

# Service Activity

## OVERVIEW:

The Tenants' Union continues to experience high demand for its services. 2759 clients contacted the TUT requesting support, advocacy and/or information from volunteers and staff. The Community Legal Education and Training program reached out to wide variety of people in the community through seven projects and forums, and there were eight areas of law reform pursued. The Tenants' Union achieved this with the equivalent of 2.6 full time paid positions. The website ([www.tutas.org.au](http://www.tutas.org.au)) was viewed 16,128 times in the last financial year.

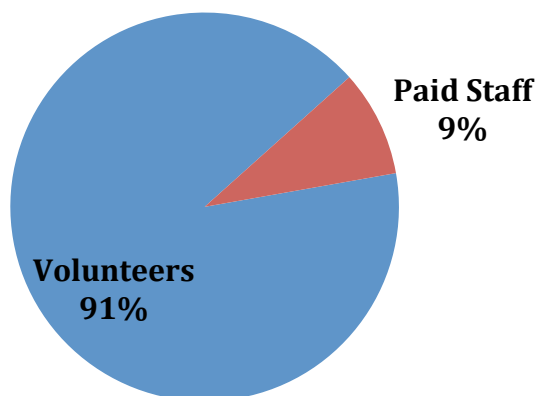
		06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Tenant Advice:		3070	2619	2802	2780	<b>2759</b>
Made Up Of:	Drop In	246	297	287	403	<b>358</b>
	Cases Opened	87	71	79	71	<b>87</b>
	Telephone Advice	2737	2251	2436	2306	<b>2314</b>
Region:	South	64%	65%	65%	64%	<b>66%</b>
	North	26%	23%	23%	23%	<b>21%</b>
	North West	10%	12%	12%	13%	<b>13%</b>
Callers Identifying As:						
	Low Income	66%	68%	69%	75%	<b>77%</b>
	ATSI	3%	3%	3%	4%	<b>4%</b>
	Under 30	37%	41%	34%	37%	<b>38%</b>
	Women	70%	71%	69%	70%	<b>70%</b>

## TELEPHONE ADVICE LINE:

The data provided below is collected from clients using the Telephone Advice Line. This data is extremely valuable to the Tenants' Union as it informs law and policy reform activities, assists in targeting community legal education programs and generally allows the organisation to develop a better understanding of current trends in the rental market. We ask all our clients to provide information to us that will be used in statistical reports. It is important to note that a number of clients choose not to divulge some or any statistical information, however we still provide them with advice and information.

The following charts show the volume of contact with tenants via the Telephone Advice Line in the financial year. The first chart demonstrates the important role that volunteers play in providing assistance to tenants.

**Telephone Calls Answered By:**



Volunteers provided 1039 hours of telephone advice in 2010/11. The figure is 20% less than the previous financial year, although the discrepancy is accounted for by an increase in volunteer hours spent on drop-ins, case work and research (around 280 hours). More statistics based on the data collected is presented later in this report under Tenancy Statistics.

**FACE-TO-FACE ASSISTANCE:**

Our ‘Drop-in’ sessions at the Hobart office still prove to be popular amongst tenants. In the last financial year data indicates that 358 tenants were assisted in this manner, an 11% fall on last financial year’s figures but still high in historical terms. This is a significant number given that this particular service operates for only nine hours per week. The issues discussed at ‘drop-ins’ are usually more complex than those discussed on our telephone advice service. In many cases they escalate into legal casework and representation. It is expected that numbers will rise in the forthcoming financial year with the expanded ‘North West’ face-to-face service.

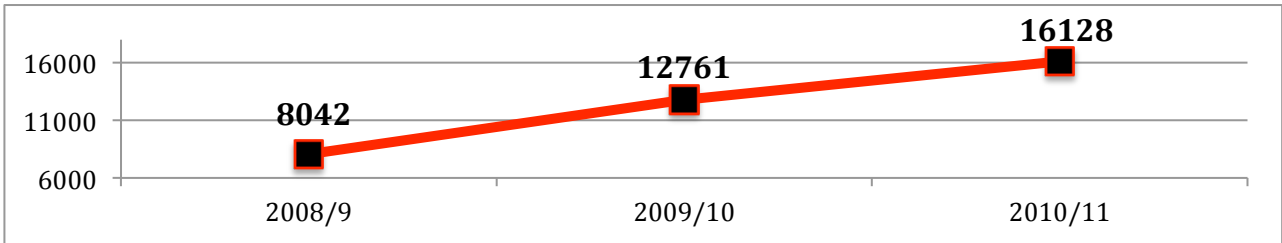
**ADVOCACY AND CASEWORK:**

Advocacy and casework continued to be a core activity of the Tenants’ Union over the last financial year. Of the tenants assisted through this service 87 case files were opened (up by 5%) and 70 cases were closed. The Advocacy and Casework project is particularly important as it is primarily focused on tenants with complex needs. Issues that may require advocacy and casework assistance include rental arrears, bond return, lease disputes and, most urgently, the threat of eviction. The advocacy work has been strengthened by the Tenants’ Union developing good working relationships with landlords, real estate agents, the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, and the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania. However, by far our most important relationship in this area is with the Private Rental Tenancy Support Service (PRTSS). For many tenants, our legal expertise combined with the on-the-ground negotiation skills of the PRTSS means tenants have a far better chance of gaining success in their disputes.

