

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 3 July 2021 10:59 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.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to share something with you: a snapshot of what it's like to rent in Queensland.

One of my friends moved here from Japan on a working holiday visa in 2019. She found a place to rent a room in South Brisbane that was reasonably priced for the location, however once COVID hit, her landlord tried to strongarm her into prematurely re-upping her lease despite the fact that she lost both her jobs due to the pandemic. She told the landlord about her situation as soon as she understood the severity, and told them with 2 weeks' notice that she would need to move out to do farm work much earlier than anticipated, but because she was Asian, the landlord made it clear to her that they believed her to be a wealthy international student, and wouldn't accept her story/wouldn't believe her when she told them she was actually a 27 year old ex-teacher who wasn't studying anything and was living off her own savings. They wouldn't permit her to leave her tenancy, and they wouldn't accept that she was unable to pay rent, so after working hard to find potential tenants to replace her (during the beginning of Australia's COVID lockdown), my friend was forced to 'leave town', as they left her with no choice (as she wasn't eligible for any government assistance, being on a working holiday visa). After this, because of some cultural differences, she was terrified of returning to Brisbane because her landlord/real estate had been so angry with her, she thought that they had reported her to the police.

From my own experience - a house I rented with a friend of mine a few years ago was supposed to be air conditioned, but when we moved in, there was no remote for the air con, nor any other way to turn it on. We had a pet at the property that was getting sick during the hot weather because the house was so poorly insulated, so we brought this to the attention of the real estate straight away, and then followed up with them about once a week for months - finally, we got the answer that they had been in negotiations with the owner for months about who should be responsible (i.e., the real estate or the landlord) for paying for the replacement remote (RRP \$30), so in the end I paid for a remote myself and replaced it. At my last property, where I lived alone, I asked the real estate whether the landlord would be open to installing air con after 2 years of living there with none, and for a quote for how much that would increase my rent - I told them that I wanted to weigh my options up, because if my rent was going to be increased too much, I would prefer to pay for the installation myself and keep my rent reasonable. They responded by sending me a new lease which pushed my renewal forward 2 months, despite my already signing a lease that ran through until the beginning of the following year, that raised my rent by \$35/week, but only on a 6 month contract (so there was no assurance that the rent would not be increased even further beyond this date). When I asked questions about this, the real estate were combative; they wouldn't give me straight answers, sometimes they'd ignore questions altogether, they then placed a deadline on my signing the new agreement, and when I asked about this, they moved the deadline forward by 2 weeks. During this experience, I lost all confidence in the real estate and decided to move out rather than re-up any lease - something I wasn't planning on doing for years, because I loved the property and the location.

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.