
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 3 July 2021 8:57 PM
To: Macalister 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 Melissa McMahon 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 family and I needed more space and moved to a larger property in Meadowbrook after renting for almost 12 years in Kingston. From the outset the agent lied to us, claiming in the conversation when we were made the offer to take the lease, that there were several suitable applicants and we needed to sign straight away or they would give it to someone else. We were extremely pressured and had only had one viewing, which had actually been in the dark (5pm Qld winter time) with no opportunity for a second viewing.

During a later conversation the agent stated that she had had great difficulty in finding tenants, the property had been vacant for 9 months, and was about to end the contract with the owner when our application came in. During our time at the property we had numerous issues, starting with the property not being cleaned (this was during lockdowns 2020 after numerous viewings and people walking through the house). The owner had no interest in maintaining the property. There were serious plumbing issues, electrical problems, outside drainage issues, vermin and mould in some areas.

On the dot of 10 months of living in the property I had a message left on my voicemail from the real estate receptionist saying that she had had an email saying our lease was not being renewed. This was in March 2021, at the height of the current housing crisis. It came completely out of the blue. They gave us 2 months notice to vacate. We were told that the owner had a family member who wanted to move in to the house. We had done nothing wrong, had paid all our bills and had a perfect rental record. We were devastated. I had established my home business there and my children had school and work in the local area.

As we began the horrendous task of finding another suitable place to live we quickly realised the enormity of the crisis we were caught up in. I was searching the property sites every day, submitting applications and attending viewings where crowds of people were turning up. I was told at one viewing that the owner had received an offer above the listed rental price but I could make a better offer if I wanted. I was shocked as we simply could not afford to do this. Rents had already significantly risen to the point of being barely affordable for us. We witnessed this happening numerous times.

We had to consider the devastating possibility of our family separating as we could not find a property to accommodate our needs.

The stress we have endured has been horrendous. The agent we were with was threatening legal action if we were not out of our home by the end of May, and we simply could not find anywhere to go. This went on for almost 3 months, with applications rejected, including one application which was accepted then rejected because we have a cat.

We finally had an application accepted, I answered all the questions on the form including the question as to whether a business would be run from the property. Upon reading through the terms and conditions in the lease agreement I noticed that I was required to agree to not conduct business at the property. I questioned this with the agent as I had already informed them of my business. They withdrew the offer of the lease. We were now in an

extremely precarious position having already given notice. We were now about to become homeless. I cannot express to you the emotional and psychological trauma we experienced. I called the agent back and pleaded that they ask the owner to reconsider. Their response was that I agree to not conduct any business at the property. I had no choice but to agree, but I stress that this agreement was under extreme duress. I had to make a decision to give up my business in order to give my family a home.

We moved into the new house two weeks ago. I have used all of my savings to pay for a bond and 2 weeks rent in advance, removalist, bond cleaner and numerous other expenses. I still have not had my bond returned from the last property and the agent there will not speak to me directly.

Two days before moving I received a notification from the domain.com website informing me that the house I was moving out of was now available for rent and would I like to apply for it. The rent had been significantly raised. The agent and owner had outright lied to get us out to increase their profit.

I'm now in a position of having lost all my savings, my ability to earn an income has been severely restricted and I have to deal with severe anxiety about future income.

By the way, the owner of our new home is Department of Transport and Main Roads. Queensland Government are denying me my right to earn my income from my home. This in these extreme times when millions of people are now having to work from home.

I sincerely hope this is not just another token effort and some real change happens. After all, it is the tenant that pays for the owners investment and the agents commission. We damn well deserve rights and respect.

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]