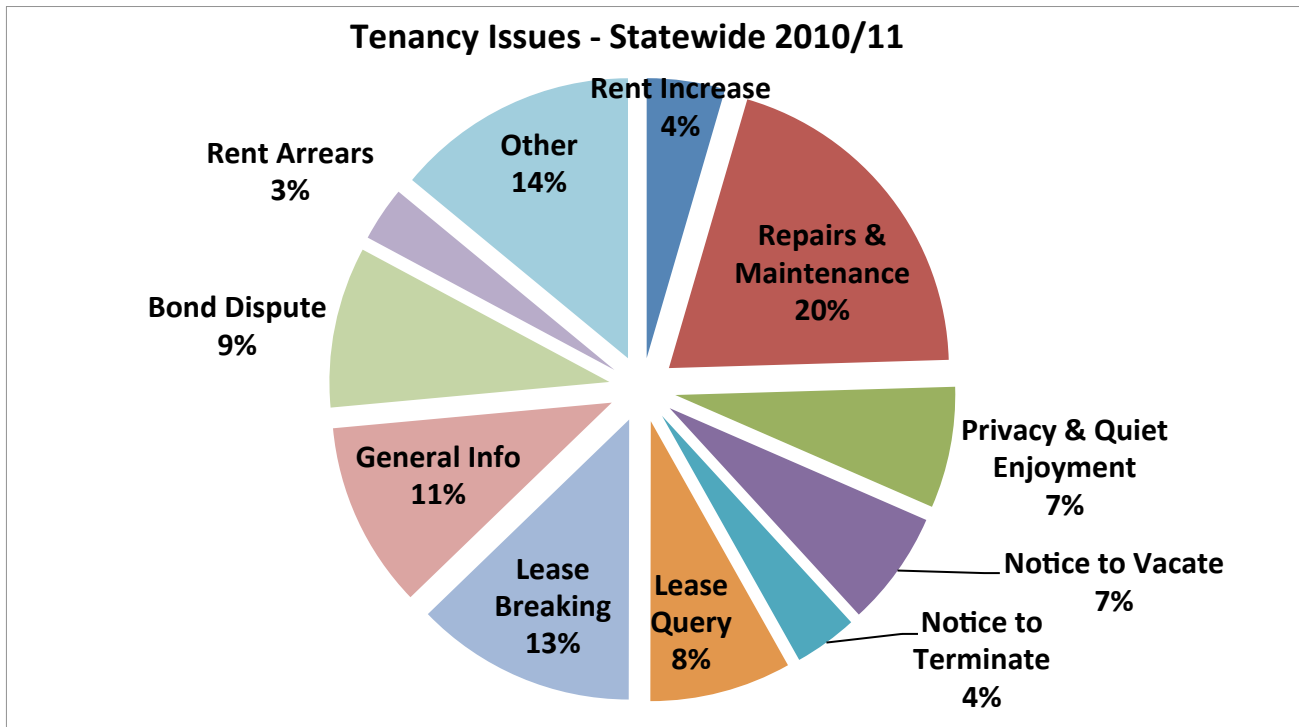
**WEBSITE:**

The website ([www.tutas.org.au](http://www.tutas.org.au)) has experienced significant growth in visitor numbers since its relaunch in September 2009. In 2010/11 there were 16,128 website visits, up by 26% on the previous financial year, and since the relaunch visits have nearly doubled. The most popular destination in the website is Factsheets, accounting for half of all pageviews beyond the home page. The most viewed factsheets were (in order) Notice to Vacate, Leaving Leases Early, Repairs & Maintenance and Access & Privacy.

