

FINAL REPORT
for
QUEENSLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
HOUSING AND PUBLIC
WORKS

Open Doors
to renting *reform*

ENGAGEMENT

MOST
RESPONDENTS
WERE FROM
**SOUTH-EAST
QUEENSLAND**



OVER 135,000

RESPONSES WERE
RECEIVED DURING THE

9 WEEK CONSULTATION

OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF RENTING IN QUEENSLAND

TENANTS

39%

30%

31%

PROPERTY OWNERS

47%

29%

24%

PROPERTY MANAGERS

48%

39%

13%



HOT TOPICS

TENANTS

Property management, pets, minimum standards and long-term leases

PROPERTY OWNERS

Minor modifications, balance of laws, pets and notices to leave without grounds

PROPERTY MANAGERS

Disputes, balance of laws between tenants and property owners, pets

Acknowledgments

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We would also like to thank the many members of the public who took the time to participate during the Open Doors to Renting Reform consultation. We thank them for their time and insights and trust that their views are adequately represented in this report.



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Terms

The following terms have been used throughout the analysis to describe the many interchangeable phrases which are often used to describe the same interested party.

Term Used	Represents
Tenant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renter • Rentee • Lessee • Occupant • Boarder • Sublessee
Property Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord • Landowner • Proprietor • Purchaser • Titleholder • Lessor
Property Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agent • Real Estate • Real Estate representative
Written response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written submissions • Letters • Emails • Discussion forum posts and comments (unless specifically called out separately) • 'Big ideas' at consultation sessions • Agree/ disagree boards • Feedback forms • Shared Services Queensland • Telephone feedback • Social media posts and comments (unless specifically called out separately)

Abbreviations and acronyms

The following abbreviations and acronyms have been used throughout the analysis.

Term Used	Represents
CGT	Capital Gains Tax
CLCQ	Community Legal Centres Queensland
CPAQ	Caravan Parks Association of Queensland
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works
MIT	Managed Investment Trust
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PCA	Property Council of Australia
POAQ	Property Owners Association of QLD
QCAT	Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
QCOSS	Queensland Council of Social Service
QLD	Queensland
QYHC	Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
REIQ	Real Estate Institute of Queensland
RTA	Residential Tenancies Authority
RTRA	Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation
RTRAA	Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008
SCAQ	Strata Community Australia (Queensland)
SEQ	South East Queensland
TQ	Tenants Queensland Inc

1 Consultation insights

In September 2018, the Queensland Government launched the Open Doors to Renting Reform consultation program (Open Doors Consultation). The Open Doors Consultation was a state-wide consultation program that invited the Queensland community to have their say and share their ideas for how to improve renting in Queensland. The consultation program ran for nine weeks from 30 September to 30 November 2018. The department used a mix of consultation and engagement methods throughout the nine-week period.

A very high level of engagement in the consultation process was achieved with a total of 137,776 responses received from tenants, property owners, property managers and other stakeholders from all over Queensland. These comprised:

- 19,965 responses to the online survey
- 96,649 responses to the snap polls
- 14,146 postcards returned to the Department
- 2,190 posts and comments on social media, and
- 4,826 other written responses (including forum posts and comments and peak body submissions).

The Open Doors consultation included a range of consultation and engagement tactics and channels to ensure everyone had a chance to have their say. The Queensland Government gathered a wealth of information and feedback. This report summarises the views, issues and suggestions made by Queensland tenants, property owners, managers and other stakeholders in response to the consultation. These include responses to the online survey, snap polls and postcard survey, as well as online responses, directly emailed responses and talking with staff at consultations or on the phone.¹

To focus the consultation, the Department established five key themes for discussion:

1. A house and a home
2. Property conditions
3. Flexibility and security
4. Better protections, and
5. Looking and leasing.

