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To: [Residential Tenancy](#)
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Hi, thank you for accepting my submission to this important consultation. Please keep my submission anonymous, thank you.

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 in the [REDACTED]. I've been a renter for my whole life except for a few years when I was very young when my mum briefly owned a home. I've share-housed around the [REDACTED] since I was 18, and I'm now 29 living in an apartment with my two cats.

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've never personally experienced a no grounds eviction, but I believe that's because in every rental I've ever lived in, we've been extremely cautious about doing anything that could possibly bother the landlord or agent, at all. I have never requested repairs, I have never pushed back against unlawful access, I have never negotiated against a rent increase.

I have been beyond the 'model tenant', to the point of not asserting any rights that I know that I am entitled to. I've done this because I know how jarring, expensive, and stressful moving house is even when it's something I've chosen myself. I want to do anything possible to avoid the experience of eviction - being forced to move when I don't want to and have done nothing wrong - even if it means living in a mouldy house in a state of disrepair, paying too much rent.

This isn't how the renting system should work. Renters have protections for a reason: because we're entitled to a safe, secure, affordable home just like everyone else is. For as long as no grounds evictions remain in place, every other renting protection we have is undermined, because we can simply be

evicted if we assert our rights.

We need to end no grounds evictions for renters on periodic *and* fixed-term contracts, and we can't add in extra loopholes like a property being 'prepared for sale' that will let landlords continue evicting renters for no reason, or for very bad reasons like that they're asserting their rights.

I have friends in Queensland, where 'no grounds' evictions have ended for renters on periodic agreements, and they keep getting put on 6-month fixed-term contracts, so they have all of the same concerns as me about getting evicted for no reason (or bad reason) at the end of each 6-month term. This means they also can't assert their other renting rights, and live with the threat of unfair eviction hanging over their head. A term ending in and of itself isn't a valid reason for someone to lose their home -- and deal with all of the massive costs linked with being forced to find and move to a new home.

A property being prepared for sale should not be added as a ground for eviction. This again opens up the risk of landlords evicting in retaliation for a renter asserting their rights. If being 'prepared' for sale is added, any landlord can claim that they're planning on selling, evict the renter, and then claim to have just changed their mind. If this ground is added, I still won't feel comfortable asking for the repairs I need, because I know if I cause a "fuss" (by asking for some really, really basic repairs), the landlord could just say they're 'preparing' to sell and evict me, then just "change their mind" and bring in someone new. And then I don't know where I'd go, the rental market is terrifying at the moment.

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 grew up with pets my whole childhood. When I was still at uni and in sharehouses, and even my first few years out of uni with decently-paying jobs, I held off on adopting a pet because I wanted to make sure I was *really* in a position to give the animal all the care it needs.

I moved out into an apartment by myself in 2020 and was extremely, extremely lucky to be able to secure a pet-friendly rental. The landlord said I could get "one, small, short-haired, female cat", so I adopted a gorgeous senior rescue cat. Unfortunately, she passed away in 2021, and I wanted to adopt again, and not adopt a senior this time. By this point, I was back to working in the office a lot, and I didn't like the idea of leaving a younger, more energetic cat, in the apartment alone all day. I asked if I could please have two cats, and offered for the agent to come and inspect more regularly to ensure they didn't cause any

mess or damage. I was told no.

I ended up adopting a pair anyway, and just keeping one secret. They cause no more damage than a single cat, in the slightest. I daresay they cause less damage than if I had just the one cat left to their own devices (and boredom) all day, since they have each other to play with. I took care of pairs of cats my entire childhood and know they can help keep each other out of trouble, especially with proper training.

Inspections are annoying as I have to just take one of the cats to a friend's place, put away the second food bowl, make sure I only mention the one cat (and that it's the same one each time!). I also can't post my second cat on social media, which is a shame as she's adorable. Other than that, it doesn't make any difference having one cat or two.

It feels like nothing more than a weird power trip being told I can't have a second cat (and the size, gender and type of cat I'm allowed to have) in my own home that I live in, keep clean, and pay for. I've paid a bond, so if any damage were to happen, the landlord would take the costs out of that money when I leave -- or far more likely, I'd fix it up myself while I live here, because it is *my home* that I live in and take responsibility for.

I would understand being told I can't keep a horse in my apartment, or can't have 17 cats, but there are other rules and regulations around animal welfare and council requirements that would stop me from doing that anyway. And those apply to people who rent *or* who own their home. If there need to be more or stronger rules around keeping animals in homes, then they should exist for homes in general, not just renters' homes, and they can belong in council regulations, the Companion Animals Act, or similar.

There shouldn't be these extra rules applied to me just because I'm a renter; I'm better placed than someone who doesn't live here and doesn't know my cats to know whether or not my home is appropriate for them. The Residential Tenancies Act isn't the place to regulate what types of pets people can keep. It is there to regulate the renter-landlord relationship, and it already holds me as a renter accountable for any actual damage that might happen to the property, whether that's from an animal, a guest, myself, or if I have a child.

If a landlord wants to put in restrictions on what animals I can keep in my home beyond those rules that already exist elsewhere, at the very least the landlord should have to go to the Tribunal and argue their case for why it's reasonable.

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.

