

## **Submission: The Hope of Improvement in NSW Renting Laws**

I strongly believe that all renters should have access to affordable, secure, and safe homes that truly feel like home. It is essential to reform NSW renting laws to ensure fairness for the one in three people in NSW who rent their homes.

I am a renter in Sydney's [REDACTED]. I've been renting for the past 8 years. I am currently living in a two-room apartment with a flatmate.

Renting has been a significant financial burden throughout most of my adult life. The high cost of rent, paired with the minimal service provided by landlords & real estate agents, has been a consistent source of stress. This has regularly interfered with my ability to study, and progress in my career and impacted my overall quality of life.

### **Unfair *No Grounds* Evictions**

Renters deserve homes that offer stability and security, free from the constant fear of unjust 'no grounds' evictions. Every renter should have the right to receive a valid reason for the termination of their tenancy. Landlords should be obligated to provide a reason for ending a rolling (periodic) lease, as well as a fixed-term lease after its end date.

The practice of using 'the property will soon be sold' as a ground for eviction should be prohibited to ensure fair and just housing for all renters.

In my rental experience, I have had to regularly deal with issues of landlords not providing upkeep for the property or common areas, or even issues in accessing working locks to the property. Furthermore, surrounding vermin infestations have been another reoccurring feature that requires significant follow-up to get assistance with dealing with these pests if the real estate agent or landlords do anything at all. Real estate agents are quick to express the possibility, the threat, of having to pay for any repairs to the property, this has occurred multiple times in my experience. Most recently this was in relation to a power point oozing a metallic green substance when I requested this be looked at due to concern and potential fire risk. It is clear in this interaction that the real estate agent is to act as a deterrent for the tenant to engage with their rights and to prevent any expenditure of money that would be legally the obligation of landlords in property upkeep.

## **Pets in Rental Homes**

Renters deserve homes that truly feel like home, and they should have the freedom to make simple choices that personalize their living space, such as deciding whether to keep pets. Landlords should only be allowed to deny a pet's presence after obtaining a Tribunal order, following a model similar to those in Victoria, the ACT, and the NT. This approach ensures a fair and balanced approach, providing renters with the opportunity to create a comfortable and welcoming environment within their rental property.

In today's age of increased work demands and financial constraints, pets can greatly enhance people's quality of life by providing companionship, emotional support, and bettering quality of life. This became extremely apparent for many in the COVID-19 pandemic, where pets were a lifeline of warmth and care that many could not otherwise receive. Unfortunately, many individuals face stressful lives and struggle with their mental health, making the presence of a pet even more important. It is understandably distressing that the joy and comfort that pets have brought to people throughout history are now out of reach for many due to, quite frankly, discriminatory policies.

The use of a rental bond was intended to offset risks associated with tenants which easily also covers having pets, yet without policy gaps being fixed for many lives, the comfort of a pet is not a reality they can enjoy. It is evident this situation can quickly become discriminatory where individuals whose health and well-being are tied to their pet, can have pronounced difficulties in finding suitable rental properties due to the ability to flippantly deny pets on premises. I personally experienced the challenges with a former flatmate who needed their dog for day-to-day living. Finding a pet-friendly place was an arduous task with many discriminating against them and their needs. This scenario was heartbreaking to see and is understandably deplorable. Many people are forced to make agonizing choices like putting their pets in kennels, putting them down, or giving their pets away because real estate agents/landlords refuse the presence of what is a member of the family to many people.

This discrimination not only hurts individuals but also has a profound impact on children and families. Continuing such regressive policies that empower real estate agents & landlords to discriminate against tenants and their pets is inhumane and perpetuates an unfair system.

It is high time to reconsider and implement more compassionate and inclusive housing policies that acknowledge the significance of pets in people's lives. By doing so, we can create a better society that places more value on the well-being of individuals who share their lives with animal companions. There are no humane reasons to continue the regressive policies that empower real estate agents to discriminate against tenants and their pets, further reducing the minimal risk they take, and reducing any notion of a service being provided with rent as the fee.

