

Submission: Improving NSW Renting Laws

All renters need and deserve homes that are affordable, secure, safe, and feel like home. NSW renting laws should be reformed in order to make renting fair for the 1 in 3 people in NSW who rent our homes.

I am a renter in [REDACTED] Sydney. I have been a renter for the entirety of my adult life. I live in an apartment with my husband.

Ending unfair evictions

Renters need homes that are stable and secure. Renters deserve to live without fear of unfair 'no grounds' evictions from our homes.

All renters should be provided with a valid reason for ending a tenancy. Landlords should be required to provide a reason to end a rolling (periodic) lease, and a fixed term lease after the end date.

'The property will soon be sold' should not be added as a ground for eviction.

I have seen friends who have felt at home in their rentals only to be given 'no grounds' termination notices and have seen the impact on them this has had, including severely impacting their mental health.

As a renter, I have lived with the fear of being given a 'no grounds' termination notice and this fear is inhibitive to feeling safe and secure in housing. I have hesitated to ask for repairs and maintenance out of fear of retaliatory eviction or rent increases.

Keeping pets in rental homes

Renters need homes that feel like home. Renters should be allowed to make simple choices to make the houses we live in homes, including whether or not to keep pets.

Landlords should only be able to refuse a pet by obtaining a Tribunal order allowing them to do so. This is a model similar to those that apply in Victoria, the ACT and the NT.

NSW should go further and make sure people aren't penalised for applying for a property with a pet. This could be by providing a standard application form with only questions that are relevant.

I would love to have a pet but have never felt confident enough to adopt an animal due to the struggle of finding a pet-friendly rental. I've seen many people I know struggle with finding pet-friendly housing as well as some who have had to keep them without the landlord or agent knowing.

Rental affordability

Renters need homes that are affordable. Renters need to be able to afford to pay our rent without worrying that it will mean we go without other life essentials.

There should be fair limits on rent increases in NSW tenancy law.

Housing is an essential service. Having a secure, safe, affordable home is vital to ensure a decent life. There are other essential services – energy, health, education and more – where cost is regulated to ensure the service is accessible for everyone. Fair limits on rent increases and rent setting should apply in rental housing too.

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My partner and I have worried about receiving unreasonable rent increases for our entire tenancy. We received a rent increase, and it wasn't terrible but if it goes up every 12 months, it will add up over time to become untenable. That, or the landlord may decide to do an excessive rent increase next time. If we needed to re-enter the rental market in Sydney, we both have major concerns that we would be paying exorbitant amounts of rent for a poor-quality rental as well as dealing with the stress of an extremely competitive rental market.

My renting story

As a renter, I want to be able to live without the stress of all the aforementioned issues currently impacting so many people in NSW.

It's clear that stronger protections need to be introduced for renters in NSW, not only renters covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, but those who fall outside of it and have very few protections.

Landlords and real estate agents hold all the power and renters have little recourse to defend their housing rights. Housing is an essential service, and it needs to be treated as such. Along with stronger protections, we need more affordable housing as well as the extension and maintenance of public housing.

Renters putting in rental applications also need to feel confident that their data and information is not being misused and is kept securely. There should also be no concern over how artificial intelligence may discriminate against applications.

I know so many people who are living in fear because of housing instability and it isn't right. I have felt this pressure and know that with stronger protections I would feel much safer and have a better quality of life if the NSW Government delivered on key reforms. Without this stress, I would feel comfortable to consider what should be basic life choices including having a pet and even starting a family or even just having the ability to live closer to my friends, family, and community. All of this is to say, to be able to have good quality of life.