I am lucky that my home is somewhat affordable, as compared to the rent prices some of my friends have to pay (however, this is a bit of a trade-off for the state of my home). I had a rent increase recently which was a little bit of a blow, but still within reach with a bit of a budget rejig. I was relieved that at least now they can't increase my rent again for another year. It's good that rents can't increase more than once in 12 months, but there also need to be limits on how much rents can go up by each time. My most recent increase has been manageable, but for all I know, my rent could be put up by \$200+/week next year, and there's not much I could do about it. I know people whose rent has been put up by that much in a single increase, and because it's happening to so many people, it's hard to argue that it's "excessive".

Just because the entire rental market is skyrocketing in price, doesn't mean that the huge rent increases so many people are seeing are actually fair or reasonable. People need homes, and need to be able to pay for rent and still afford other necessities. Too many people can't do that at the moment. Even aside from the fact that people need and deserve dignity and safety, the rental crisis ultimately costs the government.

With rising rates of homelessness and people in poverty due to spending too much money on rent, more and more people need to access government supports and services. By not properly regulating rent prices (allowing landlords to charge through the nose leaving renters homeless and/or without money for essentials) the government is handing over money to private landlords. If rents were fairly regulated, many more people would be able to pay for rent as well as other things they need, and strain on government services would significantly reduce. More importantly, renters would be able to access the safe, secure, affordable home that we need and deserve.

Rents are increasing far faster than wages or even other households costs are. In the ACT, rents can only reasonably increase by 10% more than CPI. NSW should adopt a similar, or ideally stronger, protection. Rent increases could reasonably limited to only CPI.

Other renting issues

Energy efficiency

My rental is incredibly hot in summer and cold in winter, and there's not much I can do to change that. There are big gaps under all the doors (and some can't even close), so it's really difficult to keep the indoor temperature comfortable when it's cold or hot outside. The blinds don't work, so in summer I either have to cover my windows with paper or the direct sunlight makes it even hotter inside. The place isn't properly insulated, and is generally badly built. There's a few cracks in the walls to the outside. And there's a few big mould patches, and a part of the bedroom where the ceiling leaks every time it rains heavily.

As I talked about above, none of these are things I feel safe to raise with my agent in case I'm seen as too much trouble and kicked out (especially since I and the agent both know that with the current rental crisis, there will be plenty of

people still willing to move in here if I get kicked out, even with the property in the state it's in).

There should much stronger standards for rentals around these things. It shouldn't be on me as a renter to individually challenge the agent/landlord to make my home safe and healthy to live in. There need to be mandatory standards around things like heating, cooling, mould etc that a rental has to meet before it's allowed to be rented out. Then, all landlords will have to comply and renters don't have to worry about individually "demanding" these changes be made that we need to keep us safe.

As it is, my only options really are to pay huge amounts of money on heating/cooling when temperatures get extreme, or live with the discomfort and health impacts. I don't have central heating/airconditioning, so I have to run bar heaters or fans to keep the temperature livable. My first winter here, I had an energy bill of over \$300 for the month of August. It was totally unaffordable for me, so since then I've had to be really careful about how much to run the heater vs how much to just deal with it being freezing cold (and the reverse in summer, with a fan).

I know there are subsidies and programs available for energy efficiency upgrades of homes, because it's both a climate and health/habitability issue, but I as a renter am not able to (/willing to) do things like install solar panels when I could just get kicked out of this place at any time. And my landlord isn't the one paying my energy bills here, so there isn't the same incentive for them to make energy efficiency upgrades here as there are for owner-occupiers. I know heaps and heaps of other rental homes are in similar states to mine, but even with subsidies available landlords just aren't making them more energy efficient as it's not them who will see the comfort and cost benefits, but the renter.

We need to make minimum standards mandatory, so that ensuring homes are livable doesn't rely either on renters going to the Tribunal (and risking retaliation) or landlord good-will.

Social housing

NSW needs far more social housing. Right now, there is such a small stock of social housing that only people in really, really significant financial need can access it. But the private rental market is unaffordable for a growing portion of lower- and middle-income people. There is a huge chunk of society that earns "too much" to access the safety net of social housing, but for whom the private rental market is altogether too expensive. We need a significantly larger proportion of the stock of housing to be social housing, and we need this to happen as quickly as possible.

If there were more social housing, not only could many of the thousands and thousands of people on the social housing waiting list move into social housing, but it would have flow-on effects for the private rental market. A decent stock of affordable, high-quality social housing would put downward pressure on private rental market rent prices, and upward pressure on private rental market quality and standards. In Vienna, almost half of the people live in government-owned or cooperative housing. The entire rental market there is fairer as a result. Social

housing should make up a significantly higher proportion of housing stock in NSW, and government should invest as a matter of urgency in bringing social housing stock up to at least 10% of total housing stock.

In summary:

- End no grounds evictions (including for renters on fixed-term contracts) and don't add 'preparing for sale' as a ground for eviction.
- Renters should be allowed to keep pets in our homes, and landlords should have to go to Tribunal if they want to deny permission.
- Introduce fair limits on rent increases: don't allow rent increases more than CPI.
- Mandatory minimum energy efficiency standards in rental homes.
- Rapid and significant investment in social housing, to bring social housing stock up to at least 10% of total NSW housing stock.