receive, during or since the financial year, a benefit because of a contract made by the company, controlled entity or a related body corporate with a director, a firm of which a director is a member or an entity in which a director has a substantial financial interest. This statement excludes a benefit included in the aggregate amount of emoluments received or due and receivable by directors shown in the company's accounts, prepared in accordance with Schedule 5 of the Corporation Regulations, or the fixed salary of a full-time employee of the company, controlled entity or related body corporate.

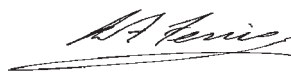
Directors and officers insurance is held with Victorian Managed Insurance Authority, through the Department of Human Services. Liability is limited to \$20,000,000 for any one claim and \$20,000,000 in the aggregate per organisation subject to non-accumulation. This insurance indemnifies Director(s) and/or executive officer(s) against third party claims for wrongful acts which includes actual or alleged breach of duty, breach of trust, neglect, error, misstatement, misleading statement, omission, breach of warranty of authority or other act wrongfully committed. No premium is payable by the Tenants Union of Victoria Ltd in respect of this policy.

Fidelity Guarantee insurance is held with CGU Insurance Ltd. Liability is limited to \$100,000 for any one claim and \$100,000 in the aggregate subject to non-accumulation. This insurance indemnifies the Tenants Union of Victoria Ltd for loss of money, securities or other property due to acts of fraud or dishonesty by its employees. A premium of \$2,045 per annum is payable for this policy.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:



Director:  
David Hayward – Chairperson



Director:  
Ross Ferris – Director

Dated this 25th Day of August 2003.  
Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227



## Statement of Financial Performance

### Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

#### Consolidated Statement of Financial Performance for year ended 30 June 2003

<b>Income</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
Grants – Recurrent	\$2,210,441	\$2,147,549
Grants – Non Recurrent	\$145,023	\$86,417
Interest Earned	\$24,604	\$25,910
Membership Fees	\$3,180	\$1,999
Hire Fees	\$2,490	\$0
Sale of Assets	\$0	\$0
Training	\$4,575	\$8,400
Sale of Publications	\$0	\$0
Other Income	\$6,882	\$8,572
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$2,397,195</b>	<b>\$2,278,847</b>
<b>Less Expenditure</b>		
Accounting Fees	\$5,046	\$4,697
Bank Charges	\$2,647	\$1,993
Capital Equipment Maintenance	\$5,173	\$3,616
Capital Equipment	\$24,686	\$24,392
Cleaning	\$17,717	\$18,876
Community Facilities	\$2,204	\$5,451
Computer Software	\$4,250	\$1,091
Conferences	\$0	\$4,110
Consultancy	\$40,587	\$4,471
Depreciation	\$33,901	\$18,718
Disbursements	\$1,757	\$4,324
Employment Ads	\$10,377	\$6,811
Establishment Costs	\$513	\$23,718
Gas/Electricity	\$9,840	\$9,234
Insurances	\$5,915	\$5,370
Library	\$20,275	\$26,032
Locums	\$256	\$45,462
Miscellaneous	\$556	\$6
Payroll	\$1,576,812	\$1,440,718
Photocopying	\$4,794	\$3,987
Planning	\$3,146	\$41,024
Postage & Freight	\$18,918	\$19,441
Practising Certificates	\$196	\$203
Printing	\$17,154	\$0
Publications Program	\$92,299	\$63,467
Publicity	\$6,447	\$8,449
Rates	\$974	\$967
Relocation Project	\$0	\$14,807
Redevelopment Access Worker	\$46,538	\$39,719
Rent	\$87,571	\$93,333
Repairs & Maintenance	\$20,422	\$14,014
Security	\$3,571	\$4,324
Special Projects	\$21,473	\$455
Staff Amenities	\$22,512	\$23,071
Staff Development	\$29,807	\$7,179
Stationery	\$24,821	\$30,467
Superannuation (Employer)	\$134,563	\$110,897
Telephone	\$46,318	\$43,673
Training – External	\$22,725	\$16,349
Travel	\$35,316	\$29,939
Workcover	\$9,007	\$9,590
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$2,411,083</b>	<b>\$2,224,444</b>
<b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>-\$13,888</b>	<b>\$54,402</b>
Surplus/(Deficit) As At 30 June, 2003	<b>-\$13,888</b>	<b>\$54,402</b>
Replacement Reserve	<b>-\$21,120</b>	<b>-\$38,556</b>
Add/(Less) Transfer To/(From) Project Balances	<b>-\$17,730</b>	<b>\$20,622</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>-\$17,278</b>	<b>-\$4,776</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

### Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

#### Consolidated Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2003

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2003</b>		<b>2002</b>	
Security Deposits		\$5,443		\$5,000
Sundry Debtors		\$915		\$3,116
Community Facilities Float	\$185		\$185	
Fitzroy	\$700		\$700	
North Melbourne	\$250		\$250	
Preston	\$150		\$150	
Sunshine	\$150		\$150	
Cash on Hand (Petty Cash)		\$1,435		\$1,435
Cash at Bank - Commonwealth Investment Account		\$785,815		\$712,198
Fitzroy Carlton Credit Co-op	\$11,555		\$7,614	
Members Account	\$69,688		\$65,152	
Gift Fund	\$520		\$423	
Cash at Bank - Fitzroy Credit Co-operative Ltd.		\$81,763		\$73,189
Cash at Bank - Commonwealth Trading Account		\$9,171		\$54,503
Cash at Bank - ANZ Salary Packaging Account		\$24,271		
Computer Office Equipment	\$220,580		\$195,739	
Less Provision for Depreciation	-\$116,223	\$104,357	-\$112,502	\$83,237
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$1,013,170</b>		<b>\$932,677</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>				
Creditors	\$44,712		\$54,688	
Annual Leave				
Long Service Leave				
Provisions for Salaries - Annual Leave & LSL	\$135,208		\$122,159	
Provision for Annual Audit	\$5,460		\$4,080	
Provision for Award Salary Increases	\$30,000		\$30,000	
Grants in Advance	\$490,561		\$417,228	
Accrued Salaries	\$0		\$25,000	
Tax Payable				
GST				
Tax Paid				
Tax Collected				
Tax Payable - Other				
Total Tax Payable	\$101,612	\$807,553	\$60,016	\$713,171
<b>Project Balances</b>				
CAV - Inner Urban Regional	\$11,665		\$11,083	
CAV - Rooming House Service	\$4,993		\$6,820	
CAV - Specialist Tenancy Service	\$596		\$4,333	
CAV - Northern Regional	\$1,315		\$0	
OoH - PHAP - Western Regional	\$28,241		\$44,592	
OoH - PHAP - Advocacy & Legal	\$11,562		\$11,406	
OoH - PHAP - Private Tenant Education	\$8,201		\$11,566	
VLA - Specialist CLC	\$14,260	\$80,833	\$8,764	\$98,564
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>				
Capital Replacement Reserve		\$104,357		\$83,237
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>\$992,743</b>		<b>\$894,972</b>
<b>Equity</b>				
Accumulated Funds at Beginning of Year		\$37,705		\$18,259
Add Transfer from Provision		\$0		\$24,222
Add Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		-\$17,278		-\$4,776
Accumulated Funds at End of Year		\$20,427		\$37,705
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>\$20,427</b>		<b>\$37,705</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>		<b>\$1,013,170</b>		<b>\$932,677</b>

## **Notes**

### **Note 1: Statement of Accounting Policies**

These financial statements are a special purpose financial report prepared in order to give accounts which satisfy the requirements of the Corporations Law to prepare accounts. The directors have determined that the company is not a reporting entity as defined in Statements of Accounting Concepts 1: and therefore, as there are no requirements to apply accounting concepts or standards in the preparation and presentation of these statements, none have been adopted.

The statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Corporations Law. The statements are prepared on an accrual basis from the records of the company. They are based on historic costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, the current values of non-current assets.

### **Note 2: Member's Guarantee**

The company is limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up, the constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the company. At 30 June 2003 the number of members was sixty two (62).

## Cash Flow Statement

Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

Statement of Cash Flows for year ended 30 June 2003

<b>Cash Flows From Operating Activities</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
Receipts from Other Sources	\$14,637	\$135,387
Payments to Suppliers & Employees	-\$1,957,818	-\$2,190,366
Interest received	\$24,604	\$25,910
Receipts from Government Grants (Recurrent)	\$2,035,173	\$2,177,600
<b>Net Cash provided by Operating Activities</b>	<b>\$116,596</b>	<b>\$148,531</b>
<b>Cash Flows From Investing Activities</b>		
Payments for Property, Plant and Equipment	-\$55,022	-\$57,275
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cash provided by/(used in) Investing Activities</b>	<b>-\$55,022</b>	<b>-\$57,275</b>
<b>Cash Flows From Financing Activities</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cash provided by/(used in) Financing Activities</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held	\$61,131	\$91,256
Cash at the beginning of the Reporting Period	\$841,324	\$750,068
<b>Cash at the end of the Reporting Period</b>	<b>\$902,455</b>	<b>\$841,324</b>

