



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Add your voice to calls for a Sterling-ASIC inquiry

The suffering endured by the elderly tenants scammed by the Sterling First rent-for-life scheme is finally getting political attention, opening up the possibility of a Senate inquiry. Such an inquiry is absolutely necessary, to expose how the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) allowed Sterling directors, with a history of ripping off investors in failed financial schemes, to prey on vulnerable elderly Australians. Ahead of Parliament resuming next week, which provides an opportunity to establish an inquiry, the Citizens Party is calling on all Australians who support the fight to clean up the financial system to phone and email the Senators in your state this week to demand they support an inquiry.

[Click here for the contact details of the Senators in each state and territory.](#)

The political attention on Sterling First has not come too soon. Of the 140 or so elderly victims who collectively lost \$18 million when Sterling First collapsed in 2019, 16 have passed away, some have been evicted, and the remainder live every day with the fear of imminent eviction hanging over their heads. On 7 October, ABC 7.30 reported on their plight in a segment called "Left in Limbo", which featured great-grandparents Lou and Laurie Thomas, who lost a Supreme Court case in June and were recently evicted. "There was lots of tears, lots of sleepless nights", Lou said to 7.30. Laurie added: "Lots of me waking up in the middle of the night, hearing her crying."

7.30 profiled other victims facing eviction, including Alex Tufekcic and his wife Leonie Yates, who are facing an upcoming Supreme Court case which could see them evicted. "Well, I don't want to think about that, because it's horrible. We'll be out on the street", Alex said. "It's humiliating", Leonie despaired. "At this age, to be in a situation where you're facing something like this."

[Click here to watch ABC 7.30's "Left in Limbo".](#)

No more buck-passing

The most important part of the ABC 7.30 report was the emphasis on the need for a Senate inquiry into Sterling, including into ASIC's failings. ASIC is the corporate regulator which is supposed to ensure consumers are fully informed, but in the case of Sterling, ASIC:

- knew the directors had a history of financial failures;
- knew they were targeting elderly people;
- failed to warn Sterling customers who asked ASIC if there were any red flags about the company;
- failed to act on complaints about Sterling until too late; and
- when ASIC did eventually act on Sterling, it failed to stop the directors from starting another structure called Silverlink to suck in another \$11 million from more tenants (\$6.8 million was extracted before ASIC's stop order, then Silverlink extracted \$11 million more).

These failings are the responsibility of ASIC, and of the government which has deliberately kept ASIC weak and ineffective as a regulator. However, ASIC is denying responsibility, and is trying to pass the buck to other agencies, which are also passing the buck. The ABC 7.30 website has posted statements from ASIC, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA), Financial Services Minister Jane Hume, and the WA state government, all effectively denying responsibility and passing the buck to each other. Yet while the bureaucrats are buck-passing, the elderly victims are living the nightmare of not knowing when they might be thrown onto the streets, and even dying. All Australians should find this unacceptable, including for the reason that such a failed system could victimise any of us at any time, including you and your loved ones. Australia is supposed to be a nation that believes in the rule of law and justice; we must demand it in this case.

And that starts with a Senate inquiry, prosecuted by Senators who are genuine about wanting to get to the bottom of the issue, including ASIC's role. Labor Senator Louise Pratt said to 7.30: "ASIC might claim that they haven't failed. However, you only need to look at the evidence to the contrary. We have seen vulnerable consumers lose hundreds of thousands of dollars and it's all very well for ASIC to intervene now, when it should have intervened before these people lost their money."

It is excellent that Labor Senators are now calling for an inquiry; with the support of the Greens, One Nation, and the rest of the cross-bench, it should be possible to initiate an inquiry next week when Parliament resumes. To ensure that happens, we need you to do your part by calling Senators this

week from every part of the country to demand an inquiry. The Citizens Party has prepared a Fact Sheet on the Sterling First collapse and ASIC to help inform people of the important points you can relay, or email, to Senators as you contact them.

[Click here for the Sterling First fact sheet.](#)

Please start calling the Senators in your state today. The calls can be as simple as telling the Senator's office: "I'm NAME, please pass on my message that the Senator must support an inquiry into Sterling First and ASIC." We can achieve this inquiry, and by doing so continue to advance the cause of forcing the Parliament to address the ongoing corruption and failings of the financial system, which is so destructive to Australians and to the economy.

Join the fight and call today!

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