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Rent Act deadline

Final days for RTA submissions

Torny Jensen

TENANTS and landlords have two days left to challenge proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act.

The Residential Tenancies Authority released a discussion paper in April detailing proposed changes to the Act, including giving tenants on fixed-term leases the power to dispute rent increases and allowing landlords to pass on water charges to tenants.

"The paper proposes enhancements to existing provisions contained in the Act to ensure an appropriate balance of rights and responsibilities between those providing the housing and those renting it," RTA general manager Fergus Smith said.

"This is the last opportunity for people to have their say before the Government finalises its views."

Mr Fergus yesterday spoke to a group of rental property investors handled by Brisbane-based Bees Nees City Realty.

Bees Nees director Rob Honeycombe said changes to the legislation might discourage investors from buying rental properties.

Mr Honeycombe said some owners had expressed concern at

the changes that would allow tenants to terminate their leases if a home was for sale, and restrict lessor inspection times from 8am to 6pm, and not on Sundays or public holidays unless agreed to.

He said the changes, combined with rate rises, interest rate increases and escalating housing prices might mean people turned away from property investment opportunities.

"We've had a few (investors) saying, 'come around and do a sales reappraisal, we've had enough'," Mr Honeycombe said.

Submissions about the changes must be made to the RTA by close of business tomorrow.

Tenants Union of Queensland co-ordinator Penny Carr was last night writing a submission to the RTA about the proposed changes.

She said the union was supportive of the changes that would give tenants more power when it came to disputing rent increases, but urged the RTA to ensure lessors could not evict tenants without justification.

"We want to take away the ability to evict tenants without giving them a reason," Ms Carr said. "It (the RTA) has to establish what are reasonable reasons and put those in to the Act."