
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 July 2021 6:45 AM
To: Jordan 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 Charis Mullen 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 name is [REDACTED]. I am a full-time Mum, a casual worker, and a part-time student. My family have now lived in 5 houses since my son was born, he has just turned three. In our last rental, despite improving the property, we were pushed out. This is going to take a while.

Our last address was [REDACTED]. When applying for a year lease on this property, the tenants were still living there, so when we did our walk-around before applying you take into consideration that it'll be cleaner when the bond clean has happened. Upon moving in I had to pay for the carpets to be cleaned as the property was filthy. Used band-aid stuck to windows, old piercing jewellery in the carpet, cockroaches scattering around, cigarette butts in the window sill, the smell of stale smoke filled the empty house. The real estate ignored all mentions, emails and calls, about the state the property was handed to us in. The entry-condition report took me a few days to get together as everything according to the real estate was clean and working. Despite this, this is what we could afford, so we spent many hours and money scrubbing this house, fixing the backyard, and making it livable for our son who had only just started walking.

We have a perfect rental history, never late on rent, always received our full bond payment back.

On renewal, rent was increased and we signed for another year. Five (5) days after our new lease commenced we had our quarterly inspection and were advised they'd be bringing through another agent to do a valuation on the property. When I asked if that meant the owner's were selling, I was told they couldn't advise anything yet. I expressed to them that my only concern was my son had a febrile convulsion in February due to high fever so I am weary about open homes as we've had to be particularly careful with him during the pandemic. I'd seen my son turn blue in an ambulance once in our lives, and I do everything possible to ensure he is never in that position again. I was told "not to worry".

A few weeks later we received the form to say the property was being put up for sale. They wanted to bring people through a few times a week, and have open homes every Saturday.

This is a huge interruption to anyone's week.

My biggest concern though was my son's health and limiting his exposure to many people in his safe environment. Virtual inspections were out of the question apparently. When I spoke with the selling agent saying we'd agree to how many times they wanted access to our home (as we'd like to help in making it a fast sale so this wouldn't continue to interrupt our already busy weeks) but I'd like to ask that everyone entering wear a mask and sanitize

their hands. A request I still feel is perfectly acceptable during a world wide pandemic. I was told by this extremely rude selling agent that she "doesn't believe in this COVID-19 propoganda and won't be making anyone do that unless she is required to by law", she was "done with this conversation as I'm extremely busy. We'll contact you to arrange a time to take photos of the property"

This all took place during a rental crisis in our area and Australia-wide. This conversation left me in tears. I felt hopeless in being able to protect my son.

I called the RTA and was thankfully advised on the law that allowed us to get out of our lease as the owner had put the property up for sale without advising us when we resigned a new lease. We could move out within 8 weeks of a new lease being signed if the owners had failed to advise on signing. We now had weeks to find a new rental home or be stuck in a lease that was now a health risk to our son. We donned our masks and went to every open we could get to, mostly travelling at least 50km from where we currently lived as this is now where we could afford in the middle of a rental crisis. The property's we saw were disgusting in some cases, tiny in others, and unliveable in most cases. We spent so much time and money in these few weeks trying to find a living solution for our family that our savings was again hit hard. It's expensive being poor.

The amount of people at each inspection was like nothing I'd seen before. Their stories of how many applications, how long they'd been looking, the quality and price of what we were looking at honestly kept me up at night with stress.

We thankfully found a nice home and were accepted within the time frame we had. My partner's commute has increased from 10 minute drive to a 50 minute drive each way. Our utilities have increased as our last lease had gas and electricity included in the weekly rent as they hadn't put seperate metres on the split residence (one home, we rented upstairs, another family downstairs - something not clear in the advertisement by the way). So we now pay the same amount in rent as our last place, but also pay all utilities, and have an almost 2 hour commute compared to 10 minutes in our last place.

I'd like to hang some family photos on our walls and make it more homely, but I've honestly been hesitant to request permission from our new landlords as we'd like to lay low, be perfect tenants, just so we have a chance at staying somewhere for a couple of years. Our son needs that stability. And moving is an incredibly expensive and exhausting exercise to keep undertaking.

We wish it was easy to save for a deposit for a home of our own, but living expenses and rental increases don't leave a lot left over.

Rental reforms are needed. So many people will be life-long renters without even the basic rights to live how you choose to live. My son asks to pat every puppy/dog he sees. I can't even imagine a position where I could allow him a pet, it puts you in too vulnerable a position going for that next lease. I'm a grown woman scared to ask to put some family photos on the wall of a home she pays to live in.

Do you know what it feels like to have any security stripped from you? To feel what it is like to be a parent and know you can't choose schools or get your child on waiting lists because you don't know where your address will be next year? To be scared to live, but have to put on a happy face so that fear isn't picked up by your child? Renters need our basic rights to be law. There needs to be some hope for those of us who will never own their own home. We just need to feel like the money we pay weekly grants us a home, and a chance to feel at home.

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.