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15 August 2019

Dean Wickenton
Senior Regulatory Manager
Essential Services Commission
By email only: retailenergyreview@esc.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Wickenton

I write in support of the Consumer Action Law Centre's submission regarding the Victorian Default Offer to apply from 1 January 2020 Issues Paper.

The Victorian Public Tenants Association is the peak body representing public housing tenants as well as those on the waitlist. The Victorians that we represent are some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our community.

Tenants in public housing are disproportionately likely to be older or elderly people, have a disability, or to be single parents.

Additionally, a significant proportion of public housing tenants nationwide (84.7 per cent) receive an income support payment as their primary source of income. The fixed, and inadequate, nature of these payments results in public housing tenants being particularly vulnerable to bill shock.

Further, the state of repair of many of Victoria's public housing properties, makes them inefficient to heat in winter and cool in summer. At times, we hear reports of public housing tenants choosing whether to eat, or to turn the lights on due to unaffordable cost of electricity. The health of public housing tenants is often negatively affected as a result of these impossible decisions.

A fair and affordable Victorian Default Offer has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of people living in public housing, as well as other low-income Victorians.

I encourage you to give serious consideration to the recommendations put forward by the Consumer Action Law Centre, which are designed to provide maximum protection to the interests of consumers, and in particular, vulnerable consumers.

Yours sincerely

Katelyn Butters
Manager, Policy and Communications
Victorian Public Tenants Association