

## **Increased Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Bill 2024**

A Bill for an Act to increase housing affordability for tertiary students by establishing the Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Board (HATSB). This board will manage the decisions of applications lodged by tenants and students seeking residency, as well as informing the Department of Housing on concerns surrounding the tenancy. These concerns include but are not limited to amenities, maintenance, and infrastructure.

This Bill's primary aim is to address the inequitable access to tertiary housing faced by students who are disadvantaged by their personal circumstances. By establishing wholly government owned student accommodation, the Department of Housing can maintain exclusive power and limit any unreasonable increases in costs associated with tenancies to relieve the burden of financial hardships of tertiary students. For some students undertaking tertiary education in some capacity, personal hardships will inevitably interfere with their ability to solely dedicate their attention to academic success. The introduction of this Bill will catalyse the alleviation of adverse circumstances, allowing tertiary students to maximise their potential in their academic endeavours.

## **PART I - PRELIMINARY**

### **Clause 1 Purpose**

The main purposes of this Bill are;

- (a) To increase awareness surrounding the lack of accessibility of student housing in metropolitan Melbourne and surrounding areas;
- (b) To decrease the financial distress on parties involved in attaining student housing;
- (c) To outline any potential risks or challenges in solutions suggested in this Bill.

### **Clause 2 Commencement**

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

### **Clause 3 Definitions**

In this bill, we define the following to be;

- (a) **HATSB** means the Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Board;
- (b) **Tertiary education** means an accredited university within wider Melbourne;
- (c) **Student** means a person who is attending a Melbourne tertiary education setting between the ages of 17-25;
- (d) **Zoning** means the geographical classification based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Statistical Geographical Standard;
- (e) **Tenant** means a student who is an occupant under HATSB property;
- (f) **External student** means a student that is enrolled in a Melbourne university, but does not actively attend the campus;
- (g) **Permanent residence** means where an applicant resides at the time of application;
- (h) **Partially fulfilled** means an application that has not been fulfilled to the expected standard of the applicant.
- (i) **Applicant** means an individual that has submitted an application for HATSB housing;
- (j) **Means test** means an evaluation of income, assets and expenses.

## PART II - ESTABLISHMENT

### Clause 4 Establishment of the Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Board (HATSB)

4.1. The Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Board (HATSB) shall be established to oversee:

- (a) The decisions of applications lodged by tenants and students seeking tenancy;
- (b) Informing the Department of Housing on;
  - (i) Number of successful applicants for each university campus;
  - (ii) Complaints surrounding the infrastructure, resources, and maintenance;
  - (iii) Suggestions surrounding the infrastructure, resources, and maintenance;
  - (iv) Appeals.

4.2 The HATSB shall be composed of:

- (a) Youth representatives;
- (b) Economists;
- (c) Previous tertiary students;
- (d) First Nations representatives;
- (e) Department of Housing members;
- (f) Department of Education members.

4.3 Members of the HATSB shall;

- (a) Serve for a twelve month term, attaining the ability to be reappointed by merit;
- (b) Be selected from a diverse array of socio-economic backgrounds and locations from within the state of Victoria, at the discretion of the board.

4.4 The HATSB shall be reviewed annually by the Department of Housing to determine:

- (a) The effectiveness of the HATSB;
- (b) The members of the HATSB.

### Clause 5 Housing

5.1 The Department of Housing shall establish student residential apartment buildings across metropolitan Melbourne that;

- (a) Are entirely government-owned;
- (b) Are subject to the *Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021*;
- (c) Utilise already developed vacant buildings prior to the construction of new residencies;
  - (i) Such buildings shall meet a minimum 7-star performance standard under the *National Construction Code (NCC) 2022*.

5.2 Successful applicants shall be allocated a student residential apartment building that is deemed appropriate by HATSB to the university campus the individual is attending.

5.3 The Department of Housing shall be responsible for determining the rent of accommodation:

- (a) This rent shall be reviewed every financial year for reasonable adjustments.

- 5.4 An individual seeking tenancy shall select;
- (a) An individual application;
  - (b) A joint application;
    - (i) Of a maximum of six individuals;
    - (ii) All individuals included must be listed;
    - (iii) Relationships between individuals must be listed;
    - (iv) All individuals must be eligible to live in the buildings.
  - (c) Applications will be reviewed by the HATSB.

