
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 4 July 2021 5:42 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.

In 2011, I moved from the ACT to Brisbane and entered a 6 month tenancy agreement for a 4 bedroom property at Norman Park, Brisbane at a rent of \$1,100 per week. I was a single woman aged 49 with two small dogs. I had a new appointment as Special Counsel (lawyer) at a national law firm. The job was demanding and I wanted a nice place to live with my two little dogs whilst I settled into work and a new city. I have nice possessions and value quality, and look after other people's property like my own.

Despite paying an executive rent for this inner city small house and being a gold class tenant (big income, paid my rent on time, looked after the property like it was my own), the problems began the day I collected the keys for the property.

Despite contracting for two sets of keys to be provided (one to remain with a friend nearby in case I lost my own set), the female landlord and her agent initially were only prepared to give me one set as they thought I was "shacking-up" with my lawyer girlfriend in a lesbian relationship. It was by threatening a QCAT application, did the agent reluctantly handover a second set.

Despite the property having 4 bedrooms, the tenancy agreement provided that I only was allowed to live in the house.

Within weeks, the upstairs bath/shower (adjacent to my bedroom) began to have drainage issues. There were problems with ant infestations; no action was taken. I reasonably asked for a deadlock to be applied to the internal garage door for my safety; this was refused. The owner wouldn't pay for a plumber to attend. She and her agent attended to try self-help remedies to unblock the drain. By this stage, I had become so distrustful of them, I had to engage an investigator to act as my agent and be present at the property whenever they attended. I was concerned that they would let my little dogs out of the property and they would get killed on the busy road immediately in front of the property. My intuition about this pair was spot-on. The drain problem just became worse.

I ended up filing a QCAT application, the first of two. The application and detailed affidavit took up many hours of my time and caused me a lot of stress whilst I was recovering from an illness I had experienced in the ACT and holding down a big job. I had to take a day off work for the hearing and my agent attended the hearing with me. The QCAT Member was scathing of the owner and agent expecting me as a tenant in an executive property to stick a wire coat hanger down the drain to unblock it.

Notwithstanding that battle, the problems with this pair ensued. I ended up placing security monitoring devices around the property as I was concerned that they would visit when I wasn't home.

I would have liked more time to find a new home but in the end, I had to get out of the property for my mental health by the end of the 6 month lease. I looked at 4 properties and bought one of them.

Despite fastidiously cleaning the property at the end of the lease (I had moved all of my furniture out weeks before), this pair looked for any scintilla of evidence that the house was not properly cleaned (i.e. a stray hair, a water streak from mopping on a polished timber floor) and I ended up filing another QCAT application to obtain the release of my 6 week bond of \$6600.

The lawyers I worked with could not believe what I was experiencing.

This woman and her agent took a large toll on my health. In fact, I recall that I annexed medical evidence as to the effect the stress of this dispute was having on my health to my QCAT application.

I know from friends who have rented that my story is not uncommon.

If I ever have to rent again, I will live in a caravan on the side of the road with my two dogs.

I understand that there is some data base in which landlords can report tenants who owe rent etc. There should be a data base in which tenants can report the conduct of landlords so other tenants are on notice.

I was a educated lawyer with a large income fighting this landlord. How do low income people deal with bad landlords?

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,

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