
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 July 2021 7:35 PM
To: Stafford 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 James Sullivan 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.

One story I can share was when renting in 2020 with [REDACTED]. This is quite detailed, as most rental cases are... and I would appreciate your efforts in reading it in full.

During the response to COVID-19, my work was unstable, and my roommate was let go from her job. We received a rental renewal, to renew our lease for a further 12 months, at a \$10 increase per week, to start in August 2020. I was surprised that the Rent was going up, as I had read several articles (including this one: <https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.domain.com.au%2Fnews%2Fbrisbane-rent-report-967759%2F&data=04%7C01%7Ccssc%40parliament.qld.gov.au%7C5d3ec9a502f64587ea5608d941f3ab6c%7C234f33c1f5a34c5d8628a50c061ce055%7C0%7C0%7C637613337077232790%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoImMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&reserved=0>) that the rental market was weak, rather than strong. I had also compared our 2 bedroom 2 bathroom unit to others in the area, which were being rented at lower prices. Our Real Estate came back telling us that the "market is very strong and the owner is firm on the increase". With the instability of our finances, we were hardly in a position to move, so we begrudgingly agreed to an additional 12 months in a property that we knew we were paying above market value for. The strain on my roommate from losing her job proved to be too much and she let me know she would be needing to leave our property to move in with a friend, in order to ease the financial burden of unemployment.

At this stage, we met with our Real Estate to discuss breaking lease. This was 2 weeks after we had resigned our lease. The Real Estate reassured us that the market is very strong, and they think it should only take about 2 weeks to be rented (even considering it would need to be advertised at the increased price). The real estate agent was very happy to explain the break lease rules, and let us know that the Real Estate was going to "work for us" in the re-renting of our home - dedicated to renting out the property for us. They let us know, that the very important thing that we don't forget is that we cannot under any circumstances stop paying rent, not until they get a tenant. We took their advice into our plans, and decided to break lease. At this stage, I had secured a small extension on my contract, found a place to move into with another friend. We vacated the property on the Friday, prior to the first open for inspection on Saturday. I called next week, and was advised that one couple showed up, however weren't interested as it was "too small for the price". The next weekend, the second open for inspection was scheduled, and upon calling and requesting an update, i was advised that no one showed up, but now that the property is vacant, they are expecting more people to come and pick up keys to view the property. At this stage, [REDACTED] stopped holding open homes. Two months passed, and I was struggling to pay rent at two homes, and had a terrible sinking feeling during this time, that I might need to keep paying rent for the

remaining of the 12 months. At this stage, I told my colleague about my situation who let me know that the real estate is required to "mitigate loss" for tenants who are breaking lease. I realised that me calling for updates, and being provided with updates of "no interest" "too small" meant that I was raising with them directly that there was loss occurring. I called the Real Estate to let them know that I have found out that they should be mitigating loss but don't appear to be. This was over three months into the break lease and coming up to Christmas 2020. I let them know my interpretation of mitigating loss would be to hold more than 2 open homes, lower the rent to market value and re-post the ad on Realestate.com. The real estate agent said that she would only re-post the ad if we pay an additional several hundred dollars in advertising (which we had already paid one round of "advertising fees" at the break lease). The real estate was hostile, unhelpful, and had a very different tune to our first meeting. "We work for you" turned into "just so you know, we have never worked for you, we have always been working for the owner". This cemented for me, that as long as they were receiving rent, they were fine to have tenants renting a vacant property, during a global pandemic. We were in financial hardship, and even though we were persistently following up for updates on the property, they showed no compassion to our situation, and consistently told me to keep paying rent. I later found out that tenants in a break lease situation have the option to stop paying rent if they feel the Real Estate is not mitigating loss. I wish I wasn't advised the exact opposite from people who we thought were "working for us". Following my call, they lowered the rental price by \$25 per week, and the property rented in under one week. The Real Estate then issued our bond refund form to me, and called me to ask me to submit my accept of the rental bond ASAP. Upon reviewing the email, it didn't include any information other than the amount of the bond, and that it would be fully paid to the real estate. I called them back and let them know that there seems to be an error because it is saying to pay the bond to them. They let me know that I need to submit the form as is, and if I kept paying rent up til the new tenant moved in, that they would then refund it to us.