**Website Visits**



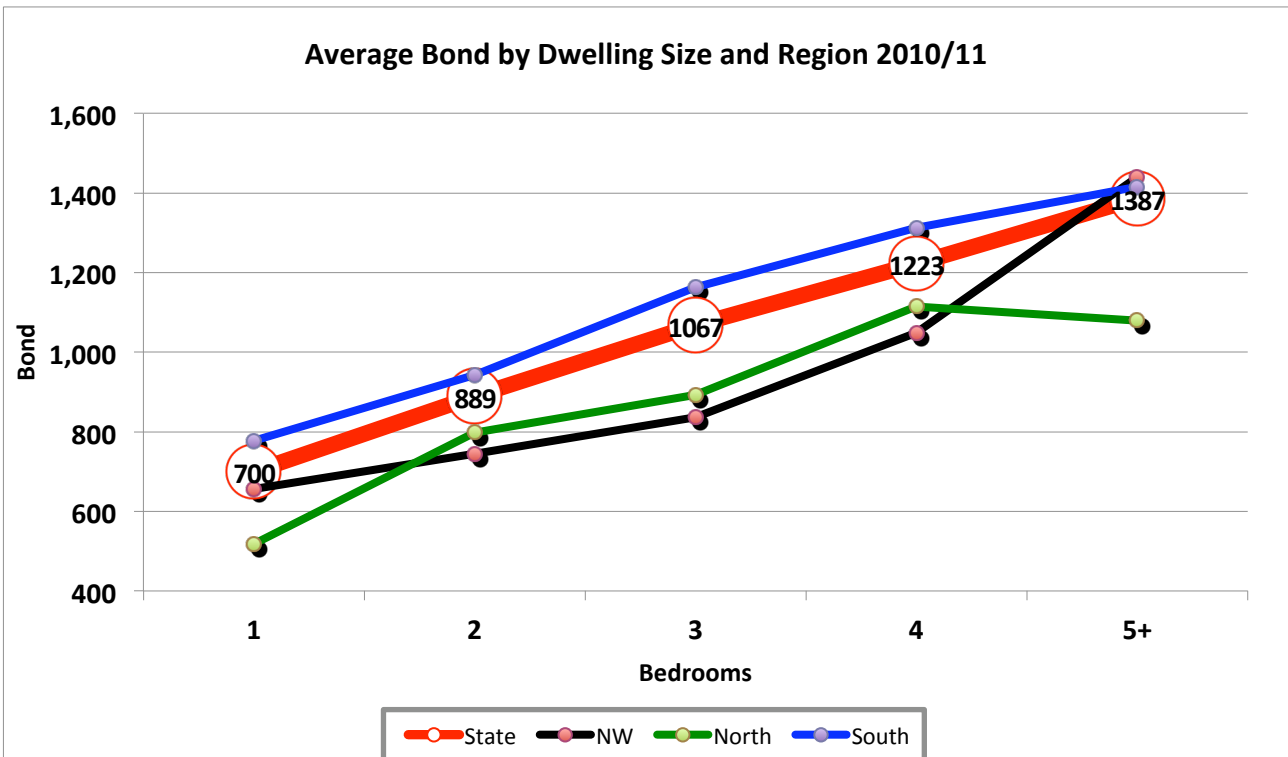
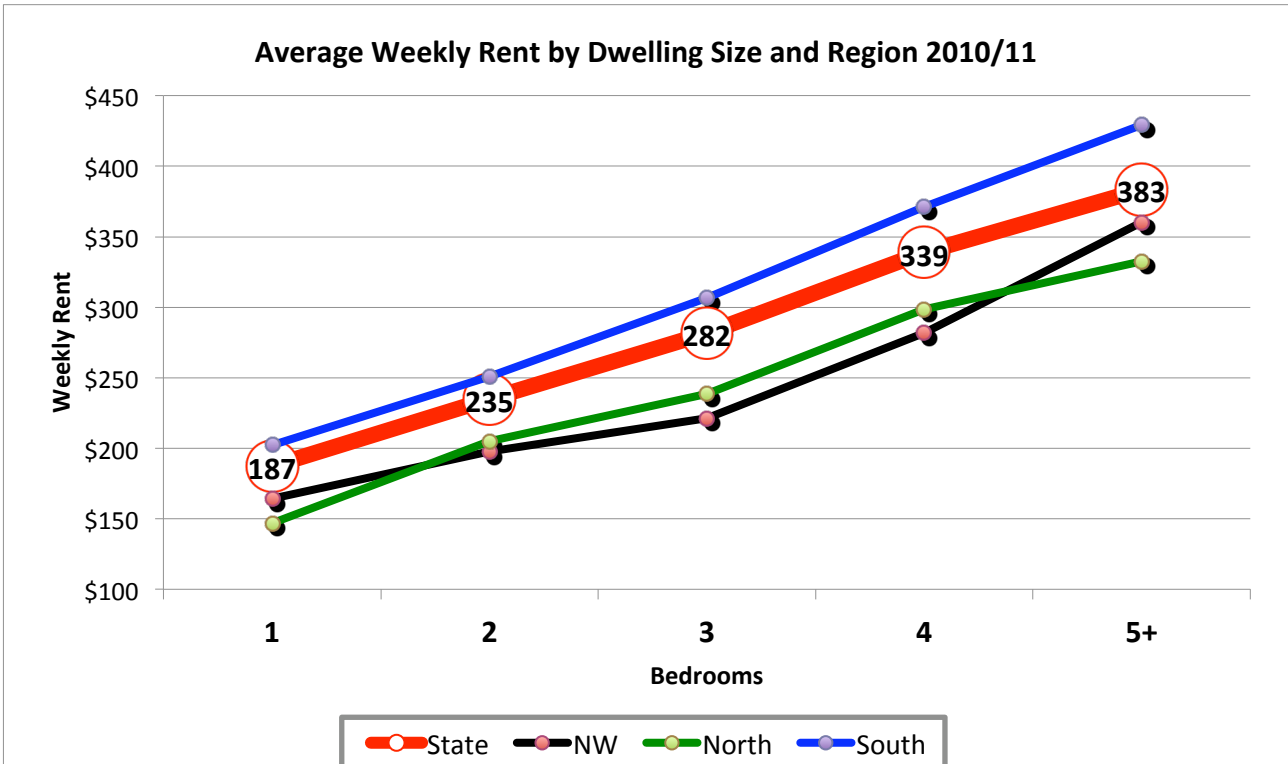
# Tenancy Statistics



