

Blaise Kost



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Senate Standing Committees on Economics
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Submission for the *Housing Australia Future Fund Bill 2023, National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill 2023 and Treasury Laws Amendment (Housing Measures No. 1) Bill 2023*

Dear Senate Standing Committees on Economics,

My name is Blaise Kost, a young activist who is passionate about community issues not only local and state based but also at a federal level. I met Senator Louise Pratt through the SheRuns 2022 Fellowship which I had completed last year to further my advocacy and political leadership skills, who had recommended that I send through a submission. My background includes a tertiary qualification in Health Promotion on top of working in the community services and disability sector over the past few years. I want to talk to you about pets and the rights of renters in the context of the commonwealth's investment in housing as I know you are chairing a committee into this investment. The reason behind my letter is to address an issue that I feel not only is felt widely across the state here in Western Australia but is also a major issue nationally impacting households and organisations across our communities.

The rental crisis in Perth alone has impacted the community largely, where we are seeing the large disparity grow and more of the community falling into the category of either not being able to afford the inflated prices or not being desirable candidates in an extremely competitive and narrow market currently. In light of this, a large proportion of the community are pet owners. In previous years rights relating to pets has been a topic of discussion however was not a highlighted issue given that the market was fairly large and therefore people were still able to find homes despite being less desirable compared to those who do not have pets. The rental crisis has directly now impacted animal welfare not only in Perth but across Australia, resulting in our communities being forced to choose between a basic fundamental necessity, somewhere to live, and their beloved pets. This has also directly caused an influx of animals needing to be brought to refuges where many are now making the heart-breaking decision to stop accepting animals due to the unmanageable high-demand and limited resources.

Animals have many important factors which serve our community, including providing emotional support to those who are more vulnerable and require support animals for daily living and assistance. Australia also deems pets as part of the family, having to impose such a decision to be either separated from a beloved family member or to be displaced and risk homelessness should not be a decision that Australians should need to make. It should also not be reality for our low to middle class Australians and those a part of our more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities due to not being able to compete in a market that is favouring upper class well-off individuals. This investment not only will benefit the community largely but will also support our local non-for-profit organisations who are feeling the worst of the rental crisis impacts. These organisations who barely have enough resources to operate are working beyond their means and capacity to ensure these animals do not end up displaced, starved or victim of abuse by being left out in the wider community. By reforming our rental rights and ensuring more flexible social housing that prioritises our more vulnerable communities and hard-working non-for-profits, the communities will feel heard and seen and most importantly valued by ensuring that they are not displaced or forced to make heart breaking and life altering

decisions. I understand that our rental markets are privatised and commercialised, resulting in difficulties to implement rental rights, particularly relating to pets. However, I feel that there could be an opportunity for landlords to embrace allowing pets in rentals through incentivisation. A potentially possibility could be looking at discounted tax for landlords who allow pets into privatised/commercialised rentals. This may be a solution to benefit both landlords and renters where both parties profit.

I doubt it has been profiled in the current submissions, but we need to use this big investment to leverage up renters' rights as compared to other countries where we see that landlords have all the rights. This big investment is a chance to change this. By embedded better rights for renters in this social housing package. An opportunity to listen to what the community needs and prioritise all members of the community despite social class.

Social housing needs to be flexible when it comes to pets because tenancy laws are so tight. Pets provide many benefits and are seen as many Australians family members, including myself. Working in disability, I cannot imagine the difficulty Australians with a medical condition or disability face when trying to find a rental when having a support animal. Many Australians impacted by a disability or medical condition will most likely never be able to afford to purchase a home in their lifetime due to limitations around their health and work capacity. This means that most Australians with a medical condition or disability will be live long rentals. These members of our community deserve to be prioritised when making rentals more accessible. Ensuring there are rights for pet owners is of the utmost importance.

I hope that from reading this submission that you understand the severity of this issue currently and the urgency surrounding the implementation of rights for pet owners who are renters. The impacts of the pandemic on the community were huge and now the rental crisis is the domino effect which keeps providing further negative impacts on our community. By improving renter rights and ensuring safety for our pet owners will be a massive win and positive in light of a very dark situation for many Australians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Blaise Kost