
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 July 2021 2:14 PM
To: Noosa 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 Sandra Bolton 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 STORY

It's been a stressful time since COVID-19 hit us [REDACTED]. My partner and I and settled here a few years earlier for the lifestyle and community. It wasn't easy to adapt our work and skills to what was available on the coast, but it was just beginning to feel like we were getting somewhere. My partner was an English Language Teacher at [REDACTED] and I'd enrolled in a degree at [REDACTED]. But when COVID-19 arrived, the English school shut down and the entire language teaching industry crumbled overnight. After the work we'd done and thereby we'd invested to get there, it was really disappointing to see such a wonderful and diverse learning space close its doors. My partner decided to re-train and he enrolled in a Cert 4 at Tafe. Somehow, we managed to pay for his course, which was not cheap, thanks to the rise in Tafe fees which doesn't make any sense to me, while I studied and worked part-time. But then, in January, we got the news that our landlord had decided to sell her home. At 70 and with her health declining, she could no longer keep up with the demands of maintaining the property alone, and she was going to move on to something smaller. We had a great relationship with her, had been renting our cabin for 4 years on her land and it felt like home. Suddenly, we were faced with the prospect of homelessness. Rent prices had risen like crazy, we'd been paying \$325 a week for a nice cabin with a big garden and now there was nothing under \$400 available with no privacy. As two students, it felt like we didn't have a chance in hell of looking good enough on paper to be accepted as a tenant, despite a glowing reference from our current landlord. It was a scary and depressing time, and we really considered leaving the area, our studies, our friends and community because we couldn't see any other options. Then we were told we could possibly stay and be tenants to the new owners, but again felt fearful that the rent would go up and with barely any funds to spare that was a stressful idea. When the new owners took over, we found out that actually no, we couldn't stay, because their daughter wanted to move up from Byron Bay. While I understand this has been a time of lots of movement and re-adjusting for many people, the sense of housing insecurity that we've had to deal with has added a layer of stress to our lives that we just could've done without. While my partner re-trained, he was unemployed and adjusting to the idea of penetrative yet another new industry in our journey to thrive here [REDACTED]. At times, it's felt like it will never happen. Prior to covid-19, we were not far off being able to buy our own home in the hinterland, maybe in [REDACTED]. Now, we have pretty much given up hope of being home owners and have sought to solve our own problem. In January, we bought an old bus from Ipswich and have been renovating it with the intention of making it a tiny home. This was our best and only option for remaining on the Sunshine Coast as low income earners in a post covid-19 economy. And yet, the council regulations here don't make it easy for people to live in tiny homes. However, we have friends with land and will be moving into our bus home in August. I've been scared, exhausted, and financially stressed like never before during the housing crisis [REDACTED]. No-one deserves to go through this, and our story is gentle compared to other people I know in this region. Something must be done, otherwise the heart and soul of this region will be crushed.

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.