

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 3 July 2021 12:30 PM
To: Everton 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 Mander 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.

First issue: RESPECT

I have been a landlord for two periods (i.e. renting my home to others) and sometimes I have been a tenant. I notice a distinct difference in attitude shown by property management agencies according to whether I am the owner or the tenant. It seems to be systemic, as if only landlords deserve respect, and all tenants are potentially out to damage the property.

In fact, it is a fallacy that "everyone" can and should own their own home. It may have been a good idea, but over the past 40 years the escalating price of houses in relation to earnings has put home ownership out of reach of an increasing portion of the population. Renting has become the only option for low income earners and many middle-income earners. These people are normal citizens, not "ratbags". They need stable housing with long-term tenure, to provide stability in their families' lives, especially their children's lives. I urge you to work for rental legislation which gives equal weight to the needs of tenants as it does for the owners.

Second issue: SERVICE

A niece aged 40, who had been working for 10 years continually at the Queensland Art Gallery, was moving out of a rental property in Oxford Park because the rent had increased beyond what she could afford. Although we had hired a professional carpet-cleaning machine and thoroughly cleaned all her carpets after the house was emptied, the real estate agency/property manager insisted that she must still pay for a carpet-cleaning company. This was a waste of money. I had already had many years of cleaning our carpets by hiring those large carpet-cleaning machines, and I could see that our use of the equipment and recommended chemicals had produced a perfectly satisfactory result. The property manager would not budge on the matter. My niece was struggling to cope with the financial costs and physical effort of moving house plus her full-time work roster. Then on a further inspection the agency insisted that she pay \$90 for repainting of the ceiling of a small bedroom, refusing to accept that the marks on the ceiling were caused by tiny stick-on silver stars which a previous tenant had left there, and which my niece did not notice and therefore did not write into the Condition Report when she moved in. The property manager was rigid in her proceedings, and my niece felt unable to continue to argue with this rigidity, so she borrowed the \$90 for the ceiling painting. There were other matters of disagreement between her and the property manager, regarding very old bathroom fittings in disrepair which my niece had painted to improve their appearance, and permanent stains in the cupboard under the laundry trough. My niece's explanation regarding these issues was over-ridden by the head of the property management company, instead of considering the details and making a fair decision. My niece felt it best to give up on all remaining matters.

Five years later I hear from another niece who lives down towards Ipswich, of the difficulties she is experiencing as a renter. She is 50 years old, has a University Degree in Child Psychology and Social Work, which relates to her work.

For several years - approx 10 years I think - this niece has been renting a house and raising her two children. One has left home and the other is 17 and still living at home. Their house's roof was damaged in a violent storm last November, which ripped out some of the ceiling over her kitchen. The roof was fixed and a temporary repair was done for the kitchen ceiling. The property management firm said this was due to the difficulty in getting tradesmen as there were thousands of damaged homes needing repair. Then in February, another storm blew down a section of the fence. These repairs have not been carried out. Last month, in June 2021, the rent was increased for the new lease period, and my niece has paid the new amount of rent, while raising again the matter of the need for repairs. She is expressing to me her fear that if she keeps contacting the property management agency, or if she asks the RTA to push for the repairs to be done, she will not be offered a renewal of the lease. She will not allow me to attempt to influence the situation. She strongly believes that the agency or the landlord can cause her to lose the tenancy if she makes a fuss.

I appreciate your attention to these stories from my immediate circle.

In its current form, the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 will do little to improve this woman's 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 our experiences as renters.

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 a pet or pets. A pet can create more benefit than medication for people who are depressed or lonely or unwell.

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, Please redact my name and address so that they are not publicly available .

[Redacted signature and address]