

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 2 July 2021 8:26 PM
To: Clayfield 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 Timothy Nicholls 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 been in my current rental property for a bit over two years and I have been treated incredibly poorly by the real estate. When I was first approved to move in, the real estate agent took so long to finalise the documents that I was at risk of homelessness - my prior tenancy was ending and I would have no where to go. I begged her to let me move in by the date I had to be out of my old rental, and was yelled at on the phone and verbally put down. She finally agreed, but said that she would not be able to organise a cleaner before we moved in. The property had been vacant for a few months and every wall was covered in mould, there were cockroaches everywhere and a lot of things were broken. The electricity could not be connected because the power box was illegal, so we lived in darkness the first few nights. It took a week to bleach all of the walls and clean and repair all of the broken things - to make it liveable.

Since then, there has been an incredibly upsetting pattern of negligence towards this property and my concerns with it - the worst of which was when a friend who was visiting me fell through the deck in December of 2020. I had reported the rotting wood on the deck 3 times to the real estate, with the first complaint dating back to the 21st of May 2020 - 7 months prior to the accident. It took a full week for the deck to be repaired, and this was done without notifying us that someone would be entering the property. I desperately tried to contact the real estate to discuss my concerns with this and they refused to answer my calls or respond to my emails. Eventually I gave up attempting to contact them because it was so taxing on my mental health.

Some other unresolved issues that I have had during my tenancy are as follows;

* 20/04/2020 - unauthorised entry to property. At 6.30am this morning, I was woken up by a group of workers pulling down my temporary dog fence and bringing a truck into my yard, and removing a very large tree. I came

outside and told them that they did not have permission to be here, but they assured me the real estate had been told. After sending an email and calling the office, we discovered that our property manager had been told but had forgotten to issue an entry notice.

* 26/08/2020 - reported a leak under the house that still has not been fixed. Followed up on 21/10/2020, but still was not fixed.

* 21/10/2020 - sent an email following up on the maintenance issues that had not been fixed (leak under house, broken deck, water damage to kitchen sink cabinets). Received a response on 30/10/2020 apologising for the delay in response and actioning these maintenance issues, and was promised they would be actioned either that day or the next. Did not hear back.

* 05/11/2020-24/11/2020 - extreme delay in processing a tenant application. RTA advised me that this period (nearly 3 weeks) was inappropriate and should have resulted in a rent reduction. I continuously followed up on this application, and made it clear that paying the full amount myself was putting me into severe financial hardship.

* 04/01/2021 - unauthorised entry to property. Principle of [REDACTED] and a builder came to fix the deck, but had done so without obtaining verbal permission or telling me this was happening. 24 hours is the legally required period of notice of entry - an exception can be made in an emergency, but given it had been a week since I reported this it was clearly not being treated as an emergency.

To add insult to injury, they increased my rent in February of this year. I tried very hard to explain how unfair this was given all of the unaddressed maintenance issues with this house and the extreme level of cleaning it took to make the place liveable. They threatened me with eviction if I did not sign the lease at the higher price, and as I would have no where else to go and did not want to be homeless I agreed. This made me feel so incredibly powerless and upset - as if I was being punished for coming from a lower income background, and like no matter how hard I try I will never be able to improve my circumstances.

Now, as I said, all of these issues have happened solely at my current rental over a period of just over two years. But this has been a consistent pattern in every rental I have ever lived in throughout my entire life. I remember being a young child and seeing my mother crying and telling me how helpless she felt because of the way the real estate was treating her. Because any number of issues - huge leaks under the house, rats in the walls, flooding in the garage, damaged carpets from faulty pipes causing leaks in bedrooms (through an airconditioner), broken windows, consistent power outages - were being ignored or turned around on us. Because rents were being increased and we had to choose between poverty and homelessness. Because we were consistently seen as a problem - a single mother on low income who was making things difficult by asking for respect. I have had enough of this treatment, and I am sick of seeing so many like myself go through this. We should be allowed to

live in a home without constantly fearing rent increases and breaches and evictions - never really feeling comfortable anywhere. Everyone deserves to have a home and to feel safe and comfortable there.

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]