

**THE PLAN
TO FIX
RENTING.
CAMPAIGN
TOOLKIT**

**Renters
United!**

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Welcome.

Kia ora!

Welcome to the campaign to fix renting.

This toolkit contains everything you need to support the *Plan to Fix Renting*, whether you just want to do something as an individual or whether you're keen to start or join a local group.

The goal of this campaign is to persuade the Housing Minister to implement the *Plan*. We'll do this by getting:

- Thousands of signatures on our online petition: fixrenting.org.nz
- Hundreds of media outputs - letters, press statements, op-eds and interviews that promote the Plan and point people toward our petition
- Hundreds of renters having their say in the government consultation later in 2018
- Dozens of fun public events and demonstrations across the country.

All our efforts are to show that renters want renting laws **fixed**, and we won't settle for less!

In this pack you'll find a wide range of ideas for things to do, from quick and easy to big bang, but remember — the best campaigning is creative so don't be afraid to make your own ideas a reality. You'll also find advice for getting media attention to get the word out there.

Before you start, here are some important first steps:

1. Sign your own support for the *Plan to Fix Renting*: fixrenting.org.nz
2. Share the petition and encourage others to sign. Use the hashtag [#FixRenting](https://twitter.com/FixRenting).
3. Join our Activists' Network to stay updated and receive invites to virtual meetups online with other renting activists. To join, email organiser@rentersunited.org.nz and join our Facebook group 'Renters United Activists'.

Note: if you are from an organisation that wishes to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

A quick intro to the *Plan to Fix Renting*.

Renters United knows that New Zealand's renting laws need to be fixed.

In 2017 we published the People's Review of Renting, a collaboration with ActionStation, in which over 600 renters shared their experiences of renting. We analysed the stories and came up with recommendations, available at rentingreview.nz.

This year we've built on these findings by consulting more renters, tenant advocate groups and other experts and compiled the *Plan to Fix Renting*.

The Plan proposes solutions in four areas:

- **Stable homes, so renters can feel secure**
Nine recommendations including an end to no-fault evictions and a shift to indefinite tenancies as the norm. We also recommend that renters be allowed to keep pets and make their house a home through reasonable changes – like hanging pictures on the wall.
- **Fair rent, so homes are affordable**
Seven recommendations including that rent be increased only once per year and by no more than the Consumer Price Index in the preceding 12 months.
- **Safe and healthy homes, so renters live healthy lives**
Eight recommendations including that every home be required to comply with the *He Kainga Oranga rental Warrant of Fitness*, enforced by local councils.
- **Meaningful enforcement, so renters can stand up for their rights**
12 recommendations including reforms to the Tenancy Tribunal, funding of tenant advocacy services, and licensing and regulation of all property managers.

Read the full plan at fixrenting.org.nz.

We've timed its release to coincide with a government review on renting laws, due in the second half of 2018. Our campaign calls on the Housing Minister to implement the Plan so we can fix renting.

If you agree with any part of the Plan, get involved.
Email organiser@rentersunited.org.nz.

How to support the campaign.

Five actions to take with friends

1. HOLD A 'FIX RENTING DINNER'

- Invite friends for dinner. Discuss: 'What would you like to see changed about renting?'
- Read the Plan together. If you like, invite a Renters United organiser to say hi via Skype!
- Take action: sign the petition on the spot, and share it online.
- Brainstorm further local action, considering the ideas below.

2. VISIT YOUR LOCAL MP AND ASK THEM TO SUPPORT THE PLAN

This is powerful, as it is rare for renters to talk to MPs directly about the issues they face. It doesn't matter which party the MP is from, we need all parties to understand these issues. A suggested agenda:

- Share a story or two from your own experiences (or those of friends).
 - Discuss the ideas in the Plan that you think would make a difference in those situations.
 - Don't forget to leave the MP a copy of the plan (print it or order copies at fixrenting.org.nz).
 - Ask them what they intend to do next.
 - Afterwards, let us know how it went and what your MP said by emailing organiser@rentersunited.org.nz.
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3. SHARE A RENTING STORY WITH LOCAL MEDIA

- Identify a story one of you wishes to share. The best stories are current, and accompanied by video or photos. Before you share your story, consider whether it puts the renter telling it at risk of being evicted - if so, tell the story anonymously.
- Practice telling your story succinctly. What is the key problem with renting your story identifies? What solution in the Plan will fix it? Conclude by directing readers/listeners to sign the petition.
- Contact local media outlets using the advice below.