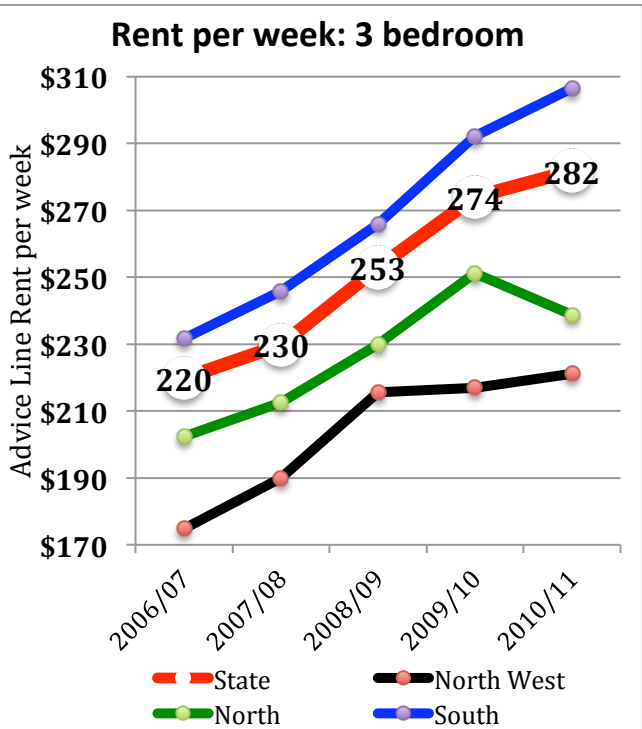
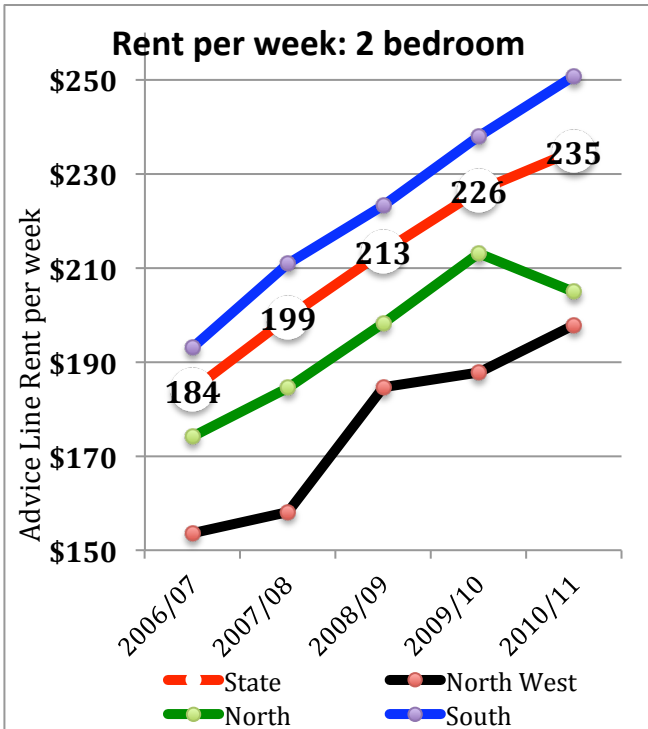
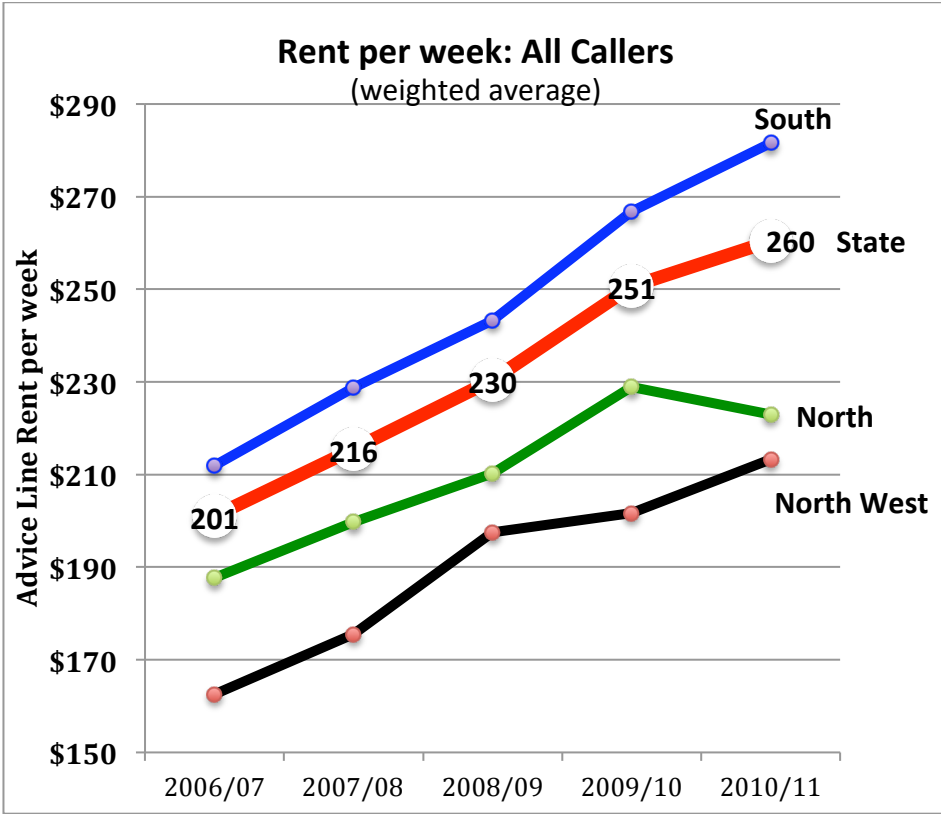
Repairs and Maintenance once again were the matter that residential tenants sought advice for more than any other issue. In 2010/11, one in five callers discussed matters associated with the repair and maintenance of their home, up from 17% last financial year and 15% the year before that. The Tenants' Union believe that a major solution to this problem is the introduction of legislated tenancy quality standards for all Tasmanian residential dwellings. We have made this a major component of our submissions to the *Residential Tenancy Act* Review currently being conducted.

There has been a fall in the percentage of tenants seeking advice about bond disputes since the introduction of the Rental Deposit Authority ('MyBond') in July 2009. Prior to MyBond, bond disputes made up around 13% of queries, but that number fell to 11% last year and as can be seen above has fallen further to 9% in 2010/11. The Authority informs us that disputes have risen dramatically since the change to the new scheme, and the responsible Minister, Nick McKim, has said that it shows that tenants now have better mechanisms with which to dispute bond claims against landlords/agents.

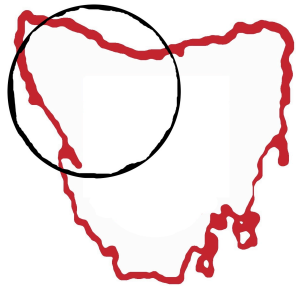
The following graphs provide an overview of weekly rental prices statewide and in the main geographical regions. There are no surprises to see a correlation between number of bedrooms and the weekly rent and bond.



For many Tasmanian residential tenants, housing affordability is a major issue. REIT figures show that for the past ten years rents have outstripped inflation dramatically in Tasmania. The following figures based on Telephone Advice Line callers for the last five years, also show increases that have outstripped inflation. The only segment to buck that trend were Northern callers who experienced falling average rent in the 2010/11 financial year.



