

To the Committee Secretary  
Public Works and Utilities Committee

In response to your Inquiry into proposed Housing Legislation (Building Better Futures) Amendment Bill 2017 I would like to voice my support for the proposed changes to the *Residential Tenancy and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* to set minimum standards for rental properties.

More than a third of the Queensland population rent their home and as home ownership becomes increasingly out of reach many people will be long-term renters. The quality of the homes renters live in can have important impacts on health and wellbeing. It can also have a financial impact for renters. For example homes that are drafty, poorly insulated, or have faulty hot water systems or leaky pipes can result in higher bills.

Current provisions in tenancy law do not clearly define the standards required, making it difficult for renters and lessors to know when it is reasonable to ask for something to be repaired or replaced. Clear standards will give substance to the current requirements that the premises are “fit to live in” and “in good repair”.

It will also help tenants to enforce their rights. Many renters are unwilling to ask for repairs or maintenance to their rental property because they want to be on good terms with the lessor and they may be worried that the lessor will decide not to renew their tenancy agreement. This is a particular problem when people have short-term leases and because lessors are able to evict people without grounds. Fear of retaliatory eviction particularly affects low income and other vulnerable households who have limited housing choices and limited financial resources to move.

Setting minimum standards (and supporting the standards with a process for inspections by independent qualified third parties) would take the pressure off tenants to raise problems and pursue their rectification. It would also reduce the number of disputes between tenants and lessors. Importantly it will support improvements in the quality of housing, cost of living, health and wellbeing of an ever growing portion of the Queensland community.

Yours sincerely