4. ORGANISE AN EVENT TO PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON RENTING.

Ideas include:

- A public meeting. This could be a debate on the topic: “The Plan to Fix Renting should be adopted in full by our government”, where you invite three speakers to argue for the topic, and three against. Or you could simply invite speakers to share for 5 minutes each. Possible speakers could be MPs, renters, landlords, housing experts, or representatives of ally organisations, iwi or local councils. Invite media and as many renters as you can. Ask them to sign up and share this campaign toolkit with them.
- An event to gather signatures from the public. For instance get a bunch of renters to gather on a busy street to chat to the public and invite them to sign the petition. Use the form attached in Appendix C.
- A ‘Walking Tour’ of renting challenges. Invite your local MP and/or journalists to visit your rental home and friend’s homes nearby. Discuss the challenges you face renting, and how the Plan would solve them.
- Some other stunt highlighting a problem with renting, and how the Plan would solve it. Use your creativity!

5. JOIN THE ACTIVISTS’ NETWORK

Tune into activists’ network online meetups to hear what other renters are doing around the country. Email organiser@rentersunited.org.nz to sign up.

Four actions to take by yourself

1. SIGN AND SHARE THE PETITION

Ask everyone you know to sign! You can print flyers and petition forms at fixrenting.org.nz.

2. WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF A LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Renting rarely gets discussed in local newspapers so a letter to the editor can have a big impact on local public opinion, especially if it prompts others to share their stories. A good letter to the editor connects personal experience to the bigger issues and the solutions we are promoting in our *Plan to Fix Renting*. Most importantly it should be concise, no more than 300 words (even fewer for some papers). Appendix A includes four template letters, one for each section of the Plan, to get you started.

3. SHARE A STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The lack of visibility of renting issues is one barrier to winning our campaign. Therefore, sharing your story can have a huge impact. For example, recently some renters in Auckland attended a flat viewing in a terribly maintained damp, mouldy house. They shot video on their phones of the place and it was viewed and shared on Facebook hundreds of times and resulted in several stories in the media as well as the local MP getting involved.

Whilst not every story will “go viral”, sharing your story on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram can have a big impact, especially if it’s video. Make sure you tag Renters United ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)) and use the hashtag [#FixRenting](#) so we can re-share. If you’d like to share your story anonymously, Renters United can help.

4. KEEP A VIDEO DIARY

If you are in the midst of a renter’s nightmare, whether it be a moldy cold home or some other dispute with your landlord, consider making short videos with your phone and posting them on social media. Here are some tips:

- Tag Renters United and use the hashtag [#FixRenting](#).
- Keep your videos short and to the point (no longer than 60 seconds).
- Start and/or conclude by directing viewers to the petition at fixrenting.org.nz.

But first, consider whether you are putting yourself in jeopardy with your landlord! The last thing anyone wants to see is you being evicted for telling your story.

How to catch media attention.

Housing is already a topical media subject in New Zealand, covering broad issues - homelessness, housing supply, the scandal around meth-testing and more. Our plan is to throw a spotlight on renters' rights within that topic.

Tips for telling your renting story in the media:

- Identify a story you or a friend wish to share. The best stories highlight current problems, accompanied by video or photos. Before you share your story, consider whether it puts you at risk of being evicted. If so, tell it anonymously.
- Practice telling your story succinctly. What is the key problem with renting your story identifies? What solution in the Plan will fix it? Finish by directing readers/listeners to fixrenting.org.nz.
- Consider telling your story on social media. This could be via a 'video diary' (see tips on page 6) or with photos.
- Contact Renters United - we often get media requests so may know a journalist in your area who might be interested. Alternatively, do your own work to find local journalists who have reported on housing or social issues. Ask them if they're interested in covering your story. You can get their attention by tagging them in your social media post, or emailing them a summary of your story.

Tips for getting media attention on your event:

- Before the event, write a press release about the event's purpose, pointing to the Plan to Fix Renting.
- Send the press release to reporters and invite them to attend. The templates below may help.

