



Background

Renters United is an advocacy group that organises renters and campaigns to make renting in New Zealand better for everyone. We see decent housing as a basic human right and our broken renting system as a barrier to realising this right for all.

In 2017, Renters United worked with ActionStation to collect hundreds of renters' stories and analysed these in the report *The People's Review of Renting*. We found four key needs failing to be met among the stories:

- a stable home,
- fair rent,
- a safe and healthy home, and
- meaningful enforcement.

These stories spoke of a power imbalance in the relationship between landlords and renters. The result of these interrelated problems is that renters are second-class citizens. Renters cannot reliably realise their rights to healthy and stable housing, as can property owners.

Following further consultation with members and tenant advocacy experts, in July 2018 we launched the Plan to Fix Renting. The Plan sets out 36 changes to the law and its application that will make the private rental sector healthy, safe, affordable, stable and — most importantly — fair.

Since then Renters United has been leading campaigning efforts, submitting on local and national plans, bills and reviews, and consulting with government officials as a member of the Tenants Advocacy Network.

Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region

Renters United is proud to support the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington region (“the RPS”). We believe that the RPS supports our vision for an Aotearoa where everyone has access to a stable, warm, affordable home and where everyone can meaningfully enforce their human right to a decent home.

Housing

Right now renters are feeling the brunt of the housing crisis. Renters live in poorer quality housing, don't benefit from rising land values, and find it hard to see a future where they have the option of renting a home that is stable, warm and affordable.

The lack of good housing is a major contributor to the stress that renters face, but we also understand that a good home is beyond what's inside its four walls. A good home has plenty of local amenities, shared green spaces, and is well connected to other areas of the city.

The proposed changes set a clear direction that everyone deserves access to good housing. If we want to leave neighbourhoods that last generations we need to ensure that they don't contribute to an unsustainable climate.

Denser suburbs that are well connected by public transport with a reduced dependence on private motor vehicle transport are the best way to ensure that we're leaving neighbourhoods, and a sustainable climate, for generations to come.

Many other countries have metropolitan areas that have seen the benefit of denser housing, and are now reaping the reward. Denser communities contribute to less emissions through reduced car dependence, affordability through more efficient land use, and happier communities through localised amenities and shared spaces.

We therefore hope that the Greater Wellington Regional Council will maintain the regional emissions reduction target to stay within 1.5 degrees of warming above pre industrial levels, including 50% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050 and maintain links between transport and urban development during consents to ensure new developments will not increase emissions. It may sound ambitious, but it is necessary, and through denser, well connected communities, it is possible.

Plain language

Renters United supports the use of plain language in all areas of government, including local bodies like regional councils.

Active participation is a core pillar of democracy and with more renters working longer hours or multiple jobs, they need to be able to easily read and understand changes to regulations that have implications for them, so they can provide their input and ensure that their voice is heard.

In future it would be great to see these documents become more accessible to the communities they serve through the use of plain language.