

## **Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024**

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# Submission to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Proposed and presented by University of Queensland Union  
Vice-President Student Rights, Jordy Duffey  
April 2024

Committee Secretary  
Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Committee Members,

The UQ Union and UQ Union Student Rights Collective welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission in support of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. We recognise that the housing crisis has continued to impact many people in Queensland especially students in consideration to their rights to accessing affordable and safe accommodation and believe that rental reform within Queensland to better recognise renters rights is well and truly necessary.

### **Introduction:**

The UQ Union is an independent organisation that is the peak representative and advocacy body for over 55,000 students who attend the University of Queensland run by students, for students. The UQ Union believes that every university student deserves access to the support they need to thrive, not just academically, but also socially and mentally and as part this, works towards ensuring that student voice is heard on all university and government matters.

The UQ Union Student Rights Collective is a collective that is part of the UQ Union and is committee to the advocacy and activism of UQ students centred around education and welfare issues that are important to university students and their experiences to accessing education, this includes addressing matters relating to housing and rental rights for students and how these continue to impact students experience from accessing their education.

### **Why we support this bill:**

As part of our advocacy in addressing rental rights and housing affordability and how it is impacting students, we conducted a cost of living survey with over 875 responses with **61% of respondents highlighting that housing and rent were the number one contributor to their cost-of-living pressures based on their current experiences.** This highlights the need to address growing concerns towards affordable and safe accommodation being available for students and

the overarching issue of housing affordability and rental rights in consideration to the experiences that students have had towards the ongoing housing crisis.

We support the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 and see the many benefits the bill covers for students in consideration to the issues it focuses on for rental reform especially:

- 1. Improving the rental bond process by ensuring bond refunds are fair and transparent and claims against the rental bond are genuine and substantiated;**
- 2. Easing cost of living pressures for renters by protecting renters from unreasonable fees and charges, including reletting costs and rent payment methods that attract costs other than bank and other account fees usually payable for transactions;**
- 3. Help to stabilise the private rental market by applying the annual limit for rent increases to the rental property not the tenancy, and banning all forms of rent bidding;**
- 4. balance renters' right to privacy with property owners' right to information by extending entry notice periods and appropriate handling and disposal of renters' information**
- 5. support renters and property owners to agree to changes that can be made to the rental property to meet occupants changing needs;**
- 6. Progressing reforms under National Cabinet's A Better Deal for Renters (ABDR)**

These are all significant issues that we believe will focus and strengthen the rights of renters in particular students and help somewhat alleviate the financial stress associated with housing and rent that has continued to impact many during the cost of living crisis. Arguably, we have seen the disproportionate impact that issues such as rental bidding, lack of affordable housing and the associated costs of moving that have continued to disadvantage students as they experience financial stress with cost of living. These costs and issues have continued to create a significant financial burden to students as they continue to be forced to choose between their education and working to be able to afford paying their rent or to even be given the chance and opportunity to be able to have a fair consideration in their rental applications with the current housing crisis. These reforms are desperately needed to strengthen the rental rights of students.

### **Key Recommendations:**

In consideration to the issues that are addressed within the bill itself, we believe that there are several issues that it does not address that need to be considered regarding rental reform and renters rights. These issues include:

- 1. Ending no-cause evictions;**
- 2. Limiting annual rent increases to the level of the Consumer Price Index (adopted in the ACT); and**
- 3. Ensuring that the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act applies to on-campus student accommodation.**

These are key recommendations that we believe need to be included in the proposed changes towards rental reform as we believe they will provide greater security and protection for renters. It is important within the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act that it does not also exclude students who are currently living on-campus student accommodation – just as they may pay a weekly rent to live in their accommodation, they should be afforded the same rights as any renters. We welcome the inclusion that if a bond payment has been made that this is covered under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act, however, are still concerned about the experiences of students and their rights within on-campus student accommodation if any issues do occur.

Arguably, we believe all students deserve to have safe, secure, and affordable places to call home. This includes ensuring that there is an end to no-cause evictions which should be included as part of the rental reforms. There have been instances, where students have been in unsafe and unhealthy accommodation but have not raised concerns about this because of potential risks of possible evictions. Ensuring that no-cause evictions are ruled out within the act, will ensure a safer environment where the rights of the renters can be heard and further recognised.

Finally, cost of living and housing affordability continue to be ongoing issues impacting many Queenslanders especially students. We need to ensure that there is a limit on the annual rent increases to the level of the Consumer Price Index (similar to what has been adopted in the ACT) as the continuing increase of rents, continues to create further barriers for students to access affordable and safe accommodation. Therefore it is imperative that this bill considers this and the other recommendations in addition to what has already been proposed to ensure the strengthening of renters rights. We believe that the implementation of the proposed changes as well as the ones that have been proposed will help to ensure renters, especially students, will have access to safer and more secure and affordable housing.

**Conclusion:**

We thank the Queensland Parliament for this opportunity to provide feedback on the bill and look forward to seeing this bill progress to Parliament with the aim of improving rental rights for renters. In our view, the bill address many of the issues that need to be addressed in consideration to rental reform and the rights of renters and this is necessary reform that needs to happen.

Yours sincerely,

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