

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 9:30 AM
To: Maroochydore 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 Fiona Simpson 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.

My partner and I have been renting the same house in Mudjimba for over 3 years. We have never missed or been late with a rental payment or water bill. We keep the property clean and always have reported issues that need to be fixed. We also look after the garden and are well liked by our neighbours for how quiet and courteous we are. Our landlord recently sold the property, shortly after our lease expired (so we have been on a periodic lease since April). The new owners want to raise our rent by \$75/week. Both my partner and I have taken very significant pay cuts in the past year due to Covid and despite this have still never missed a payment. This increase puts a significant burden on us and also makes it that much harder for us to save to buy our own property. We have negotiated with them and they have agreed to an increase of \$35/week, but wish to keep it a periodic lease, which obviously provides us with less security that they won't again increase the rent in 6 months

time. As I am sure you're aware, there is a housing shortage on the Sunshine Coast right now, so we have zero leverage as tenants. If we get evicted (which our new landlords can do at any time for any reason with only 2 months notice), we will likely wind up homeless or having to live with my partner's parents in Brisbane, meaning we would both have to commute over 100km each way to work. As renters, we need more protections against unreasonable rental increases.

I will also share an experience of the first house we rented on the Sunshine Coast, that was infested with mould. It was literally making me sick and also wound up destroying several hundred dollars worth of clothing, shoes, and handbags. The landlord not only refused to acknowledge the issue (despite us independently paying for an expert to come out and assess the issue and us providing ample photographic proof), but also refused to remedy the breach. He allowed us to break lease, but still tried to get us to pay rent until another tenant was found. One day when I was packing all of our stuff, the property manager came by with a group of prospective tenants to view the place. Among them was a couple with a very small baby. I couldn't in good conscience let them apply to rent this place without

telling them about the mould (which I had to do subtly and out of view/earshot of the property manager). It shouldn't have been my responsibility to do that. The owner should not h

ave been allowed to rent the property until the mould issue had been fixed. But with the threat of being blacklisted hanging over our heads, we felt we had no real recourse.

Prior to moving to the Sunshine Coast 4 years ago, we lived in Brisbane, and our landlords there weren't much better. Our landlords would frequently ignore repair requests, and one leaky tap that they ignored for months actually wound up leading to significant water damage to the kitchen bench. We didn't have a working oven for the first 3 months we lived there, and didn't have a working clothes dryer for the first 6 months. The one air conditioning unit was undersized for the apartment and there were no ceiling fans or screens. It also hadn't been properly serviced or maintained, so one day it died and leaked a bunch of sludge down the wall and onto one of our paintings and dining chairs. We eventually had to pay to get it fixed ourselves.

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]