Tenants Union welcomes new protections for rooming house residents

The Tenants Union of Victoria congratulates the government for passing a Bill that will see unscrupulous rooming house operators outlawed from the industry.

The Rooming House Operators Bill 2015 will see operators required to pass a ‘fit and proper person test’ in order to run a rooming house.

The introduction of the scheme comes ten years after the tragic deaths of a young couple who were trapped inside their substandard Brunswick rooming house during a fire in 2006.

Following the fire, the Victorian Coroner made a number of recommendations, including the introduction of a licensing system.

The tragedy also spurred a major campaign, ‘Call This a Home?’ , involving 40 organisations, including TUV, which called for ‘fit and proper person’ legislation to be enacted.

A 2009 Rooming House Standards Taskforce, chaired by current Minister for Housing Martin Foley, also recommended a system be established to register rooming house operators.

Yaelle Caspi Policy Officer at the Tenants Union of Victoria says, “The licencing scheme will ensure that those involved in the management of a rooming house have not been recently convicted or found guilty of relevant criminal offences, or offences under relevant legislation governing the management of rooming houses.”

“Rooming houses provide accommodation to some of Victoria’s most vulnerable people, and the industry has been desperately in need of greater regulation.” Yaelle Caspi said.

Despite legislation already in place outlining minimum standards in rooming houses, unscrupulous operators have continued to dodge the law with little regard for the lives of their residents.

“Many rooming houses provide accommodation that is unsafe, insecure and rife with illegal practices. This scheme will see that operators must be accountable for their actions.”

“The introduction of this scheme is the culmination of the tireless work of the community sector. We thank everyone who has been involved over the years.” Yaelle Caspi said.