

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 29 June 2021 6:57 PM
To: South Brisbane Electorate Office
Cc: Community Support and Services Committee; Minister for Communities and Housing
Subject: To Community Support and Services Committee (CC my local MP): Submission on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (Tenants' Rights) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Dear Amy MacMahon MP,

Dear the Community Support and Services Committee, cc my local MP -

I'd like to comment on both the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (Tenants' Rights) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to share something with you: a snapshot of what it's like to rent in Queensland.

I've been renting for my entire adult life. For some reason banks can see that I can afford to pay a third of my income in rent every fortnight, but a quarter of my income as mortgage is too big a risk.

In my years of renting, I've rarely encountered a landlord or rental agent who didn't skirt, bend, or outright break renting laws. The over-controlling landlords who found any excuse under the sun to enter the property with often short notice or false claims of having provided entry notice 'under the door'. For years I did not realize that notices to remedy breach can count against a tenant, given how frequently and frivolously they were issued. I've had inspections followed up by notices to remedy breach for 'damage to property' that when queried were issued for normal water marks on the bathroom mirror or droplets of grease on the kitchen range hood. Many agents have insisted that I register with dubious payment systems to receive their rent, systems which impose their own non-negotiable service fees.

A renter's home is not a home. From decorations to pets, your freedom of uninterrupted enjoyment of your residence is always under assault, always at the mercy of whether the landlord deigns to allow you that freedom. All while pricing renters out of owning their own homes, to preserve the 'value of their investment.'

Rental agents have at various times tried to use hints and rumours of a 'rental blacklist' as a threat to force me to meekly accept flagrant abuses of my renter's rights, forcing me to choose between acquiescence or homelessness. Too-frequent inspections for manufactured reasons. Breaches issued for accounting errors that are their fault, not

mine. Refusal of pets. Refusal of decorations that involve drilling or nails. Refusal of effective or timely maintenance or replacement of unsafe (eg: moldy) air-conditioning or vents.

Every - bar none - rental agent has seemingly felt automatically entitled to a part of my bond, always for things that when disputed are found to fall squarely under the definition of 'fair wear and tear' at best, outright lies at worst. I have since found an effective way of taking them to task for this behaviour, but it requires experience, knowledge, and confidence that not every renter has or should be required to have.

Some of the most popular advice I have ever been requested to provide has been for renter's advocacy, making inexperienced or insecure/anxious renters aware of their rights, such as: being the first to claim their rental bond, 'fair wear and tear', the importance of a thorough entry condition report, all communications in writing (including sending and saving emails to confirm a record of phone or in-person conversations initiated by agents and landlords specifically to avoid a paper trail) and the importance of making sure that frivolous or false notices to remedy breach are contested and withdrawn, rather than accepted and remedied.

To the average renter, their safety and shelter let alone comfort is only at the whims and tender mercies of greedy, manipulative, callous and abusive bad actors who have an unfair advantage. The power imbalance between renters and rental agents/landlords is especially pronounced today, in this pandemic-influenced seller's market.

The universal principle of law should be to establish and protect some kind of fairness in our society, to protect the vulnerable from the strong who would abuse them. The law as it stands does not sufficiently do that.

In its current form, the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 will do little to improve my situation as one of the 1.8 million renters in Queensland. While this bill may be palatable to the real estate lobby, it completely disregards my experience as a renter.

While I'm pleased that the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill includes positive provisions for renters experiencing domestic and family violence, it contains little other reforms of substance for renters.

I urge the Queensland Government to take this opportunity to amend this bill and to implement real rental reforms that will make renting in Queensland affordable, secure and fair.

It's crucial that rental reforms in Queensland include:

- A genuine end to 'no grounds' evictions – providing tenants with long-term security in their homes without the risk of an unfair eviction at the end of their lease
- Allowing tenants to make minor modifications, like hanging picture frames or installing furniture safety anchors

- A real ban on rent bidding – banning agents and property owners from accepting amount above the advertised rent for a property
- Expanding minimum standards to include ventilation, cleanliness and insulation
- Stopping unreasonable rent increases by tying rent increases to general inflation (CPI)
- Ensuring prospective tenants have fair and honest information about the property
- Banning inappropriate or discriminatory questions by lessors
- Make it easier for tenants to have pets – by flipping the onus on property owners/agents to demonstrate why it's unreasonable for a tenant to have pet

These provisions are included in the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (Tenants' Rights) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I urge the government to either support the Tenants' Rights Bill, or amend its own bill to provide real protections for renters.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]

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