

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 30 June 2021 3:19 PM
To: Aspley 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 Bart Mellish 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 have rented in several Brisbane suburbs since leaving my parents' place. My partner and I have never had the ability to make a true home in any of the houses we have rented. It has always been a struggle to find rental houses that are affordable, in reasonable condition, close to work and university, and allow pets. The last time we moved, the real estate agent attempted to seize our bond (about \$2,000) on spurious and vexatious grounds, citing damage to the property that had obviously occurred before we had moved in, alleging that we were to blame for the fact that the curtain rods had bent under the weight of the curtains, and saying that we had not cleaned the walls despite the fact that our attempts to clean the walls resulted in the cheap paint coming off. Had I been less informed and easier to intimidate, the real estate agent would likely have been able to improperly obtain money from my partner and me that we could not afford to lose. The experience was very distressing for me and my partner, especially since we had always done our bit to keep the house and garden in good condition, and the property was in a better condition than we had found it in.

Renting is increasingly becoming a permanent reality for more and more Queenslanders as the federal government chooses not to take steps to de-commodify housing and guarantee safe, secure, comfortable, and convenient housing for all Australians. The real estate lobby represents the interests of people who regard our homes as financial assets. All residential landlords, no matter how personally benevolent they may be, have economic interests that are irreconcilably opposed to the needs of the increasing number of people who have no choice but to rent. We need the government to protect us against those economic interests and the predators of the real estate lobby.

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,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.