
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 July 2021 2:37 PM
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.

My most recent experience as a renter has been a nightmare. My housemates and I were made to feel worthless, exploited and degraded.

When we first inspected the property, large parts of the building were still being renovated. We agreed to lease the property on the condition that this work be carried out at reasonable hours and would be completed within three months. This did not happen; the builders did almost no work in the agreed first three months but then proceeded to come to our home unannounced and disturb us with no notice on dozens of random days throughout the next 15 months. They would show up unannounced (sometimes during Brisbane-wide lockdowns), use loud machinery while we were trying to work from home and would also smoke in our home. When we confronted the landlord and real estate agent about this, we were assured it would not happen again, but it kept occurring.

Our landlord and real estate were extremely unwilling to carry out vital repairs in an acceptable timeframe. The damaged balcony and auto-locking balcony door (leaving a person stranded on the balcony and locked outside) was a safety hazard (especially in the case of a fire) which we reported immediately. The door was not fixed for over two months and the balcony was not fixed for over a year.

A sink that was not installed properly by the landlord's builders (as confirmed by an independent plumber) broke and we were blamed for this. It was not repaired for months and we were told to just use our kitchen sink instead.

A major plumbing leak that we reported was not fixed for over six months, despite us giving multiple reminders and emphasising urgency as the leak was wasting absurd amounts of water. We made it clear that due to the lack of a timely repair we would not pay for the excess water consumption (over the 15kL threshold) for the relevant periods, but the real estate and landlord still tried to make us pay for these and accused us of lying about notifying them (even though we had records proving otherwise). We also noted that in periods before the leak our water usage was far less than the 15kL threshold (it was about 8kL) but the landlord and real estate still insisted we pay for the water.

When our lease ended, the landlord and real estate agent made absurd claims about the state of the property and tried to withhold our bond. They said we had to pay for damages such as 'chips in the wall', even though we had photos of all these damages from our inspection before we leased the property and noted them on the entry condition report, meaning they were not caused by us. These are just of the many issues we had in this lease.

This was an extremely stressful time for me and my housemates and I began to have suicidal thoughts. I am now terrified to ever rent again and I currently live with family (despite a history of domestic violence from nearby extended family) or by crashing at friends' places.

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]