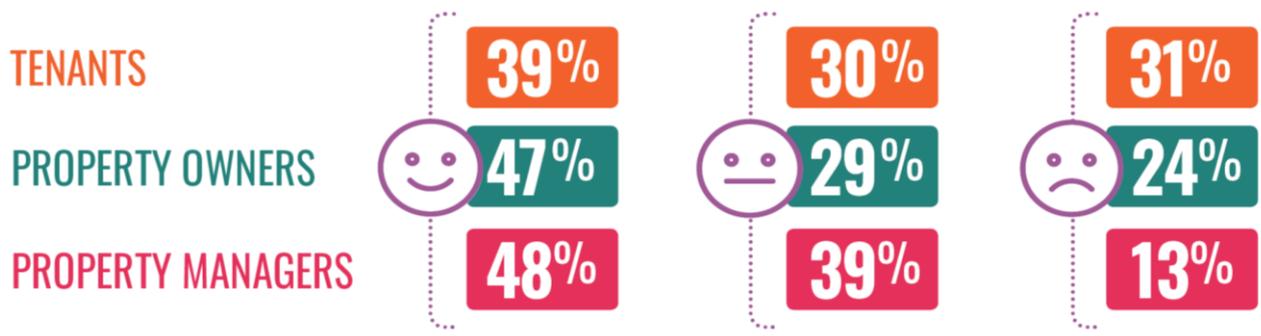
Within each theme, there were several topics which helped to stimulate discussion around key areas of reform (the full list of topics is shown in Appendix 7.2.1).

¹ The results presented in this report reflect the views of people making responses but is not necessarily representative of the views of the Queensland population in a statistical sense.

PROPERTY OWNERS AND TENANTS



OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF RENTING IN QUEENSLAND



HOT TOPICS

TENANTS

Property management, pets, minimum standards and long-term leases

PROPERTY OWNERS

Minor modifications, balance of laws, pets and notices to leave without grounds

PROPERTY MANAGERS

Disputes, balance of laws between tenants and property owners, pets

RESPONSES CAME FROM



1.1 Key insights from the consultation process

Queenslanders spoke loudly during the consultation process. People shared their stories about renting and provided thoughtful responses on a wide range of themes.

We overwhelmingly heard that Queenslanders want to feel safe and secure with their rental property, either as a home in which to live as a tenant, or as an investment in the housing market as a property owner. For example, tenants speak about making the house they are renting into a place they can call 'home'—this can be established in many ways, such as being able to make minor changes to the property, knowing they will not have unexpected inspections, having security of tenure, or by being allowed to bring their pet with them. Property owners were often sympathetic but focused on the risks these allowances place on their financial investment in their property or concerns about liability should anything go wrong.

Pets were a key theme raised during the consultation process. In fact, pets accounted for 14% of all comments made during the consultation process, and 37% of all written submissions mentioned pets in rental properties (n=308). The different views on pets being allowed into rental properties were very clear – property owners were opposed to being forced to allow pets into their properties while tenants expressed a desire to be allowed to keep a pet without needing to ask permission from a property manager or owner.

Minimum standards were the focus of 30% (n=251) of all written responses (as identified by the machine assisted qualitative analysis model, for more detail about this method see section 7.1.1). Tenants and property owners again had differing views. It was important to tenants that the property they rent be safe, secure and habitable and they felt that minimum standards would ensure this. There was also discussion from tenants around introducing standards for heating and cooling, kitchens, and energy efficiency (i.e. solar panels). Property owners had a different view, commenting that safety and other basic standards are already mandated and that increased costs caused by additional standards would be passed on to tenants, increasing rents.

Notices and evictions, especially the matter of issuing a notice to leave without grounds, were the subject of many responses, more often as the subject of a comment made by property owners and property managers. Both of these groups see these notices as a way of managing tenancies. Of the tenants that mentioned notices to leave without grounds, many expressed that they felt these notices were unfair, are often misused by owners/managers and impinged on their ability to plan for the future and feel secure.

Other key themes that emerged were the need for better complaints and dispute resolution processes (such as those involving property managers and QCAT) and issues with property managers.

Overall, about one quarter of all Queenslanders participating in the consultation process feel the current laws achieve a balance between property owners and renters. And while both tenants and property owners tend to feel the balance is in the other parties' favour, more tenants than owners are inclined to feel this way (it is worth noting that through the consultation process, property managers views tended to track those of owners more so than tenants). This pattern in sentiment is reflected in the higher rates of dissatisfaction with renting in Queensland by tenants than property owners.

