
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 July 2021 2:34 PM
To: Toowoomba North 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 Trevor Watts 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.

While renting in Brisbane share houses I had many unpleasant experiences with landlords and real estate agencies. As well as the run-of-the-mill experiences of tardy responses (unless money was involved), constantly changing rental managers who had no idea what was happening with the property and exorbitant rent for sub-par housing, a few particular instances come to mind.

While renting in Annerley the ceiling in my bedroom (and other rooms in the house) leaked badly whenever it rained for nine months after a bad summer hail storm. I informed the real estate but they did nothing until a chance encounter with the landlord got the ball rolling. After this the rental agency even tried to insinuate it was our fault for not notifying them of the seriousness of the issue (which of course we had). The builders said it was a miracle the ceiling hadn't fallen through, likely due to it being of old-fashioned horse-hair construction. Therefore it is also quite miraculous that I was not injured while sleeping, and it was only due to my protection of my valuable possessions that they were not damaged. After the hail storm my housemates and I were left to clear up the property ourselves, and found glass everywhere for months. This property (a raised Queenslander) also had a tiny apartment built underneath that I believe was not entirely above board, and which we later realised we were covering some of the bills (water/gas) for. At this property the rental agency removed the incorrect amount of rent from my account for about 6 months, after an increase in rent. If I had been sending the incorrect amount I would have accepted this as my fault, however it was the rental agency removing the incorrect account for months that they then tried to insinuate was my mistake. I paid the difference, but didn't appreciate that I was made out to be the villain.

Some time later a change in circumstances resulted in my renting a room in another less-than-above-board share house in Highgate Hill. I was charged \$200 a week rent in a house with six rooms (and one bathroom), which I now know means the house should have been classified as a boarding house. The rent was to be paid in cash and in-person to the owner at his restaurant. Needless to say I only remained in those accommodations until I could find a better situation.

The "better situation" turned out to be a spacious, leafy house in the suburbs of Bulimba. I lived in this house for 3, going on 4, years. Despite some issues I remained in this house for that long because of the reasonable rent and the leafy backyard, which I had missed since moving to Brisbane. My main issues with this house were the other inhabitants, so I shall not list those events here. However around the middle of last year (2020), during the Covid-19 pandemic, the owners sold the property without informing us it was on the market, which again, I now know is not legal. During this process while I was considering my options I also discovered that it was unacceptable that the landlords had never written up a lease for us. A lease could have potentially avoided some of the aforementioned issues with housemates. We lost a housemate just before the onset of the pandemic, and obviously it was difficult

to replace them during once Covid started. The landlords "generously" subtracted the missing persons rent for a couple of months before upping it again, pleading that they were retired and needed the income. When they sold the place (for just under \$2mil) we discovered that they had multiple rental properties and plenty of income, certainly more than myself and my other housemates had (mostly students). You may not be aware, but share houses tend to accumulate a lot of abandoned items, so the garage and under the house were full of old furniture, mattresses and rubbish from people that had moved on. The landlord came to inspect (never with the required notification and forewarning) after the house had been sold (the new buyers bought without viewing, we believe for the land value), and verbally abused my remaining housemate about the accumulated items, even though that housemate had been there the shortest amount of time and was the most self-contained of any in the house. He claimed that skip bins were expensive (after just pocketing well over \$1mil) and that it should have been up to us to clean up for the new owners. Again, I feel this situation could have been avoided if the owners had implemented a lease and made ex-tenants responsible for their own mess.

During the last 6 months of living at this property, my partner had moved in with me and we adopted two dogs. Trying to find a decent rental property at such short notice and with our new puppies turned out to be impossible. Everything within our price range that allowed pets was, quite frankly, appalling. The prices being charged for properties with holes in the ceilings and floors, exposed plumbing and wiring, in filthy condition and in terrible locations, was unbelievable. All that and it always turned out that "pets allowed" meant cats and toy dogs. I could not understand the reasoning of this, as the only reason that could have tempted me to live in these places would have been if they were truly dog friendly. There isn't much that even a large rough dog could have done to make these places worse. Conversely at a slightly higher rate of rent there were more "pet friendly" rentals available, though again this turned out to mainly mean cats and small dog breeds. These properties would have been well above 30% of our shared income, and we decided that with no time to find housemates to share with, we could not afford to continue renting in Brisbane, and moved back to Toowoomba (where I am from originally), and where we still reside. We were lucky, as my parents had an unoccupied granny flat that we moved into. It seems slightly ridiculous to me that upending our lives and moving places of work, etc, was a more viable option than moving somewhere close by. We were fortunate enough to have somewhere to go, but I can't help but consider us lucky and worry about others in similar circumstances who may have to accept unhealthy living conditions or have no where to go.

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,

[Redacted signature]