

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.

My name is _____, and I am a renter in _____ and previously, the _____ council area. I have been renting for about a decade now and currently live with my long-term partner, a cat, and a small dog.

Ending unfair evictions and the difficulties with ending a rental agreement

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 grounds for eviction.

Our last landlords gave us a no grounds eviction claiming their daughter intended to move into the apartment. They then pressured us into leaving before the end of the lease but offered no compensation to assist with moving or anything else. We had been excellent tenants for multiple years, paying rent on time, respecting the property, and abiding by the complex's by-laws.

After moving out early they then tried to take a large portion of our bond over issues under fair wear and tear and we were forced to seek advice from the Tenants Union for NSW and people familiar with tribunal proceedings. We then had to go through weeks of negotiations, finally settling on an amount that was still unfair to us but meant we did not have to waste more time while we were still moving into our new apartment and dealing with everything that comes with that.

The first email we received about the landlords wanting to withhold bond came 3 weeks after moving out, such a long time we had assumed they did not intend to put in a claim on the bond at all, and as a suffer of mental health issues was very negatively impactful on my mental health. They provided no actual amount of money, only that they intended to, with an actual amount taking another week. When we asked for a breakdown and

quotes for the amount they had told us they came back with an even bigger amount as they had mistaken an estimate for the an actual quote, this also taking about a week.

We had our rent terminated and then our lives heavily impacted for 2 months by landlords with no empathy or respect.

Landlords and agents currently have too much power with making claims against tenants bonds when leaving. They point to fair wear and tear, quote hundreds of dollars and you are forced to breakdown their arguments, research and converse endlessly. There is no real ability for tenants to submit the actions of landlords and agents and have them suffer real world consequences for the careless and greedy way they go after exiting tenants. Going all the way to the Tribunal is time consuming, stressful and grueling for tenants and if landlords and agents actually had ramifications to unrealistic demands (fines, loss of license, restrictions to bond claims) it would help ensure that any claims made were reasonable and informed.

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.

When signing a lease for a rental in _____ I informed the landlords I had a small, indoor only ferret that spent most of its time caged. I looked after that animal very well, it was clean and received all shots and flea/worm treatments. They insisted I agree to terms when signing the lease that, on exiting the rental, I would pay hundreds of dollars in cleaning costs to have the place "de-flea'd". It had no carpets, drapes or anything of such and on exit we cleaned the apartment very well, to the standards we received it. There were no fleas or any other problems relating to the pet occupying the space. It was held over us when signing the lease that if I did not agree we would not get the apartment. My pet would pass in the time we were at the property yet I had signed a document committing me to a fumigation or cleaning that wasn't needed.

When it comes to renting in _____ and whether or not having a pet affects a renters ability to rent, the evidence can be obtained by anyone in minutes. Going on any

commercial website that hosts properties for rent and clicking the “pets considered” box removes sometimes as many as 90-95% of properties, depending on the area. The enormous stress this has put on myself and my partner as we feel demonized and unwanted by society for simply owning a cat and a small dog. We are denied from the get-go hundreds of properties and forced to fight, tooth and nail, for the small number of properties that are willing to have us. We cannot also be expected to exert the energy to confirm with every rental property if they truly won't except pets as agents can be rude, unresponsive or evasive in getting back to you.

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.

When renting in _____ during Covid we asked for a fair reduction in our rent and were only offered a very small amount of \$100, leaving to people who were stood down and on the government payment program to pay \$500 a week. After the agreed 3 month time period, the rent returned to the full amount of \$580. The downstairs apartment was equivalent to ours and was rented shortly after the Covid lockdowns ended for around \$420. When we discussed matching our rent to that, as from our research and providing examples, the median price in the area had dropped. We had been tenants of 3 years (with no others in the 4 apartment block longer than a year or periods of apartments with no occupancy), had no issues and paid rent on time. The agents/landlords had no interest in discussing this, so we were forced to move. Afterwards the property was listed and wasn't rented for months with it finally being rented almost 3 months later at around \$420.

When a no grounds eviction was given to us in our place in _____ we looked for alternatives in the area. The cost of rent had gone up so much in the area we were forced to move entirely to a new suburb. Our initial rent was a 2 bedroom apartment for \$580 and an equivalent apartment 2 years later were going for \$800 with very high

competition. We were forced to look elsewhere, moving to a different area of [redacted] and downsizing. It was an awful experience as every property inspection had many people at it, sometimes as high as 30 or 40 individuals that we would be competing with. Agents were unresponsive, were not listing inspection times, relying on the desperate renters to reach out to each agent to essentially beg to know when they could inspect the property. This desperation meant on being accepted as tenants for a new rental, we had no negotiation power, had to accept whatever terms the landlord/agent provided and offer \$20 above asking just so we could beat any other rental applications out and guarantee a home for us and our pets.

My renting story and a message to anyone who will listen

In closing, renting in [redacted] has been a horrible experience with every property from the first rental I ever lived at.

I have lived in houses with broken fences, mold, faulty wiring, had greedy landlords try to unfairly take my bond money, had interactions that were extremely unprofessional and emotional, been made to feel unwanted and never appreciated for actually being a good tenant.

I dread what the end of my current lease will bring, if we can afford the rent increase that will come, and the life disruption that comes when having to once again enter the rental market.

Agents look after their and landlords' interest and that is it. They bully tenants, they ignore tenants, and they show no support or care. The government needs to do something to help renters in [redacted] have more protection through its laws and legislation.

Whenever I have discussed the examples of issues I have had through this letter with certain parties, suggestions are made such as "take them to the Tribunal" or "report them to the Tribunal". Such statements have no appreciation for the fact that we as renters are paying for a home. We are not signing up for work, legal action, major time investments; we are looking and PAYING for somewhere to live OUR lives and not have them dictated, controlled and so heavily impacted by the landlords and agents of NSW.

Thank you for your time.