

Submission: Improving NSW Renting Laws

I have very limited time to write this submission, so unfortunately I won't be able to address every issue in the consultation paper. I just want to provide some general input, based on my personal experience of almost 20 years renting in Australia (in Sydney and Hobart), with a 2 year stint renting in London.

I first entered the rental market in 2006, as a university student. The amount of rent I was paying then for a room in a sharehouse in Enmore was \$150. The average rent for a comparable room in a sharehouse in Enmore now would be double that, at \$300. I honestly don't understand how any young people or people not in full-time employment are currently able to afford to rent in inner Sydney.

That first house had mushrooms growing out of my bedroom carpet due to damp issues from improper sealing of the shower recess on the other side of the wall. I didn't have too much time to dwell on this, as I soon had to move due to the landlord deciding to sell the property. The next tenancy was also terminated for the same reason, within a year.

However, I don't want to bolster the current impression the government seems to have, that only university students rent in Australia. I have rented continuously since 2006, and will be renting for the foreseeable future, as even now, as a part of a working couple in our mid-30's, my partner and I would never be able to save up enough for a deposit on a property in Sydney.

In my 17 years renting, I have dealt with 10 landlords and many more real estate agents. Only in a single instance has that relationship felt respectful, and professional and I felt treated like an equal and valuable participant within the context of a tenancy - a paying client whose interests were taken into account to an equal degree, with a recognition that what is being paid for is what I consider my home (no matter if temporary). I could tell a million stories about what the rest of the relationships were like, stories that every renter in Australia has, and many of which I'm sure you will read in other submissions.

The deadline to submit is in 10 minutes, so basically, all I want to say is that there is currently an enormous power imbalance between landlords and tenants. I say this based on my extensive personal experience, and the experience of all of my peers. Yes, there are occasional times when you are treated professionally and humanely by the real estate agents and the landlords. But overwhelmingly, that is not the case.

Consequently, I completely back any and all measures to try and correct that imbalance in favor of tenants, even if it leads to overcorrection (something I highly doubt would happen). The market has failed under current laws and policies that prioritise the rights and interests of those using housing as an investment opportunity, over those who need somewhere safe, clean and comfortable to live.