

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 30 June 2021 2:02 PM
To: Steven Miles
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 Steven Miles 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.

In 2014 I was living in Hervey Bay, where there was a very high unemployment rate and huge competition for jobs, I was lucky to get casual work, but I also had to support my partner who had a disability. We had to find rental accommodation (as we were unable to stay with family any longer), our choices were extremely limited, due to our budget. So when we found an affordable rental, we applied straight away and to our excitement our application was accepted.

We didn't pay very close attention to the place before signing the lease, as we assumed it would be livable and that's all we needed. But when we started moving in, we felt bites on our legs and when we looked down there were fleas all over our legs (we did NOT have pets). It was so bad that we couldn't sleep there. We contacted the landlord (it was a private rental) and she told us that she had the house treated for pests after the previous tenants left, but reluctantly agreed to get the guy to come back out. When the pest control guy came out he said that the landlord did not pay for the flea treatment last time, as that was an extra and she said that the previous tenants didn't have pets. Then we were informed that we should stay out of the house for at least 24 for our safety (to avoid breathing or coming into contact with the toxic chemical) and as I have respiratory issues, I felt I should stay out of the house for an extra day. One week later the house was still infested with fleas, so we contacted the landlord again and she reluctantly sent the pest control guy out again. In the end it took at least 2 weeks for the fleas to die off and if I didn't have family close by, we would've had to spend at least 4 nights at a motel. I asked the landlord for a refund of the 2 weeks rent, due to the fact we were not able to sleep properly for 2 weeks (which caused my partner to have seizures, plus he was allergic to fleas and had swollen, bleeding sores all over his legs), and she only agreed to refund us 1 week of rent.

Things didn't get better from there. Shortly after we moved in, the shower head broke and when I told the landlord I replaced it, she said that was ok and did not offer to reimburse me.

When summer started, we realised that not having air conditioning, ceiling fans or screens on any windows in the house, was a huge problem, because if we left the windows open for some fresh air at night, we would end up covered in mosquitoes, not to mention the safety concern of potential break-ins. One day in summer the temperature inside the house was 38 degrees Celsius, while outside seemed to be only 30 degrees Celsius. Inside the house on summer nights it never got below 29 degrees Celsius (we had a thermometer).

Also the wooden front door was in such bad condition, that sometimes it swung open, even after locking it, I woke up to find the door wide open on more than one occasion.

The lino flooring was very old and torn in many places when we moved in, it was not stuck down in the corners and we noticed the gaps in the floor boards were so wide that in winter mice were jumping up through the cracks and coming inside. When moving out, the landlord told me I had to replace all the lino, because my bed tore part of it (due to the lino being so old and brittle).

I did not have the money or time to take the landlord to court. And I didn't know what else to do. So I paid for the new lino and left. The whole situation was so stressful on my partner and I, that it caused our relationship to break down and I couldn't cope with caring for him anymore, so we separated.

The next 4 years I lived in share houses with strangers, as I was unable to afford a rental on my own. Then finally I managed to get a rental with a friend, in Murrumba Downs. Since moving in here I have desperately wanted to get a small pet (like a bird or guinea pigs), but the tenancy agreement says no pets, so I'm too scared to ask. But I would be willing to pay extra bond for a pet.

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,

