

Removing 'no grounds' terminations

'No grounds' terminations should be removed entirely, and landlords should be provided to require a reason to end both periodic leases and fixed term leases. With right to shelter being so fundamental as being a part of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Australian method of seeing housing as an investment before it is seen as shelter is completely backwards. Safeguards that make sure people have a roof at their heads, even if it comes at the cost of a few extra dollars the landlord class (which unfortunately includes the people making these laws, and so I assume won't act on any of the actual changes needed because they're disincentivised), are essential.

Prescribed reasons should be narrowed for the same reasons as above, that housing should be shelter first before it is an investment. Things such as deliberate damage, selling the house, or moving into the house itself, essentially things that would either help someone else be an owner-occupier, or free up a property elsewhere, adding to overall stock. Current reasons are way too broad, including the obvious 'no grounds'.

There should be regulation and enforcement of ensuring that reasons given are real. Anecdotally, there are many stories of landlords claiming that people need to be evicted so that a family member can move in, only for this to be a complete lie concocted to up the rent. Some sort of enforcement needs to occur, especially given the NSW government's recent history of allowing landlords and REAs get away with whatever they like - <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/03/no-real-estate-agents-fined-for-breaking-nsw-rent-bidding-rules>

A new model for keeping pets

The default position should be that pets are allowed, rather than requiring renters to go through a pet form. The onus should be on the landlord to show why it can't be allowed, and these reasons should be very limited. While people are living in these properties, they should be treated as housing rather than investments, people don't live in museums for a reason.

Renters' personal information

This should be as limited as possible, and it made illegal for landlords and REAs to even ask for the disgustingly large amount of information they currently demand. This is both for reasons of basic privacy requirements that people are entitled to, as people should not have to open up their entire lives to strangers just to be able to have a roof over their heads, but also for security reasons. If major businesses such as Medibank and Optus are subject to security hacks, it is very unlikely that small real estate agents have cybersecurity systems that aren't significantly more vulnerable, and open up renters to serious consequences, just because they dared to want to rent a place. The amount of information given over to REAs to even inspect a property in some instances is appalling. The proposed approach given at the bottom of page 10 and the top of page 11 of the consultation paper does seem to strike a balance, though it should only be 1 (one) piece of information from each of the columns.

Enforcement and punishment of REAs that don't comply should be strict and strong given the risks involved for the renters having their information held, and legislation with some teeth would be a good show of strength in that area in general given how weak Australia's cybersecurity in general has proven to be in the past couple of years.

Other changes

Generally, there needs to be a redress of the power balance that unfairly demotes renters to second-class citizens at the moment. A government that was serious about helping its people would look to institute and incentivise European-style arrangements where 3, 5 and 10 year leases are often the norm, allowing people to live with a sense of security and normalcy, and not constantly have the threat of eviction dangling over their heads by merciless landlords. Making these changes to assist with rental affordability is not only the fair and equitable thing to do, but could spur on productivity and creativity within the NSW economy more generally by making the state, which has in recent years seen its younger people in particular flee both interstate and overseas due to affordability issues, the light on the hill that people want to be a part of once more, and bring that younger population back in when they can genuinely envisage a future here beyond the next six months of their lease period when a bored landlord decides they want to up their rent again just for something to do.

It's been really damaging to the psyche as a NSW resident to see the brain drain and the loss of creativity from our streets and from our population, just because people are priced out in a system that rewards the greed of landlords in a race to the bottom. With serious inaction at a federal level, it's a chance to lead the country and attract people back to the state, and make us a global capital once more that people want to see and don't dismiss due to cost.