
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 July 2021 10:12 AM
To: McConnel 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 Grace Grace 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.

I spent a few years renting around the Teneriffe area, and have now moved to Herston. In this time, I've been through three rental properties, and have never had a positive experience. In my first rental, we were paying well above market rent but had no other options as students who had just started renting, and were later forced to pay for multiple bond cleaners that went well beyond the scope of what is reasonably required - which is a very small issue compared to what went on in later properties.

In a property on [REDACTED], We lived for two years with an enormous hole in the ceiling caused by the apartment flooding. We asked the agent/landlord to fix the ceiling at least 8 times over the course of multiple years, and would constantly be told that repairs were being organised, only for nothing to happen. Upon termination of the lease, the agent demanded we pay huge amounts out of our bond for ridiculous things. I have a cat, and despite the property being incredibly well looked after, the moisture present in the broken ceiling caused a very mouldy smell. Our agent maintained there was a "strong smell of cat urine" and made me pay for an extremely expensive deodoriser. When I went to inspect the property with the agent, she said that she could smell cat urine, and refused to accept that it was the ceiling causing the issue. I later found out from a painter who mistakenly called me instead of the agent upon my vacation of the premises and informed me that the hole in the ceiling contained black mould which had likely been there for a long time. Suddenly, the agent hugely dropped the case against us for bond repayments. We knew we had a right to go to the RTA over the lack of maintenance, but we desperately needed a new place to live and feared jeopardising our chances by engaging in a long drawn-out process which we didn't have the time to commit to. Additionally, this agency only put one person on the lease and adamantly refused to add more - which meant my old housemate was able to move out with absolutely no consequences and leave me to pay rent and find a new housemate myself with absolutely no assistance from the landlord. I've dealt with the RTA previously, and while they're well intentioned, they're so limited in what they are able to do for renters without dragging them through a long mediation process where the landlord has a huge imbalance of power - they control the place you live. Finally, the fact that I had a cat was held over my head and used to justify me paying for all kinds of unreasonable repairs, despite the fact my very small indoor cat had really done nothing at all to the property. Historic damage was blamed on my pet and since the agents were "not able to locate" the entry report, I wasn't able to demonstrate this as untrue. I am now lucky to have a house in Herston, however the unprompted painting that is now being completed makes us fear that our new landlord is planning to sell. We have a fixed term lease, but are desperately hoping that the new owners will also want renters in their home. If not, I will need to look for a new house with my cat - which makes finding a rental in an incredibly saturated market much harder. I would never give up my pet, so I'm facing paying far more than market value to secure myself a place to live if I am evicted at the end of my lease.

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.

Thank you for reading about my concerns - I truly hope that some of what I have said can be taken onboard, as the number of renters is only going to increase over time and we are so incredibly vulnerable to the whims of property owners.

I look forward to a response on your position on what could be done to help me and the many other renters in my situation.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.