## **Clause 6 Zoning of Prior Residence**

6.1 Classes determining remoteness of an applicant's permanent residence at the time of the application's shall be established, utilising the Remoteness Areas classification as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistic's Australian Statistical Geographical Standard, these classes include;

- (a) Very remote Australia;
- (b) Remote Australia;
- (c) Outer regional Australia;
- (d) Inner regional Australia;
- (e) Major cities.

6.2 The HATSB shall consider the remoteness class of an applicant's permanent residence at the time of the application's submission, with the prioritisation of remoteness classes in descending order being;

- (a) Very remote Australia;
- (b) Remote Australia;
- (c) Outer regional Australia;
- (d) Inner regional Australia;
- (e) Major cities.

6.3 The HATSB should not solely consider the remoteness class of an applicant's permanent residence at the time of the application's submission but must simultaneously consider;

- (a) Criteria outlined in Clause 7;
- (b) Special considerations outlined in Clause 8.

6.4 The HATSB must always utilise the latest version of Remoteness Areas classification as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistic's Australian Statistical Geographical Standard to determine remoteness classes.

6.5 These classifications apply only to geographical areas within Victoria's borders.

## **Clause 7 Criteria for Tenancy**

7.1 HATSB shall assess the following financial criteria for applicants to be eligible for tenancy;

- (a) Degree of financial support given by parents and/or guardians;
- (b) If an applicant is financially independent;
  - (i) An applicant's independent income is considered to determine prioritisation.

7.2 HATSB shall assess evidence of the following for an applicant to be eligible for tenancy:

- (a) Evidence of enrolment and on campus attendance;

- (i) HATSB housing is not provided for external students;
- (b) Proof of housing and residence history;
  - (i) The remoteness class of applicant's residences, as set out in clause 6, shall be considered.
- (c) To ensure the safety of tenants and property, the criminal record of an applicant shall be evaluated based on the nature and gravity of the offence(s) committed.

7.3 If an applicant has concerns regarding the outcome of their application, they shall refer to Clause 9.2.

## **Clause 8 Special Considerations**

- 8.1 The Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Board (HATSB) shall examine the following considerations for modifications to housing to create a more equitable environment;
- (a) Disability and accessibility;
    - (i) An applicant in need of suitable accommodation in accordance with their needs shall be provided with the necessary facilities and support;
  - (b) First Nations Australians;
    - (i) An applicant of First Nations descent shall be provided with modifications that are culturally appropriate;
  - (c) Gender and LGBTQIA+;
    - (i) An applicant that identifies as LGBTQIA+ shall be provided with modifications to ensure a safe and respectful environment;
  - (d) Cultural and religious accommodations;
    - (i) An applicant in need of specific religious accommodations and amenities shall be provided with modification that respect and accommodate their religious beliefs;
  - (e) Criminal record consideration;
    - (i) An applicant with past criminal history and evidence of successful rehabilitation shall be considered for tenancy.
  - (f) Applicants under 18;
    - (i) An applicant that will be under the age of 18 at the time of moving into accommodation must provide written parent or guardian consent.

## **Clause 9 Appeals Process**

- 9.1. The HATSB shall oversee;
- (a) Appeals from tenancy applicants regarding;
    - (i) Rejected tenancy applications;
    - (ii) Partially fulfilled, accepted tenancy applications.
- 9.2 Applicants shall have the ability to appeal an application if they;
- (a) Believe that their application has been rejected without valid reasoning;
  - (b) Believe that their application has not been accepted to the standards that they expected.
- 9.3 HATSB shall review all appeal cases;
- (a) Without bias;
  - (b) To the standards set out in Clauses 6, 7 and 8.

9.4 If an appeal is approved the applicant should be allocated housing as set out in Clause 5.2.

9.5 If an appeal is rejected;

- (a) The applicant is to be informed the reason their application has been denied or not fulfilled to their expectations and directed to alternative options;
  - (i) An applicant may not submit another application unless factors influencing their eligibility have changed.

#### **Clause 10 Bill Review**

10.1 The Increased Housing Affordability for Tertiary Students Bill 2024 shall be reviewed annually.