I talked to the rental tribunal, and they said that I could have requested my bond the day we vacated. The real estate told us that we weren't able to lodge the bond refund until they had the new tenant. Now that the real estate had claimed our bond, it was up to us to dispute their claim. In the claim, the reason stated was "rent arrears" despite our rent being ahead and having this confirmed in writing by the real estate. I had to lodge a dispute of bond form, and show that we were ahead in our rent and deserved the bond back. I called the Real Estate to ask why they were claiming our bond, and they said it was because "they suspected that we (the tenants) were going to raise a dispute with the real estate". I explained that they claimed it due to "rent arrears". They said that there isn't a box where you can claim someones rent for suspected dispute.... to which I pointed out, because maybe that isn't a valid reason to hold someones bond. The real estate

The tribunal let me know that I could raise a dispute with them for some sort of compensation and possibly win some of the rent I paid during the period between stopping open homes, and them lowering the rent. I started to pursue this, however after several very rude phone calls with the Real Estate, and realising that they lied to us, or seemingly intentionally misled us often, it was too stress inducing to go through the process of lodging a dispute. Especially when I know that I have 0 real estate experience, and I would be taking on a real estate office, full of people who seem very confident in bending the truth and being generally untrustworthy and aggressive. I lost a lot of money with [REDACTED], and suffered a feeling of helplessness with my housing. During the months of double rent, I was putting myself into further financial hardship, and there was no end in sight. This was a suffocating position to be in and I really, really believe that renter's rights are under represented compared with land lord and real estate agencies rights. The acts are very confusing to interpret for lay people, and that puts tenants at a significant disadvantage compared with the real estates, and land lords. Further research would have been conducted by myself if I had any idea that there were nefarious actions taking place, but I (probably stupidly) trusted that real estate. On top of this, a Real Estate agency is the authority figure when compared with a tenant which creates an unequal power imbalance where the risk is transferred onto the tenant (who is already the disadvantaged person, by needing to rent in the first place). There is a conflict of interest in the Real Estate providing verbal advice to tenants which acts in the best interest of the Real Estate to the detriment of the tenant. I could go on, but basically the system seems very set up for Real Estate Agencies, and Land Lords, and doesn't really seem to protect renters basic rights to affordable housing, and basic honesty from Agencies that they are forced into dealing with, simply by being a renter. Why would we as a state, put the trust in the oppressors, not the oppressed? To me, the current rules and regulations seem very odd and there is a great need for Amy MacMahon's rental reform bill.

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 black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Please redact any and all of my personal and identifying information, including my name, if in the event that this information is stored or published



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Brisbane rents fall during pandemic: Domain Rent Report

ALLISON WORRALL | JUL 8, 2020

Brisbane's longest run of rental stability has ended, with house and units rents falling over the last three months, new data shows.

The latest quarterly *Domain Rent Report*, released Thursday, revealed asking prices for houses across Greater Brisbane dropped by 2.4 per cent or \$10, taking the median weekly rent to \$400. Apartment prices also slipped, with the median rent down from \$385 to \$380.

Within Brisbane City Council's area, there were similar falls, with the median asking price for units falling by \$5 a week and houses by \$10 a week.

After years of relative stability and minimal price fluctuations, the global pandemic



“To date, the Brisbane rental market has not been as affected compared to other capitals but international border closures, plummeting foreign student numbers, job losses and pay cuts have had an impact,” said Domain senior research analyst Nicola Powell.

MEDIAN WEEKLY ASKING RENT – HOUSES

City	Rent	QoQ Change	YoY Change
Sydney	\$540	0%	0%
Melbourne	\$430	-2.3%	0%
Brisbane	\$400	-2.4%	0%
Adelaide	\$395	0%	2.6%
Perth	\$370	-1.3%	1.4%
Canberra	\$575	-0.9%	4.5%
Darwin	\$480	0%	0%
Hobart	\$450	-4.3%	0%
National	\$449	-1.2%	0.5%

Source: Domain Rent Report, June quarter 2020.

