

Subject: Submission in Support of Laws Improving Renters' Rights in New South Wales

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to express my strong support for legislative reforms that enhance the lives of renters in New South Wales. As a resident of NSW and a renter myself, as well as someone who has previously been a property owner, I believe it is crucial to ensure the fair treatment of renters and the protection of their rights. In this submission, I would like to address several key areas that require immediate attention.

1. Protection of Personal Information:

One of the pressing concerns for renters is the excessive requirement of personal information, such as bank statements, during the rental application process. This practice raises serious privacy concerns and can lead to potential misuse of sensitive data and increases renter exposure to data hacks. I urge the New South Wales government to enact laws that limit the amount of personal information landlords can request and ensure that any collected data is deleted within 30 days of the application decision. The 3rd party applications used to collect data should be restricted from using this information for their own purposes, as well — it should only be shared between landlord and tenant. This will safeguard renters' privacy and prevent any unnecessary invasion of their personal lives. And there should be significant penalties on landlords, property agents, and/or 3rd party services for violating such laws, with clear delineation of responsibility.

2. Flexibility in Personalizing Rentals:

Renters should have the freedom to personalize their rented accommodations without facing unnecessary hurdles. It is essential to allow tenants the right to hang paintings, install shelving units, and make minor modifications that do not fundamentally alter the structure or integrity of the property. I have asked 3 separate landlords if I could hang lightweight framed pieces of my own personal art, and only one has ever granted me that permission. I can't even enjoy the benefit of seeing my own artwork on the wall in the place I call my home, and it's not fair to say my only alternative for doing this is to buy a home. By granting this flexibility, the government can promote a sense of belonging and allow renters to create a comfortable living environment that aligns with their personal taste and style. It can also improve how much a renter takes care of their rental.

3. Non-usage of Inspection Photos for Advertising Purposes:

I once had a property agent use private photos of my bedroom from a property inspection in a public listing for the property a year later. I was never made aware of which photos specifically would be used. When I requested them to take it down, they

told me that it was their right to use the photos as they'd like. Indeed, some rental agreements I've seen have included predatory clauses that grant the property agent permission to use photos in this manner, and I've been told my only recourse is to not sign the lease. Renters often feel uncomfortable when their personal space is put on display without their consent. Photos taken during property inspections should never be utilized for advertising purposes without explicit permission from the tenants. This practice not only violates renters' privacy but can also compromise their security. It is crucial to establish regulations that strictly prohibit the use of inspection photos for advertising, reinforcing the trust and respect between landlords and tenants.

4. Limitations on Property Inspection Frequency and Preparation Requirements:

Frequent property inspections and stringent preparation requests can disrupt renters' daily lives and invade their privacy. To strike a balance between the needs of landlords and tenants, it is imperative to restrict property inspections to a maximum of once every six months, except in cases where there is reasonable cause for additional inspections. This limitation will provide renters with a sense of stability, allowing them to live without unnecessary interruptions and maintaining a healthy relationship with their landlords.

There must also be a restricted (and enforced) list of what a property agent can reasonably ask to be prepared for an inspection. I once had a property agent arrive for an inspection when I was not at home and then email me that, because I had not made the bed which made the inspection photos look untidy, I had failed the inspection and that they needed to do a second one. Things like an unmade bed have absolutely nothing to do with the purpose of a property inspection, yet when I reached out to Tenants Union they informed me that I had no recourse. Again, to provide renters with a sense of stability, there need to be strong restrictions of what a property inspection involves.

By implementing these proposed reforms, the New South Wales government will take significant strides towards improving the lives of renters. These measures will ensure that renters' privacy is respected, their individuality is recognized, and their right to a secure and stable home is protected.

I sincerely hope that you will consider my submission and take decisive action to address these vital issues. By enacting legislation that prioritizes the rights of renters, New South Wales will set an exemplary standard for tenant protection and create a more equitable and inclusive housing market.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I eagerly anticipate positive changes that will enhance the lives of renters throughout our beautiful state.