

Community Support and Services Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 3 July 2021 11:04 AM
To: Southport 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 Robert Molhoek 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.

Real estates use their power to manipulate tenants.

In my last rental, the property manager claimed to have physically delivered a water bill to us. We never received it, and because it wasn't an email, we couldn't prove otherwise. When we didn't pay this bill (the one we never received), the on-site property manager turned off our water supply. They claimed that the Gold Coast city council had turned our water off and that they would have to contact them once the bill was paid. They demanded that we pay the money before they did anything about putting our water back on (a mere \$130 that we would have paid immediately if we had the bill - like we usually do). We have two children, and this was during the pandemic in 2020. I needed to call the council to confirm they were lying, and then the Rental Authority to confirm they were in breach of their contract for quiet enjoyment (but was told it could take TWO WEEKS before mediation could start). I called the local police to see if they would ask the property manager to turn the water on and was told it was a civil matter. Basically, we were manipulated into paying the bill (that we never received) on that day so that our family could have water, and had no authority to turn to in order to have a simple manipulation squashed.

Needless to say, we moved at the end of that lease. It cost us money we couldn't afford to spend. At the new rental, everything was fine until we were chased and threatened for a bill we had already paid (another water bill - issued in April, paid in April, the chased and threatened about it in June). We provided the proof and they left us alone, until the following week when we received a threatening email: clean these things we noticed at the inspection (held 3 weeks prior!) or else we will send you a breach notice! The items to be cleaned were ridiculous - "water marks on the shower screen", "bug debris on the outside awning", "various items in the yard to be tidied". I pointed out that it was unreasonable, vague and inappropriately timed (being 3 weeks later). They told us we need to fix it within a week and send them photos, or else the breach would be recorded. Again, the power difference allow them to manipulate us into doing what they wanted, whether it was completely reasonable or not.

These are only 2 of our stories - it's so common. It makes us uncomfortable and leaves us feeling powerless (which isn't fair - we pay our rent and bills on time, we keep the properties we rent in excellent condition while living family life in them, yet this never seems to matter).

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.