

Private Tenants Face Housing Crisis

Private tenants are facing a housing crisis as rising interest rates force up rents and encourage private landlords to sell off their properties.

While the Federal and Victorian Governments have stepped in to assist homebuyers hit by interest rises, only \$20 million in additional funds has been given to rental housing assistance.

The Brotherhood has written to the Prime Minister and Members of Cabinet protesting at the Government's failure to provide more help to low-income tenants.

Thirty per cent of Australians rent their homes. At present, tenants are facing rapidly rising rents as the supply of rental property falls away.

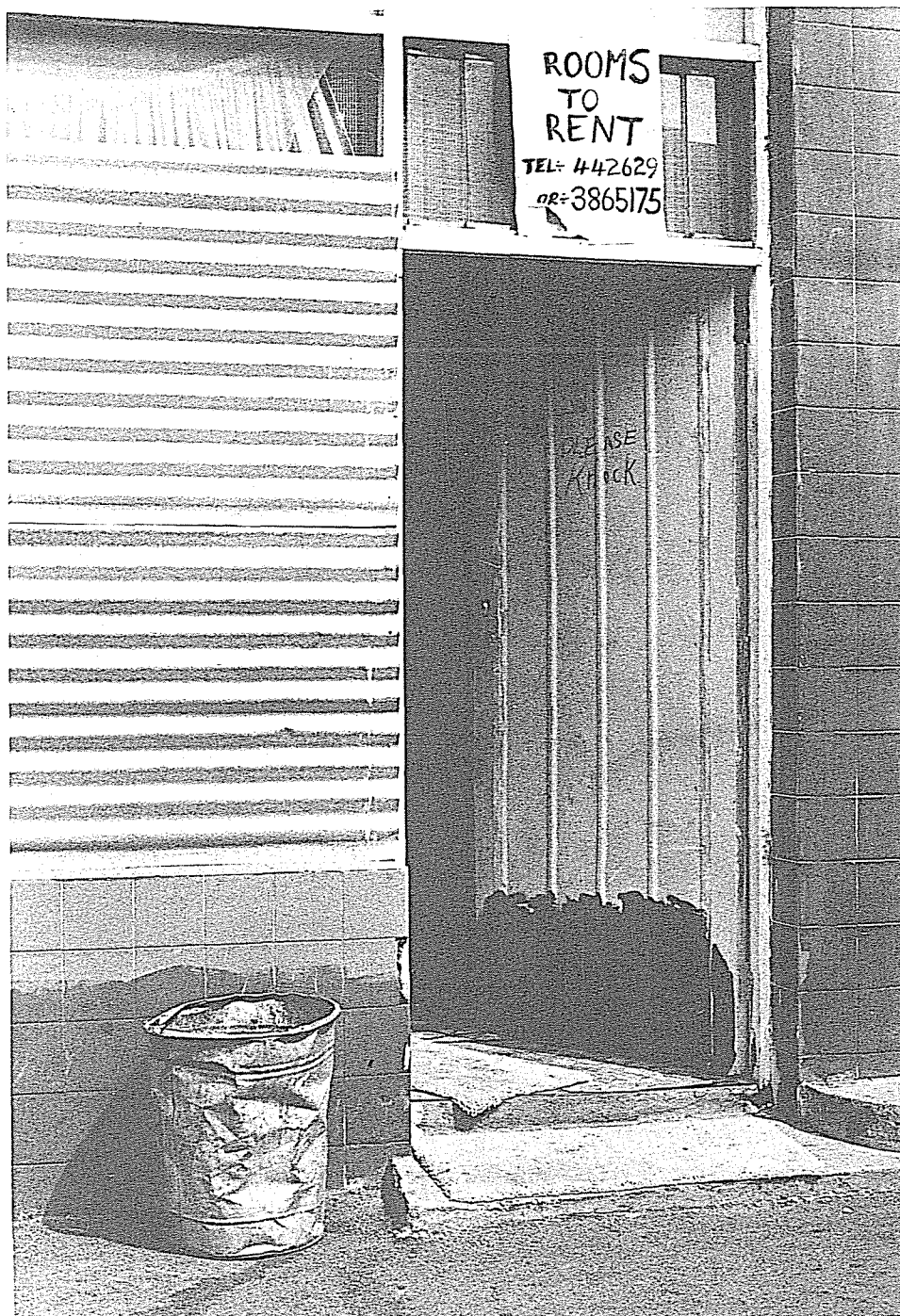
Demand will increase as many prospective homebuyers are forced to join the queue for rental accommodation. Higher interest rates will encourage landlords to sell their properties and reinvest in more lucrative alternatives.

With landlords who keep their properties, the rise in interest rates is likely to be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents.

Already in Melbourne the vacancy rate for private rental housing has fallen from 3 per cent to a dangerously low 1.1 per cent. Estate agents have estimated that Melbourne rents will rise by 20 per cent this year and 30 per cent in some inner suburbs.

The Brotherhood has argued for several years that the best way to head off this crisis is to increase the supply of public rental housing. However, substantial cuts in Federal funding over the past five years have placed State housing authorities under great pressure.

The number on housing waiting lists throughout Australia now exceeds 100 000. In Victoria, 1 200 new applications for rental accommodation are received each month. The Victorian Housing Ministry has estimated that there are 100 000 families in need of housing assistance in Victoria alone.



The Brotherhood believes that to realistically tackle the present crisis, public rental stock should be increased by 6 100 units a year over the next five years. It is expected that less than 1 000 new units will be provided during this financial year.

New publication

On Your Own Two Feet —

A follow-up study of the original 60 families in the Family Centre Project. Shirlee Williams. Brotherhood of St Laurence. \$6.00.

This is the follow-up report of the unique and innovative experiment the Family Centre Project, whereby through the provision of a variety of resources 60 families were given the opportunity to escape their impoverishment.

The final report compares the situation of the 60 families at the commencement of the experiment in 1972 and their situation three years after the experiment finished.

This report is unique in the fact that it was written by an indigenous research worker whose previous work experience was in factories.