

## Community Support and Services Committee

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 30 June 2021 12:00 PM  
**To:** Maiwar 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 Michael Berkman 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.

If you can't afford to buy a place in Australia, it is not possible to provide a proper home to your children. Let me tell you our story.

We are a family of four, and will be forced to move houses for the third time within two years in the next three months. After spending some time overseas, we moved back to Brisbane in 2019. It took us several months to find an affordable place close to a public school and a childcare centre with vacancies. Just two months after moving in, we were informed that the unit was going to be sold. The owner waited just long enough – had it been less than two months, we would have been able to at least break the lease.

In the weeks after that, we had to put up with numerous open houses. I remember one Saturday morning when dozens of people flocked in. My then two year old son was so upset that he started crying. There was no consideration for our privacy. People opened our bedroom cupboards without even asking for permission, and the real estate agent informed us that they had “every right to do so.”

And the Covid hit. My husband and I both lost work hours. Moving houses and the financial stress took a toll on my husband's health. He was diagnosed with a heart condition, and I believe that the stressful circumstances played a major roll.

We finally found another unit. It wasn't easy. We don't own a car, and rely on our unit to be within walking distance of school and kindy. With my husband being in and out of hospital, I had to organise the majority of the move alone while looking after the children and working part-time.

We were optimistic when we moved into the new place. We made an effort to decorate it nicely, and make it feel like a home. But a few weeks after moving in, we found a flyer in our letterbox. “Sell your property”, it said. “Take advantage of this booming market.” Real estate agencies are pushing sales.

We found out a few weeks ago that our unit was sold, and that we found out that we have to move out once again. The new owners are investors. But they want to apply for the first home owner's grant, meaning they have to live in the unit for a period of time. And our family has to pack bags, once again.

All of this has taken a huge toll on our family savings: Moving houses costs a lot of money, and our family safety net has slowly been dwindling away. We feel like here in Australia, landlords have all the rights, and tenants have almost none. We pay an ever more expensive rent, but we cannot make the rental unit a proper home. I imagine that there

are other people who have been it even harder. We are very lucky for our supportive families. If we can't find a place on time, we can move in with our in-laws. It's far away from school, and will be very crowded, but at least we won't ever be homeless. I'm not sure this is the case for everybody else. What happens if somebody has their work hours cut due to Covid? What if they can't find another place they can afford? What if nobody will offer them a new lease in this situation? People could end up on the street.

And whenever I tell friends and family in Germany our story, they are shocked. Tenant protection is much stronger over there. Leases are long-term, and if a house or unit is sold, the lease will continue nonetheless. A change is possible, and I believe that there should be a more equal relationship between landlords and tenants.

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:

- the possibility of long-term leases
- 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]

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