Despite the different perspectives of tenants and property owners, many recognised the different needs for safety and security of the other party. Suggestions made by Queenslanders were often focused on actions that might be mutually acceptable and fair – for example, the idea of a 'pet bond' was offered as a way of balancing the competing interests of tenants with property owners.

1.1.1 Key themes for different groups

Each of the five consultation themes, and their respective topics, were thoroughly discussed by Queenslanders during the consultation. Tenants focus on issues relating to day to day living, while property owners focus on managing risks and disputes. Property managers tended to reflect themes raised by owners with an additional interest in notice periods.

The top five themes in the written responses of tenants are:

1. property and tenancy managers (15%)
2. minimum housing standards (14%)
3. entry practices and privacy (12%)
4. renting with pets (11%), and
5. dispute resolution (10%).

When asked in the online survey about the 'one thing they would change', tenants wanted renting with pets (14%), a means of lodging complaints against property managers (13%), longer-term leases (12%), and a better balance of laws between tenant and property owner (11%).

The top themes in the responses of property owners are:

1. renting with pets (22%)
2. making changes to property (13%)
3. dispute resolution (13%)
4. minimum housing standards (12%), and
5. notice to leave without grounds (11%).

When asked in surveys about the 'one thing they would change', property owners wanted a better balance in laws between tenants and property owners (29%), a means of lodging complaints against property managers (10%) and increase in the bond amount (10%).

1.1.2 Issues on which Queenslanders agreed

Tenants and property owners are interested in getting the balance of tenancy laws right. Everyone who rents in Queensland wants to be treated fairly and with respect—whether they are tenants or property owners.

When responding about the fairness of Queensland tenancy laws, many respondents focussed on the disparity in notice periods depending on who issues the notice. Both tenants and property owners felt that this should be equal. However, tenants and property owners did not agree about the notice to leave without grounds clause—owners wanted it to stay while tenants wanted it deleted.



Tenant response

...the power imbalance between landlords and tenants makes Queensland renters especially vulnerable to bullying and exploitation by real estate agents.



Owner response

I initially engaged an agency ... but disengaged them once I realised that the tenants were being harassed by them, they were ... just being downright rude to them.

Property managers were a topic of much discussion. Both parties mostly spoke of their negative experiences with property managers. Tenants commonly felt harassed or bullied by property managers, while owners also reported that property managers they engaged had acted poorly or misrepresented them.



Tenant response

...we need to re-prioritise expenditure on public housing, so people's most basic needs are met.



Owner response

The thought of losing control over whether pets can live on the premises ... is just not fair.

While not a high-volume topic, affordable and social housing was an area where property owners and tenants agreed. Both groups advocated for increased spending from the government and community sectors to help those in vulnerable financial positions find homes. Property owners called for more public and affordable housing as a way of reducing the risk that tenants in their property would default on their rent.



Tenant response

We have refrained from making the place our own by hanging picture hooks, and other decorations because of the lease agreement. It is degrading and humiliating not to be able to live in the house you are essentially paying the mortgage for another person for.

1.1.3 Issues on which Queenslanders disagreed

There were several key issues upon which tenants and property owners did not see eye to eye. These issues include pets in rental properties, tenants making minor changes to the property, minimum housing standards (discussed above), and evictions.

The right of a tenant to keep a pet in a rented property was the most discussed theme of the consultation. Property owners spoke as one on this issue—they did not want to be forced to accept pets into their rental properties and raised points about potential damage, cleaning costs, and issues for subsequent tenants with allergies. Some property owners indicated they would accept a pet into the property if an additional 'pet bond' was collected (75% of respondents to a snap poll agreed that a pet bond would help), though there was not a consensus on this. Tenants, on the other hand, advocated strongly for allowing pets into rentals to make the house a home and for wellbeing or family reasons. Property owners want their right to decide what happens with their property to be respected, while tenants want the ability to live with their pet allowed by law.



