

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 9:49 PM
To: Aspley 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 Bart Mellish 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.

Firstly, for context I'd like to mention that I suffer from a serious, chronic health condition which makes it hard for me to work consistently and also requires a lot of rest to manage. The experience of being forced to move numerous times during bouts of especially poor health has been very stressful and has caused significant worsening of my chronic illness at times.

Now onto some of our renting experiences. We've lived in 4 properties between January 2019 and September 2020, we've been forced to move from 2 of them because the owner had decided to sell, once during the pandemic last year.

The property we're currently living in was also for sale when we applied to rent it, this fact was intentionally hidden from us, but we researched the property online and found it was for sale. We asked for a guarantee from the owners they would not continue to sell the property if we agreed to sign the lease, they said if we signed the lease they would not sell. Two weeks after we moved in the agent rang to tell us the owners are putting the property back on the market. We objected and they didn't sell at that time, they waited until just after the point where we could break the lease without penalty and put the property back on the market. The property was sold, but fortunately to an investor and we didn't have to move again. That's 3 properties in 2 years that've been sold when we've been living in them - had it sold to an owner occupier we would've lived in 5 PROPERTIES in under 2 years! I'd just like to emphasise the owners never intended not to sell, they contacted us in under 2 weeks of us moving in to tell us they planned to sell. They only agreed not to at that time because they knew we'd be able to break our lease without penalty, which would deprive them of rental income while they waited for the property to sell. Like many renters, we're always anxious now that we could lose our home at any time.

At the last property we rented the lease agreement required that we get electricity connected in our names directly from the supplier. We moved in and tried to get the energy connected, it seemed to be sorted out, but when we got our first bill we realised the owner had insisted on keeping the electricity in their name to maximise any savings / rebates they could get from the solar panels. This was in breach of the lease but we accepted it (fighting these things is usually not worth it). However the owner then tried to force us to pay late payment fees on their electricity bills at this property (they hadn't even paid the bills late, they just wanted us to pay the fees that would have applied had they paid the bill late so they could get extra income) the owner also tried to claim the \$200 COVID electricity assistance payment all households in Queensland received. Fighting not to pay these fees was so much harder than it should've been, I was really shocked by how vulnerable we were to a dishonest owner and agent working together, we had practically no leverage to be treated fairly.

At this same property we also had a lot of issues getting repairs completed, the dishwasher broke and wasn't repaired for months (while we continued to pay full rent) - the owner used the excuse that she worked and had to wait for her holidays to deal with it. The roof leaked when it rained but that was never repaired despite us notifying the owner numerous times.

When we moved out (due to the owner deciding to sell) the owner also suggested some pre-existing damage must've been done by us. Luckily we took extensive photos when we moved in and could prove we weren't responsible. I think this was an attempt to get free repairs to increase the sale price.

Just recently, before our current property sold we were told we had to sign a lease within a day or 2 or the new owners would back out. We signed the lease in a hurry, fearing we could lose our home again. Then a few months later we got a bill for water, we'd never received a water bill before. Turns out the agent had amended the lease without telling us (while also putting a lot of pressure of us to sign immediately). They had changed the lease so that the owner only had to pay for 'reasonable water use' because the place isn't water efficient. They've defined 'reasonable' as 50% of average for a household in our area with the number of occupants we have. I have no doubt the agent changed the lease and put time pressure on us so wouldn't notice the change, in an effort to minimise costs to the owners and maximise expenses to us and not give us a chance to object.

I'd also like to point out we have been absolutely stellar tenants for years, we've had our full bond refunded from every property we've rented, we have never missed a single rent payment. It's so frustrating to do everything you can to do the right thing and then have your home taken away at the drop of a hat, with 0 concern for our circumstances or the hardship it will cause us. When you're a part of this system to realise very quickly that it's designed to maximise the profits of property owners and the rights of the humans who happen to rent are barely an after thought.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.