Dear Hon Chris Bishop,

We are writing to you from the Otago University Students’ Assocation to discuss the issue of housing. Recently in Parliament you noted the changes you intend to make on housing legislation. Specifically, how North Dunedin would be benefiting from these types of changes, to which we greatly disagree with. Between being a resident of North Dunedin, the past five years to writing my master's thesis on housing regulation and planning to now in my capacity as OUSA President – I greatly oppose the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, especially the fixed term/periodic changes.

In North Dunedin, there is no need to entice mum and dad landlords back into the market by returning to a fixed, rather than periodic lease. Most property management companies, which control the stock of housing within Dunedin, are told by students early in the year that they are not returning and in that case are treated as simple fixed term leases. Most of the flats on the famous streets; Hyde, Leith, Castle, are not rented for more than a year due to the unique residential culture on these streets. Students appreciate the stability of the periodic contracts despite taking actions consistent with a fixed term lease.

Under your proposed changes, property managers and landlords would be able to advertise for flats at the beginning of first semester. In our student led rental market, this has been known to cause headaches for landlords and property managers as flat groups form and then fall apart as the year continues. OUSA, the Residential Colleges and other stakeholders do everything in their power to prevent this, but every year it happens. The inevitable chaos your reform suggests will only lead to headache and heartbreak for renters and landlords as neither fully understand who they are getting in bed with. However, periodic rental leases soothe the chaotic rental rush by spreading it across the year.

Lastly, one of the largest issues we see around North Dunedin is the incredible rent increases year to year between flats. As soon as studylink payments increase, so does rent by a similar if not exact same amount. With the contracts being able to be periodic, many students may choose this option to keep cost of living crisis at bay. However, under the new system the landlords have the option to increase rents every year. If your government is ‘making sensible pro-tenant changes’ - you will release rolling back the automatic shift to periodic changes is wrong and only harms communities across New Zealand, especially our student one.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to continuing the conversation on housing. I really appreciate the news coming from Wellington on housing density. It will be great for our capital city.

Ngā mihi,

Keegan Wells Liam White

OUSA President OUSA Political Representative