



Disability pensioner's \$3000 in rent relief win

A VICTORIAN OMBUDSMAN ENQUIRY

A woman was denied rent relief after she could not produce a bank statement showing a loss of earnings after a job she was offered was rescinded because of COVID-19.

In 2020, a rent relief scheme was established to assist struggling renters whose income had been lost due to the pandemic.

But with her new job falling through, Jennifer had difficulty proving her eligibility for the scheme and her application was rejected.

"My rent is something like 60 per cent of my income and I'm on a disability pension, so rent relief means a great deal to me," explained Jennifer

"I filled out all my documents and had to negotiate with the landlord to reduce the rent. I couldn't prove that I had lost income through a bank statement."

Burdened by her mounting finances, Jennifer tried in vain to contact the relevant authorities to explain her situation but could not find contact details for the correct agency.

With few options remaining, Jennifer reached out to the Victorian Ombudsman, which contacted the Department of Housing.

"I spoke to the Ombudsman because I heard on the television a few weeks earlier that some businesses had a similar sort of grant.

"There was a whole raft of people who'd been rejected for various small reasons and that they were going to be reviewed.

"So I said, 'well there's a chance my case could be reviewed'.

"Really, it was made a whole easier by the support from the Ombudsman.

After the Ombudsman's intervention, The Department awarded Jennifer a \$3,000 rent relief grant.

"I can now keep living here in this house, so it means a lot," she said.

"The Ombudsman is a great alternative for these things, having someone on your side."