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The Hon. Melissa Horne
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Level 22, 1 Spring Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000

30 March 2021

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express my disappointment at the government's failure to extend the COVID-19 renters protections or to implement any additional support for renters in the coming months.

Over the past few weeks, Victorian renters and their advocates have been raising their concerns about the expiration of the COVID-19 rental measures at the end of this month, and asking for extended and additional protections to ensure nobody is evicted into homelessness.

While Victoria may now be COVIDSafe, the lasting effects of the pandemic are still being felt by many and especially by our renters. Many renters work in casual and insecure jobs, and in the industries that were most affected by the pandemic, and remain out of work or on reduced hours.

With Jobkeeper and the coronavirus supplement also expiring this week, many renters will be under significant financial stress. The lack of any additional supports means these renters will now be at risk of eviction and of homelessness.

Renters have raised these concerns over the past few weeks, and shared their fears about facing a wave of evictions as the moratorium expires and rents are able to be increased, putting renters back into rental stress. A number of renters are also facing sizeable rental debts that they will now struggle to repay, as many landlords refused to agree to rent reductions and instead only offered deferrals.

Victoria's response to the pandemic showed us that it is possible to prevent evictions, end homelessness and impose limits on rent increases to stop skyrocketing rents. The easing of restrictions should not mean abandoning these protections. While I and many Victorian renters welcome the new rental laws that have come into effect this week, the simultaneous expiration of the COVID-19 protections means too many renters will be thrown into rental stress and into debt, as well as face the risk of eviction and homelessness.

To make renting in Victoria fairer and safer, the Victorian Greens call on the government to immediately:

- Guarantee that no Victorian renter will be evicted into homelessness
- Fully waive all rental debt accrued by renters impacted during COVID
- Extend rent relief grants for renters still experiencing financial hardship from the pandemic
- Introduce permanent rent caps to limit annual rent increases

Yours sincerely,

Samantha Ratnam MLC
Leader of the Victorian Greens