# North West



Total Calls 2010/11:

**217**

% of all Calls:

**13**

% of Tas Population:

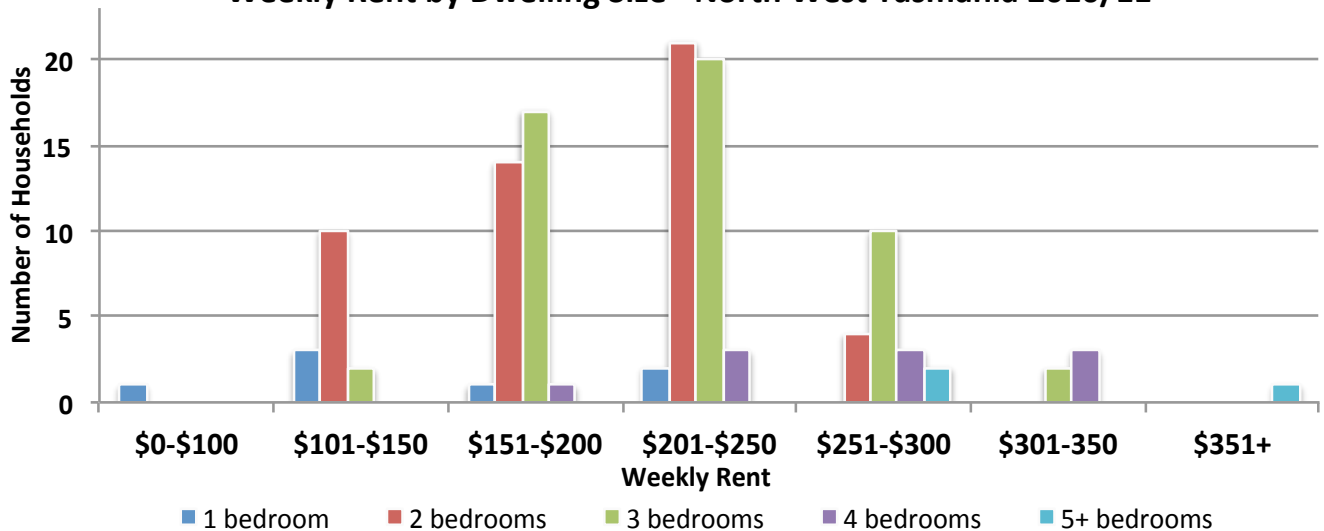
**23**

In comparison to other regions historically:  
 Lower rent and bond  
 More Repairs & Maintenance issues  
 Less Lease Breaking

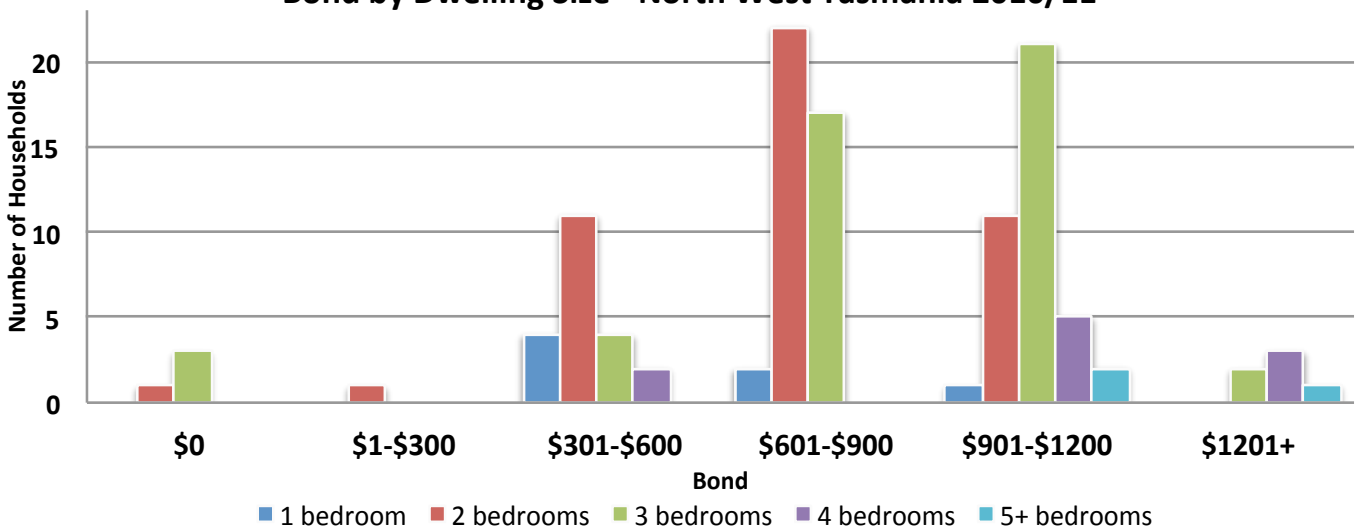
Tenancy Issue	2010/11	Prev Yr
Repairs & Maintenance	22%	22%
Other	13%	13%
Lease Query	12%	11%
Lease Breaking	11%	9%
Bond Dispute	8%	10%
General Information	8%	15%
Privacy & Quiet Enjoyment	7%	4%
Notice to Vacate	7%	7%
Notice to Terminate	5%	3%
Rent Increase	4%	5%
Rent Arrears	3%	1%

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	2010/11	Change on Prev Yr	Change on 06/07
Ave Rent	163	176	197	202	<b>213</b>	5.8%	31.2%
Ave Bond	623	646	784	804	<b>824</b>	2.5%	32.3%
2 Br Rent	154	158	185	188	<b>198</b>	5.4%	28.8%
3 br Rent	175	190	216	217	<b>221</b>	2.0%	26.6%
CPI (Aust)						3.6%	13.2%

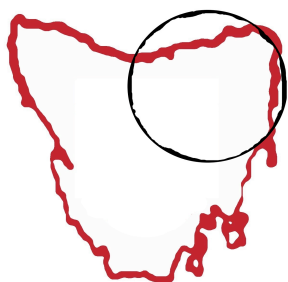
Weekly Rent by Dwelling Size - North West Tasmania 2010/11