Tips for getting the media to publish your opinions:

- As an individual, write a letter to the editor and send it direct to the editor of the newspaper/magazine you have chosen. Each provides their own word limit and direct address to send to on their letters page. Use the model letters in the next section to get you started.
 - If you represent an organisation, consider writing an opinion piece or editorial. Like letters, these pieces have word limits specific to each outlet, and should be sent to one targeted outlet at a time, so that they are exclusively published. If your first choice does not accept your piece, ask for feedback before you move on to the next.
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APPENDIX A:

Model press release

Event type in support of the Plan to Fix Renting

Your organisation/group has planned a **type of event** to support the Plan to Fix Renting to take place on **date of event** at **location of event**. The event will feature **names of speakers/type of activities**, to **purpose of event**.

You or your organisation says the rental laws in New Zealand are outdated and need to reflect the changes that have happened in the country in the last 20 years. **Your spokesperson, and their position in the organisation** says, “Almost half of all New Zealanders rent but our laws do not guarantee us a safe, affordable, healthy or secure home.”

You or your organisation is concerned about the wellbeing of renters because **it links to what your organisation does**.

“A secure and stable home is essential for well-being and yet there is a perception out there of renters as visitors in their communities, not needing the chance to put down roots,” **spokesperson** said. “Finding a decent rental home is hard enough, but even when you do it can be taken away for any reason, or no reason.”

Your organisation or spokesperson endorses the *Plan to Fix Renting* launched by Renters United that provides 36 policy solutions to ensure renters in New Zealand can realise their right to a warm, safe and stable home.

The **type of event** will feature **name of person**:

“**Quote from speaker/performer about why the issue is important to them.**”

Kate Day, campaign organizer for Renter’s United says:

“The Plan to Fix Renting proposes solutions to make renting affordable, stable and safe, and to ensure laws are actually enforced to protect tenants. We hope government will implement our proposals, particularly those to improve security of tenure.”

The Plan can be viewed at fixrenting.org.nz and the public is being encouraged to sign on in support.

NOTE:

If you need an electronic copy of this toolkit to make cutting and pasting easier go to fixrenting.org.nz

APPENDIX B:

Model letters to the editor

MODEL FOR A RENTER:

Dear Editor,

As a renter, I'm delighted there's a Plan to Fix Renting. Finally, a comprehensive list of measures our government can take to ensure my rights to a safe and stable, dry and insulated home.

Briefly tell a story — three or four sentences — of your own experience renting, and how, if taken, a measure from within the Plan might have helped your situation.

I encourage all renters to join Renters United and sign their support for the Plan. The government will soon review renting laws, so now is the time to speak up. Half the national population are caught in the middle, just trying to rent a decent home to raise our kids, earn a living or get a tertiary qualification. Renters are the backbone of our economy and our rights are worth protecting.

Your name,
Your location

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MODEL FOR A LANDLORD:

Dear Editor,

As a landlord, I shudder at the reputation I'm given by so many of my fellow property owners and managers, who flout renters' rights and offer substandard accommodation to their fellow citizens. In light of the regular stories I hear in which renters are treated unfairly, I feel it my duty to voice support the Plan to Fix Renting proposed by Renters United.

Briefly tell a story — three or four sentences — of your own efforts to ensure safe, stable, healthy housing for your tenants and frame it as something that should be considered 'the norm' but unfortunately for so many, is not.

I signed my support for the Plan to Fix Renting and urge other landlords and property managers to do the same. A government review of renting laws is just around the corner, and I hope that it means something. These recommendations are evidence-based and would make a great improvement to conditions as they are now.

Your name,
Your location

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MODEL FOR AN ALLY ORGANISATION:

Dear Editor,

As a service provider, I was delighted to learn of the Plan to Fix Renting, published recently by Renters United. I regularly assist renters who face challenges with **anonymously describe situations**. The proposals to **highlight particular recommendations from the Plan** would help people in these situations. I encourage everyone to read the Plan at fixrenting.org.nz and voice their support.

Your name,
Your location

To: Phil Twyford, Minister of Housing

Dear Minister, please implement the *Plan to Fix Renting* and its 36 recommendations that will make life better for renters. Everyone deserves a home that is safe, healthy, affordable and stable, and the ability to stand up for our rights. People who rent should be no exception. Please make this a reality by reforming New Zealand's renting laws and putting this Plan into action.

Name	Email address	Phone

By signing this petition, you agree to be contacted by Renters United and ActionStation about this and similar campaigns. You can opt out at <https://our.actionstation.org.nz> anytime.

Collected by:.....
Location:.....
Date:.....