### Notes to the Statement of Cash Flows

#### 1. Reconciliation of Cash

Petty Cash Advance	\$1,435	\$1,435
Cash at Bank	\$901,020	\$839,889
	<b>\$902,455</b>	<b>\$841,324</b>

#### 2. Reconciliation of Net Cash provided by Operating Activities to Operating

Profit after Income Tax		
Operating Profit/(Loss) after Taxation	-\$13,888	\$54,403
Depreciation and Amortisation of Non-current Assets	\$33,901	\$18,718
Changes in Net Assets and Liabilities:		
Decrease (Increase) in Current Receivables	\$2,201	\$614
Increase (Decrease) in Current Trade Creditors	\$31,620	-\$11,974
Increase (Decrease) in Current Accruals	-\$10,571	\$68,266
Decrease (Increase) in Grants in Arrears	\$0	\$0
Increase (Decrease) in Grants in Advance	\$73,333	\$18,504
<b>Net Cash provided by Operating Activities</b>	<b>\$116,596</b>	<b>\$148,531</b>

## Statement by Directors

### Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

The directors have determined that the company is not a reporting entity as defined in Statement of Accounting Concepts 1: "Definition of the Reporting Entity", and therefore there is no requirement to apply accounting concepts or standards in the preparation of these financial statements. The directors have determined that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with Note 1 to the accounts.

In the opinion of the directors the company:

1.(a) the Statement of Financial Performance is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the profit of the company for the year ended 30th June 2003, and

(b) the Statement of Financial Position is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs at the end of that financial year,

In accordance with Note 1 to the accounts.

2. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company can pay its debts as and when they fall due.

3.(a) the company has kept such accounting records that correctly record and explain the transactions and financial position of the company,

(b) the company has kept its accounting records in such a manner as would enable true and fair accounts of the company to be prepared from time to time,

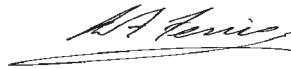
(c) the company has kept its accounts in such a manner as would enable the accounts to be conveniently and properly audited in accordance with Corporations Law, and

(d) the accounts have been properly prepared by a competent person.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors and is signed for and on behalf of the directors by:



Director:  
David Hayward – Chairperson



Director:  
Ross Ferris – Director

Dated this 25th Day of August 2003.

Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

## Independent Auditor's Report

### Tenants Union of Victoria Limited ACN 081 348 227

To the Members of the Tenants Union of Victoria Limited

#### Scope

I have audited the special purpose financial report of Tenants Union of Victoria Limited for the financial year ended 30 June 2003 as set out. The company's directors are responsible for the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies used and described in Note 1 to the financial statements are appropriate to meet the requirements of the Corporations Law and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of Tenants Union of Victoria Limited. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, and described in Note 1, are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the directors' financial reporting requirements under the Corporations Law. I disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

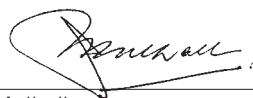
My audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report and the evaluation of significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements. (These policies do not require the application of all Accounting Standards and UIG Consensus Views).

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

#### Audit Opinion

In my opinion the financial report of Tenants Union of Victoria Limited for the year ended 30 June 2003 is in accordance with:

- (a) the Corporations Law including:
  - (i) giving a true and fair view in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements of the matters required by the Corporations Law to be dealt with in the financial report, and
  - (ii) applicable Accounting Standards and UIG Consensus Views to the extent described in Note 1 to the financial statements; and
- (b) the Corporations Regulations



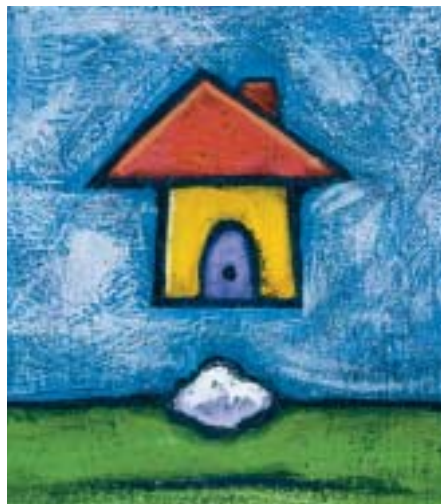
John Mulhall  
CPA Registered Company Auditor

Dated this 25th day of August 2003  
Pobjoy Mulhall & Associates Certified Practising Accountants  
19-21 Argyle Place South Carlton 3053

## Notes







*Yes, what else but home?*  
Robert Frost



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Original cover painting by Damian Fitzgerald © 2002