## **Rental Cost Crisis**

Renters need affordable homes that do not strain their finances, allowing them to pay rent without sacrificing other essential aspects of life. Fair limitations on rent increases within NSW tenancy law are necessary to ensure stability for tenants and allow them to engage in community life to support the local & wider Australian economy.

Housing is an essential service and human right. Having a secure, safe, and affordable home is necessary for a decent quality of life. Similar to other essential services like energy, health, and education, where costs are regulated to ensure accessibility, rent increases and rent setting should also be subject to similar limitations in rental housing.

By implementing such measures, we can guarantee that rental housing remains accessible and affordable for all, fostering a society where individuals can thrive without the constant worry of housing instability and better use their income on supporting themselves, loved ones and supporting & engaging in local Australian communities.

The exorbitant cost of rent has consistently placed limitations on my ability to spend on essential necessities like food, household goods, and engaging in the local community. This situation raises concerns about how it benefits Australians as a whole. Instead of contributing to the economy through spending on value-creating initiatives, innovative projects, or community development, a substantial portion of earned money is channelled into rent, which does not generate anything tangible or foster progress.

The current scenario, where many houses remain vacant or are utilized for short-term rentals like Airbnb, contributes to the perception that renting feels like a deceptive scheme. It appears to prioritize speculative value investment over meeting the housing needs of the population. Renting is seen as a burden for many, as landlords and real estate agents appear to profit excessively at the expense of struggling families. This leads to a sense of injustice where these entities seem to contribute little to society while adversely affecting the lives of Australians.

The imbalance in the housing market is characterized by inflated rents with a lack of substantial service provided for such considerable expense. This reinforces the notion that landlords and real estate agents are not truly benefiting others but rather exacerbating the challenges faced by individuals and families.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes affordable housing solutions (such as social housing, rent setting, rent increase limits), curtailing speculative property investment practices, and policy solutions to foster a more equitable rental/housing landscape. By doing so, it is my hope that we can create a housing system that genuinely benefits Australians, enhancing their quality of life to fostering a stronger, more inclusive community.

## **My Renting Story**

It is a regular occurrence that real estate agents and landlords will try to charge for low-level general wear and tear on a property to threaten the bond record. In the current rental landscape, renters are at the mercy of often indifferent real estate agents and the landlords they will seek to benefit by any means to make more money. Renters do not have rights in this system where real estate agents can up the price before consulting the landlord and get rid of tenants if they will pay extortionate levels of rent for little to no upkeep on poorly maintained properties. This is not a productive system; no value is being created here by charging people ridiculous amounts because so many are desperate for housing.

It has become a common occurrence that real estate agents and landlords attempt to charge renters for minor general wear and tear on a property, using it as a means to threaten their bond and the record around it. This has in my experience resulted in pressures to pay for repairs outside of the bond process to avoid any rental record issues that could impair the ability to find housing in the future. In the current rental landscape, renters often find themselves at the mercy of indifferent real estate agents and landlords who prioritize their own financial gains above all else. This system leaves renters feeling powerless and devoid of rights, as real estate agents can engage penalty-free in increasing rental prices without even consulting the landlord and evict tenants if they refuse to pay exorbitant amounts for properties that are often poorly maintained.

The current state of affairs is far from productive; instead, it perpetuates a cycle where no value is created, and renters are burdened with exorbitant charges simply because they are desperate for housing. This unjust practice not only exploits the vulnerability of renters but also fails to foster a fair and equitable rental system.

I have taken a landlord and real estate agent to the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal. They did not show up to the mediation or any other part of the proceedings. We were awarded a retroactive rental reduction on account of factors such as the house we rented being riddled with termites which we repeatedly requested be dealt with while at times we could hear the termites clicking beneath our floorboards. The landlord did not pay the amount awarded to us, and we were left with no recourse to follow this up for them to fulfil this. How unjust is a system where behind closed doors real estate agents as the thugs for landlords can threaten to charge you over repairs or take your bond when moving out and gladly do so with little recourse and when the tenant is legitimately owed money in a settlement the landlord can just simply not pay.

Addressing these issues, which I have brought up in this submission, likely will require implementing a myriad of policy reforms that are sorely needed. We desperately need reforms to protect the rights of renters, promote fair rental practices, and ensure that the rental market

