
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 July 2021 10:35 AM
To: Mark Bailey
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 Mark Bailey 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.

Apart from being a renter myself, I also work in community mental health, so I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you a snapshot of what it's like to rent in Queensland when you are a low-income earner with disabilities.

Working with individuals with complex mental health issues who are at risk of homelessness, I spend much of my week supporting clients to find safe, affordable accommodation that will aid them in their mental health recovery. The enormous lack of public housing has many individuals living on pensions looking in the private market. The rental market over the last many months has become an exceedingly difficult place to secure housing for these individuals. It used to be that receiving a Disability Support Pension would once make our clients viable contenders to secure a property. However, this seems to be no longer the case due to rent bidding and sudden hikes in rental costs. Recently, one of our clients attended a visit for a 2 bedroom accommodation in Logan and was turned away as 72 other potential renters were scheduled to view the same property in the viewing window.

Further, the current tenant protections as stated in the Bill make it all too easy for community members with disabilities to be TICA listed and evicted during times when they are unwell. My clients then often run into issues with being able to provide rental histories and references, making it even more difficult for them to obtain housing in future.

The result is that members of our community are left with a choice to seek temporary accommodation in poor regulated boarding houses, which often feel unsafe for them and frequently lead to them to be the victims of theft and violence in their homes. Alternatively, they often choose to remain homeless due to the inherent risks of living in the few accommodations that will accept them, such as boarding houses.

The current system is not working or welcoming for vulnerable individuals in our community, and penalises them for their disabilities. Ultimately, I see every day how these housing stressors exacerbate my clients mental health problems, make it more difficult for them to manage alcohol and drug issues, and disrupt their recovery.

In its current form, the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 will do little to improve the situation my clients are in as among the 1.8 million renters in Queensland. While this bill may be palatable to the real estate lobby, it completely disregards their and my own 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 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 large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.