

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Green landlords: do they exist?

A UTAS researcher is seeking landlords who are thinking of going green.

Dr Michelle Gabriel, Research Fellow in the Housing and Community Research Unit (HACRU), in the UTAS School of Sociology and Social Work, believes Australian households are going green, with people installing solar panels on their rooftops, insulating, giving up their generous showerheads and replacing their lawn with native grasses.

Dr Gabriel's study will investigate ways to encourage the uptake of energy and water saving measures in private rental housing.

As part of this study, she is keen to talk to landlords, including those who have adopted energy and water efficiency measures in their rental properties and those who have not.

"Those leading the way with 'green' households are home owners, in Australia's more affluent neighbourhoods," Dr Gabriel said.

"Not only do these home owners have the disposable income to buy into the green revolution, but they also have ready access to government subsidies and incentives."

Dr Gabriel said early policy initiatives in Australia have been heavily weighted towards new owner-builders and established home owners, even though about a quarter of Australian families live in private and public rental housing.

"Of central concern is 'split incentive' problem; while the landlord is generally responsible for purchasing the energy-using facilities, the tenant is generally responsible for the payment of energy bills," Dr Gabriel said.

"Despite being responsible for the initial capital outlay for alternative energy efficient equipment, landlords don't reap the immediate benefits of their investment."

Consequently, incentives to adapt a property are weaker for landlords compared with home owners.

"In the UK and Canada, there are a range of policy initiatives in place to support a tenure-neutral green revolution in the residential sector."

Measures yet to be trialled in Australia include:

- The use of taxation incentives to encourage greater uptake of energy and water efficient technologies among landlords
- The strengthening of housing health and safety minimal standards;
- The introduction of Green Landlord Awards, which acknowledge those landlords who have made improvements to the energy and water efficiency of their properties

- The implementation of an Energy Performance Certificate scheme, which requires that landlords provide potential tenants with information on the energy efficiency of a property

“We need to kick-start a new ethical conversation about the shape and form of our cities and homes.

“This includes identifying the most effective ways for improving the sustainability and quality of our homes, regardless of who owns them,” Dr Gabriel said.

“If green Australian landlords don’t exist yet, then we need to get on and invent them.”

If you would like to take part in this important research, please contact Dr Gabriel on (03) 6226 2361 or email [Michelle.Gabriel@utas.edu.au](mailto:Michelle.Gabriel@utas.edu.au).

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