

I have been renting housing for exactly half my age, as I signed my first lease at the age of 17. Coming from a bad home in rural NSW, I envisioned my new dwelling as liberation and freedom and the chance to put roots down and make something for myself.

After all these years, I am jaded. Due to my age at first I found it very hard to find rentals. I have an immaculate rental history and have had every bond refunded in full. I have had creepy landlords who went through my bins, real estates who try and swindle your bond even after returning the keys, mold has become a family member I have learnt to live with. My taps always have tricks, my windows often painted shut, my roofing leaking and without insulation. I have paid my current landlord close to \$100 000 for these "quirks."

There is a trauma that comes with renting. I have a constant fear that at any point my real estate will evict me. Will this urgent repair be the one that tips me over in to being a problem tenant? Will the rent increase that \$50 too much that forces me out? Will I even find a place? I have been on the brink of homelessness for 17 years. There is one pay cheque between myself and streets- and I worked hard and I have a good job and I raised my daughter as a single parent in the inner west of Sydney. I have clawed myself in to a stability that the rental market thrashes at constantly. I know I will never be able to buy housing in Sydney due to having had to enter the rental market at such a young age.

Currently, I have a nice landlord. I pay as much as I possibly can afford for rent to get a "good enough" property. Do they maintain it? No. Am I scared to make waves? Yes. The rental crisis has me on the edge of my seat and come the end of the year, I have no idea what I will do. I could be evicted as the rental increase may not be worth what they could re-market the property for. My daughter is starting high school and I simply cannot afford the rent in our area in a new property. I watch domain twice a week- a habit I learnt at a young age to graph the increases and see an affordable area. At this point it only fills me with dread.

Something needs to be changed. The rent needs to be capped and the real estate market needs to be strictly regulated. Tenants should not spend hours trading tips and tricks to get their applications seen. Tenants should have peace of mind they have access to safe, secure, insulated, affordable and maintained properties. People are losing their lives and their livelihoods due to the mess of the NSW rental market.