

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (Rent Freeze) Amendment Bill 2022

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I am writing to make a submission on the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Amendment Bill 2022 to discuss the impact on energy usage. The section that is of particular relevance is 82D which outlines caps on rental increases ongoingly.

- Capping rental increases after the 2-year rent freeze period at no greater than 2% every 2 years
- Setting rent for properties that have not been rented for over 12 months as the median rent for comparable properties in that postcode

The existing housing stock in Australia is only considered to be an average of a 1.7 stars on a NatHERS performance scale (see DELWP, "[Research Report on Energy Efficiency in Rental Properties](#)"). Whilst it is good news that new builds are going to be required to comply with 7 star ratings, this does nothing for the energy efficiency of existing houses. The Queensland government's Energy and Jobs Plan is to get to net zero by 2050 and thus will need to further consider the amount of energy wasted in our existing housing stock. At the Melbourne Energy Institute [forum on 14 July](#) this year it was stated that "no country in the world is trying to reach net zero without having policies directly addressing buildings' energy efficiency". Reinforcing the need for focus on housing, at the [Sustainable Innovation Forum](#) last year in Glasgow it was outlined by speaker, Briggs, that buildings represent 40% of the global carbon footprint.

Rental increase caps are required before any standards are implemented for upgrading existing housing stock's energy efficiency standards to protect renters from rental hikes. We already see how in the past year median rents have risen far higher than interest rate rises and inflation, and show that when unregulated, people's access to housing can be treated as a way to make money without consideration of the long-term environmental and social impacts. There was an article in [Science Direct](#) earlier this year that interviewed Victorian landlords and found they were more likely to implement energy efficiency standards when they understood the impact it had on the lives of their renters - a combination of improvements in [physical health](#) and [mental health](#) are important beyond bill savings that such retrofits can enable. Whilst an education campaign for landlords would also be beneficial, in the first instance protecting renters from retaliatory rent hikes is needed. Retro-fitting building envelopes will have a massive impact on the total energy emissions of Queensland and thus the cost of this needs to be shared across society. Protecting renters who have the most housing insecurity is the beginning step to lifting standards and creating energy efficient homes as the new norm.

I urge you to consider the stepping stone that rental increase capping could have on energy efficiency when discussing the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Amendment Bill 2022.