Bond by Dwelling Size - North West Tasmania 2010/11



# North



Total Calls 2010/11:

**355**

% of all Calls:

**21**

% of Tas Population:

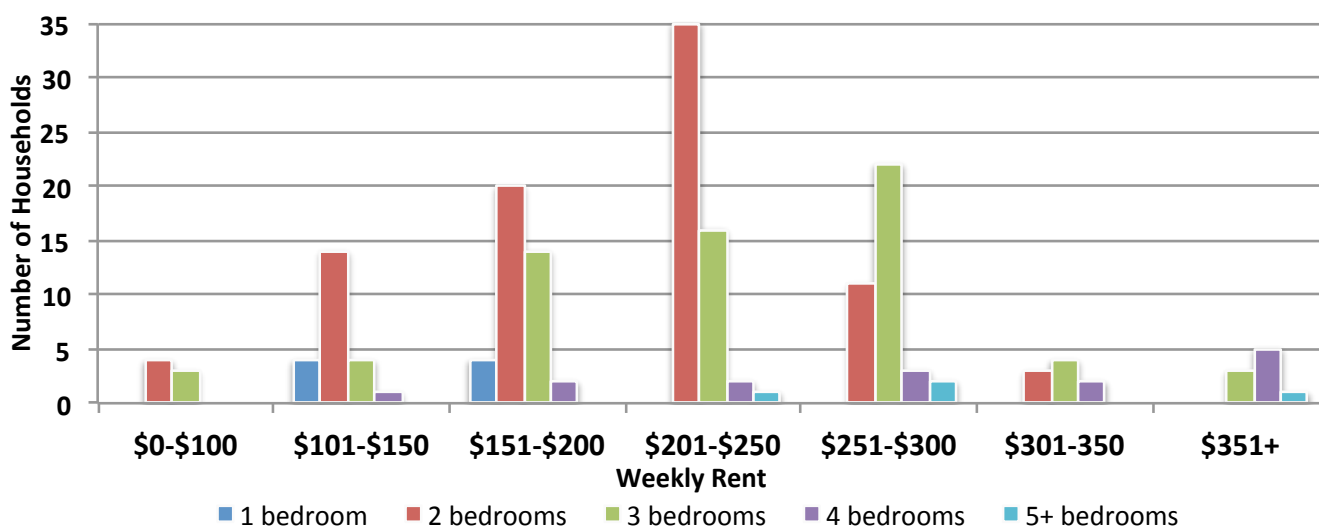
**28**

In comparison to other regions historically:  
More Lease Breaking  
More eviction queries

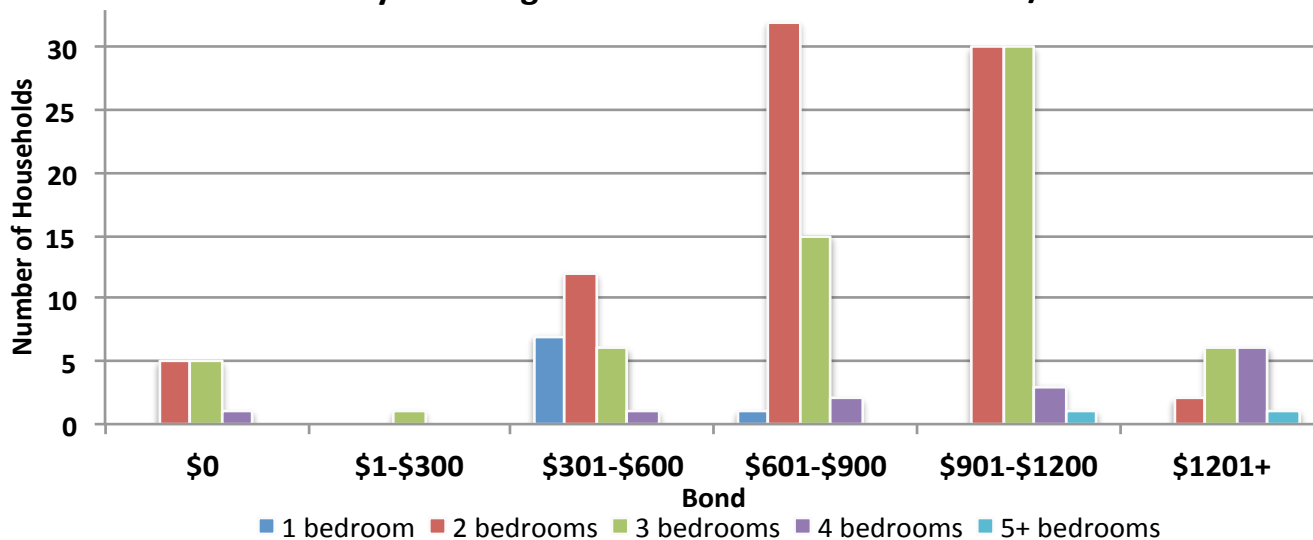
Tenancy Issue	2010/11	Prev Yr
Repairs & Maintenance	21%	18%
Lease Breaking	15%	12%
General Information	12%	13%
Bond Dispute	10%	11%
Notice to Vacate	9%	9%
Lease Query	8%	5%
Other	7%	14%
Privacy & Quiet Enjoyment	6%	5%
Rent Increase	5%	5%
Notice to Terminate	4%	3%
Rent Arrears	2%	5%

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	2010/11	Change on Prev Yr	Change on 06/07
Ave Rent	188	200	210	229	<b>223</b>	-2.6%	18.8%
Ave Bond	707	766	756	750	<b>828</b>	-2.6%	17.1%
2 Br Rent	174	185	198	213	<b>205</b>	-3.8%	17.7%
3 br Rent	202	213	230	251	<b>239</b>	-5.0%	18.0%
CPI (Aust)						3.6%	13.2%