Domain

Embed this table

MEDIAN WEEKLY ASKING RENT – UNITS

City	Rent	QoQ Change	YoY Change
Sydney	\$500	-3.8%	-4.8%
Melbourne	\$415	-3.5%	-1.2%
Brisbane	\$380	-1.3%	0%
Adelaide	\$320	0%	4.9%
Perth	\$320	0%	3.2%
Canberra	\$470	-2.1%	0%
Darwin	\$380	0%	-0.7%
Hobart	\$380	-8.4%	0%
National	\$447	-3.2%	-2.9%

Source: Domain Rent Report, June quarter 2020.

Domain

Embed this table

with advertised rentals jumping from March to June and more landlords cutting asking rents,” Dr Powell said.

The report found asking prices for apartments in the Brisbane local government area fell by 1.3 per cent over the quarter, although Eaden Hockings, of Living Here



“There are certainly pockets and areas that suffered a much greater drop than that,” Mr Hockings said.

Areas like Spring Hill, with high levels of interstate and overseas travel, had been strongly hit, he said.

Median asking rent – Units

Region	June-20	March-20	June-19	Quarterly change	Annual change
Lockyer Valley	*	*	*	*	*
Somerset	*	*	*	*	*
Scenic Rim	*	*	*	*	*
Ipswich	\$280	\$280	\$285	0.0%	-1.8%
Logan	\$300	\$300	\$300	0.0%	0.0%
Moreton Bay	\$325	\$320	\$320	1.6%	1.6%
Brisbane	\$395	\$400	\$395	-1.3%	0.0%
Redland	\$405	\$410	\$400	1.3%	-1.2%
Sunshine Coast	\$410	\$410	\$400	0.0%	2.5%
Gold Coast	\$425	\$410	\$430	-3.1%	-1.2%

And demand for inner-city furnished properties in the \$300 to \$600 range, that often typically cater to international students, had “completely fallen away”.

In a bid to fill vacant properties, Mr Locking said agents were having discussions with owners about slashing asking prices.

“There are a lot of tenants shopping around and assuming they can get good deals,” he noted, but warned that not all properties needed a price cut to secure a lease. “As always in real estate, the good quality stuff is resilient.”

Dr Powell said Brisbane’s vacancy rate had nudged slightly higher compared with last year.

Median asking rent – Houses

Region	June-20	March-20	June-19	Quarterly Change	Annual Change
Lockyer Valley	\$320	\$320	\$320	0.0%	0.0%
Somerset	\$320	\$320	\$320	0.0%	0.0%
Ipswich	\$345	\$345	\$345	0.0%	0.0%
Logan	\$365	\$370	\$370	-1.4%	-1.4%
Scenic Rim	\$380	\$375	\$375	1.3%	1.3%
Moreton Bay	\$395	\$400	\$395	-1.3%	0.0%
Redland	\$445	\$445	\$450	-1.1%	-1.1%
Brisbane	\$460	\$470	\$455	-2.1%	1.1%
Sunshine Coast	\$500	\$500	\$500	0.0%	0.0%
Gold Coast	\$520	\$520	\$510	0.0%	2.0%

Source: Domain Rental Report, June quarter 2020

The Gold Coast proved to be a two-speed market: house rents remained at a high of \$520 a week –the most expensive place to rent—but unit rents took a 3.4 per cent hit.

Dr Powell said apartment rents had recorded their first annual fall since 2013, adding Gold Coast unit prices were “more likely to be exposed to a drop in international tourism”.

Andrew Henderson, managing director at Professionals Mermaid Beach, said houses and three-bedroom apartments had been steady throughout the pandemic.

...that was mainly down to the fact that a lot of hospitality workers from overseas went home,” Mr Henderson said. Listings also surged when holiday lettings were shifted onto the permanent rental market.



Gold Coast house rents have held strong, while units rents have fallen due to the mass exodus of international visitors and hospitality workers. Photo: Signature Broadbeach

“That had a bit of a big impact, hence pricing came down. But we have seen that starting to bounce back with jobs coming back in hospitality and retail.”

Mr Henderson said furnished apartments were renting at a cheaper price than unfurnished equivalents, reflecting supply and demand.

Elsewhere, rents on the Sunshine Coast remain at record highs, with houses sitting steady at \$500 a week and units holding high at \$410 a week.

Rents for houses in Moreton Bay slipped by 1.3 per cent to \$395 a week, while Logan recorded a similar fall, bringing the median weekly rent down to \$365.

