

Monday, 12 July 2021

Committee Secretary  
Community Support and Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

Re: Submission regarding Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached the submission of PropertySafe Aust Pty Ltd (PropertySafe) in relation to the proposed Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021.

This submission has been made by PropertySafe with the full support and endorsement of our parent company, Home Trades Hub Australia (HTH) and has been co-signed by the HTH CEO, Garry Mulvey.

As an industry-leading expert in the field of home inspections in the Australian marketplace we feel well-positioned to offer credible and valuable opinions regarding the subject matter contained in the proposed bill. Our mission statement is "Protecting People & Property" and we are in full support of the proposed minimum housing standards you are considering legislating in respect of rental properties.

I have provided my contact details in the submission so if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me

Yours faithfully,



Rob Curtis  
General Manager  
PropertySafe Australia Pty Ltd

## Submission for

## Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Submitted by:



Rob Curtis  
General Manager

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



Garry Mulvay  
Chief Executive Officer

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Summary of Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. We commend the QLD Government for their commitment to addressing concerns relating to safety, affordability, and security in rental accommodation.

We strongly support the proposed insertion of the new schedule 5A - Prescribed Minimum Housing Standards. To ensure all Queensland rental properties are safe, secure, and functional we agree that it is vital to prescribe minimum housing standards and introduce compliance mechanisms that strengthen the ability of the appropriate bodies to enforce these standards.

Whilst we support the proposed recommendations, we feel that there are some additional minimum requirements that should be considered, and a clear compliance regime established to secure both the safety and well-being of tenants whilst providing clarity and certainty to landlords and the property management industry.

## Who we are and why we care

Home Trades Hub was established in August 2020 and is the result of two organisations, IAG and RACV, coming together to create a joint venture that enables the exceptional delivery of home services to its valued members and customers. That same year, in November PropertySafe was acquired.

PropertySafe is the leading residential property safety inspection group in Australia and NZ and has been in operation since 2014. Our mission statement is “Protecting People and Property”. We have completed more than 55,000 safety inspections for landlords. Our inspections cover 16 key risk areas, and we inspect in excess of 120 individual risk items that exist in most homes and rental properties.

As a result, we have unmatched data and insight into the impact and associated costs of safety issues in and around residential rental properties.

## Key inspection statistics

- 99.1% of all properties inspected had at least one safety issue
- 76.7% of properties had identified at least one **major** hazard

- 53.9% of properties had identified at least one moderate hazard
- 87.3% of properties had identified at least one minor hazard
- Average of 8.1 identified issues per property that could cause injury
- 6.9% of properties had issues with either the existence or location of smoke alarms, however over 40% of properties where a detailed smoke alarm inspection was carried out had urgent issues that needed addressing.

Some of the most common and avoidable issues detected include:

- Balcony, deck and balustrade structural / separation / rot issues are commonplace, especially in the QLD climate zones. Numerous injuries and deaths have been avoided with simple but skilled inspections and remediation work.
- Kitchen stoves and appliances not being correctly installed.
- Non-functioning safety switches are also common. This issue poses a high-risk if other conditions are present such as damaged / malfunctioning power points and exposed light sockets.
- Issues with significant high falls which may be due to window protectors not installed or used, climbable objects on balconies, outdated balustrades etc.

We remain particularly concerned with the following observations which we have made based on many years of inspections experience:

- Hidden risks - many of these life-threatening risks in properties remain undetected. The current system relies on tenants or property managers correctly identifying issues and risks and notifying the owner.
- Very rarely do property managers or landlords have the necessary skills to know what risks to look for or how all aspects of a property need to be maintained. It is unfair to burden them with responsibilities that they are not qualified to meet.
- Similarly, tenants often are not aware of the risks and dangers around their property and so do not report them.
- Identified risks not acted upon – we have seen numerous identified issues not acted upon in a timely fashion or indeed at all.

### **Our recommendation**

As per your proposed insertion of schedule 5A, we agree the minimum standards need to be legislated to ensure all properties meet a baseline level of safety. They must be mandatory in the legislation so that compliance with these standards can be enforced and penalties applied for those who do not comply.

We acknowledge that there may be an additional cost to landlords or property managers as a result of enacting this proposed legislation. However, in our experience, the cost of these repairs are minimal. Resolving the problem could range from totally rectifying the issue to informing the tenant to be careful. The important thing is transparency. Once all parties know about the risk in the property, steps can be taken to mitigate it. Identifying these risks can save lives and provide comfort and certainty to all key stakeholders in the rental property market.

In our opinion, to improve the current proposal there needs to be:

1. Some additional minimum standards established; and
2. a requirement for regular independent inspection of properties to ensure they meet these minimum standards; and
3. a mechanism to monitor compliance with these standards, penalties for non-compliance and powers given to the appropriate government departments to enforce these penalties.

We would recommend that the Government include the following additional compliance categories in the legislation as, in our experience, mitigating risk in these areas will greatly reduce the likelihood of avoidable injury:

Proposed - already in Schedule 5A	Additional Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weatherproof and structurally sound</li> <li>● Fixtures and fittings</li> <li>● Locks on windows and doors</li> <li>● Vermin, damp and mould</li> <li>● Privacy</li> <li>● Plumbing and drainage</li> <li>● Bathrooms and toilets</li> <li>● Kitchen</li> <li>● Laundry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Smoke alarm checks, as in our experience many fail the current regulations;</li> <li>● Minimise the risks associated with slips trips and falls;</li> <li>● Electrical safety associated with power points, light switches, and RCDs (safety switches)</li> <li>● Asbestos awareness</li> <li>● High window and balustrade fall risks</li> <li>● Gas supply safety</li> </ul>

In addition, the standards need to also include a requirement for these items to be checked on a semi-regular basis to ensure that any items addressed remain in a suitable state or working order.

It is within this final review and refinement of the QLD Rental Reforms process where PropertySafe believes it can assist in making a significant impact and truly delivering a safer environment to property occupiers and entrants.

We are keen to assist in any way to deliver meaningful change and to meet the growing expectation that everyone has a right to feel safe in their home.

To date, we know that our inspections have helped to save lives and reduce unnecessary injuries and as stated earlier this is our corporate mission.

We are here to assist the Government achieve their goals in this important area of society. We commend the QLD government in its actions and initiatives. In our opinion, much of the industry is already expecting and willing to embrace this change.