

News Release

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Minister Ast Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Energy

Hon Gail Gago

Minister for State/Local Government

Relations

Minister for the Status of Women

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister Government Enterprises

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MORE SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTIAL TENANTS TO AVOID TRIBUNAL

A new tenancy initiative could avoid or prompt swifter resolution of disputes with landlords or agents that are heading for the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gail Gago says the education, advocacy and financial counselling services, to be overseen by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA), will assist private rental tenants meet their obligations.

In turn, this can also assist landlords with more timely rent payments and resolutions.

“Many tenants, struggling to manage their rent and finances as well as understanding their rights and responsibilities, end up in dispute with landlords or agents,” says Minister Gago.

“This service can provide a win win solution by helping tenants and landlords find an orderly resolution before things reach the Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

“Sometimes it may involve negotiating with landlords and tenants, independently advising them about their rights and responsibilities, encouraging improvements to their household management or engaging financial counselling services to enhance their ability to meet rent obligations.

“This will be even more important for South Australians enduring greater financial pressures amid the current economic climate.

“An educative program for landlords and tenants is also anticipated as part of this initiative to try and head off disputes before they occur,” says the Minister.

The Residential Tenancies Tribunal conducted 11,222 hearings in 2008. In addition, OCBA’s Tenancies Branch assisted with 3841 disputes between landlords and tenants during the year, a six percent increase from disputes handled in 2007.

OCBA’s Tenancy Advice section will continue to provide information and advice about legal rights and obligations as well as help by exploring the issues and putting forward options for resolution. It also delivers information seminars to tenants, landlords, migrant groups and support agencies.

The service is budget neutral as a \$35 application fee for lodgement of matters before the Residential Tenancies Tribunal will help fund the service from January next year. This is a conservative fee compared to other States. Provisions will be made to exempt concession card holders and people who meet hardship criteria.

Tenants & landlords can seek advice from OCBA on (08) 8204 9544. Further information about tenancies seminars is also available at www.ocba.sa.gov.au