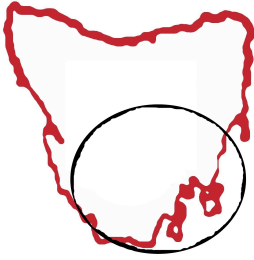
Weekly Rent by Dwelling Size - Northern Tasmania 2010/11



Bond by Dwelling Size - Northern Tasmania 2010/11



# South



Total Calls 2010/11:

**1098**

% of all Calls:

**66**

% of Tas Population:

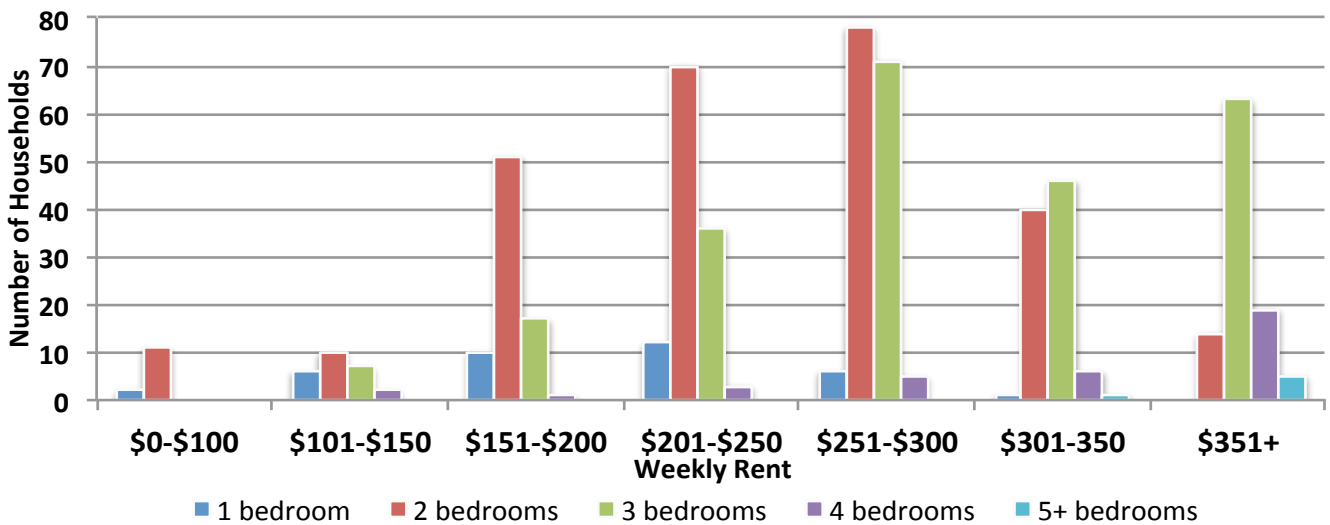
**49**

In comparison to other regions historically:  
Highest rent and bond

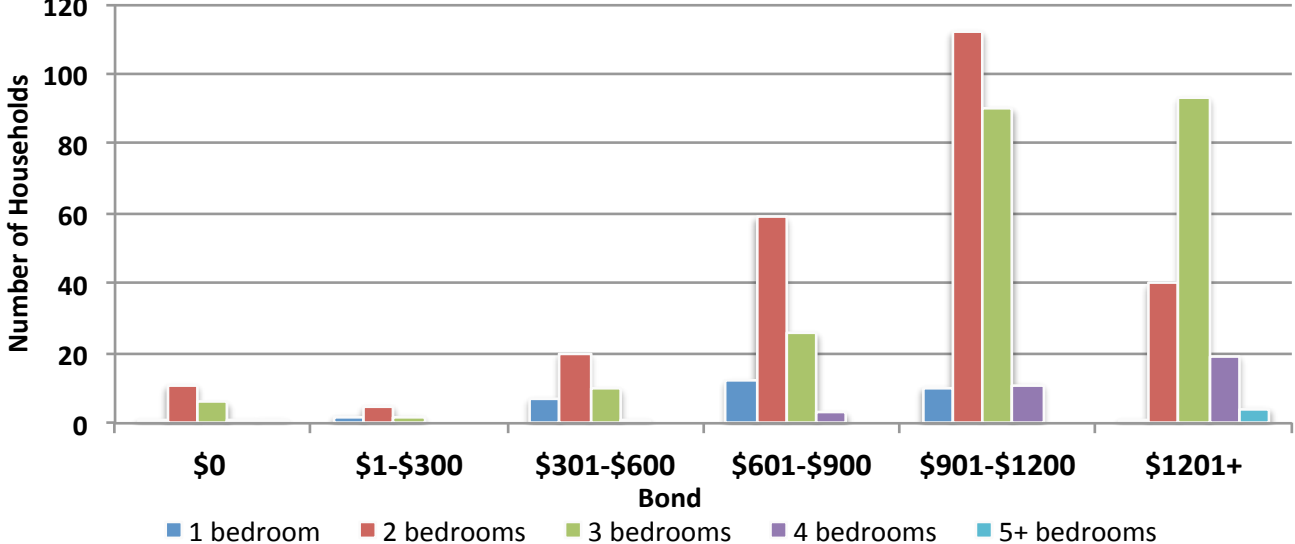
Tenancy Issue	2010/11	Prev Yr
Repairs & Maintenance	22%	18%
Other	13%	14%
Lease Breaking	13%	10%
General Information	13%	16%
Bond Dispute	8%	12%
Privacy & Quiet Enjoyment	7%	5%
Lease Query	7%	7%
Notice to Vacate	6%	7%
Rent Increase	4%	6%
Notice to Terminate	4%	2%
Rent Arrears	3%	3%

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	2010/11	Change on Prev Yr	Change on 06/07
Ave Rent	212	229	243	267	<b>281</b>	5.5%	32.8%
Ave Bond	809	840	907	1003	<b>1040</b>	3.7%	28.6%
2 Br Rent	193	211	223	238	<b>251</b>	5.4%	29.8%
3 br Rent	232	246	266	292	<b>307</b>	4.9%	32.3%
CPI (Aust)						3.6%	13.2%

Weekly Rent by Dwelling Size - Southern Tasmania 2010/11

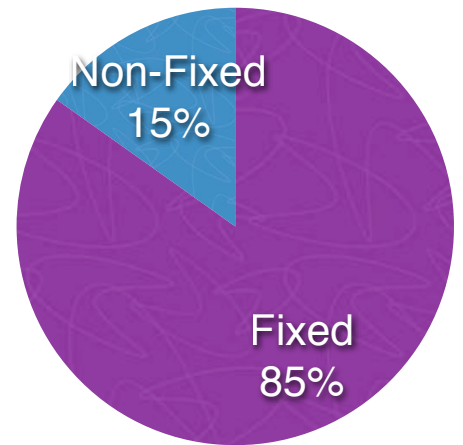
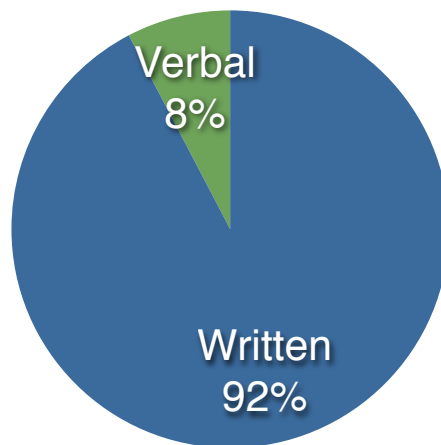
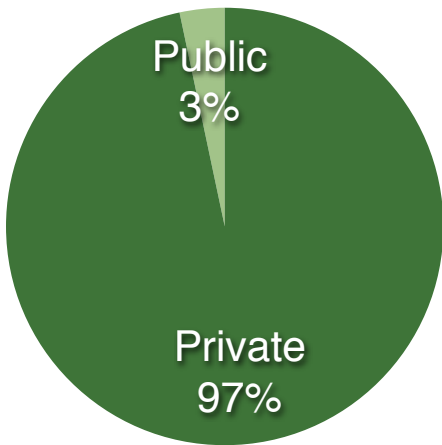


Bond by Dwelling Size - Southern Tasmania 2010/11

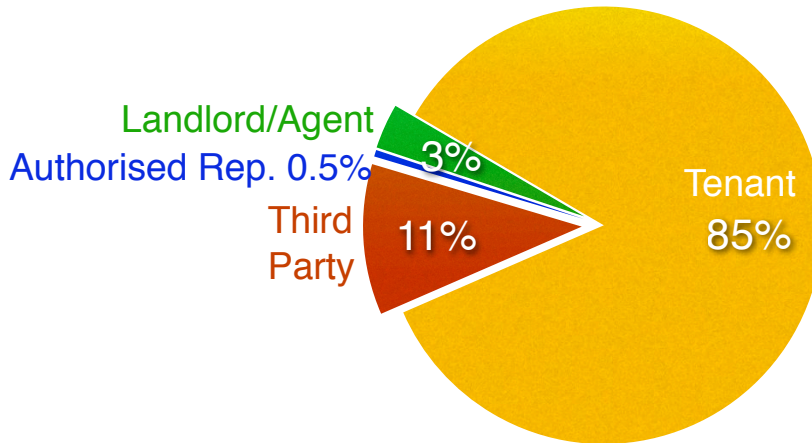


# Statewide 2010/11

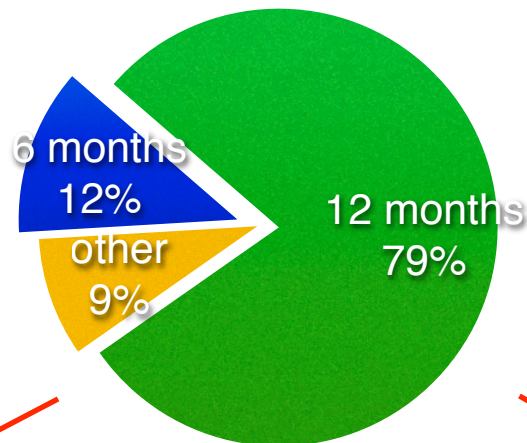
## Type of Agreement



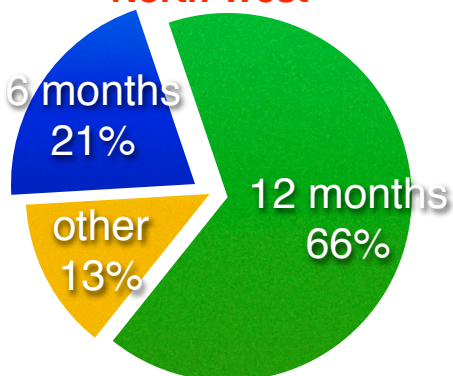
## Type of Caller



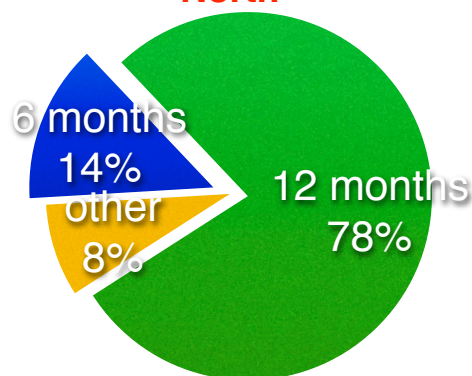
## Length of Fixed Term Lease State



### North West



### North



### South