Owner response

[Allowing changes] would remove a fundamental right of a property owner and landlord to specify how their property is used and their right to protect their property from damage.

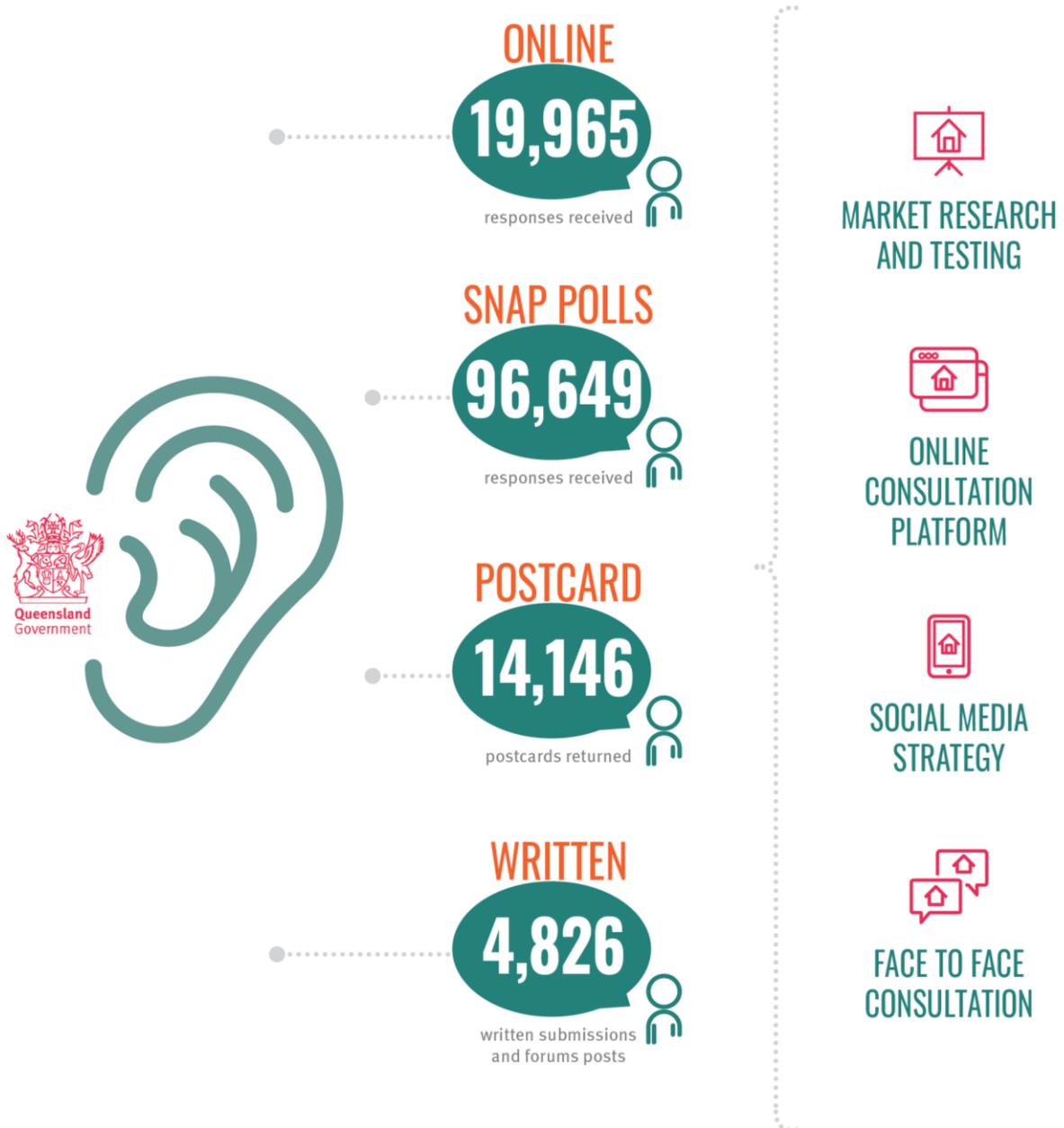
Making cosmetic or minor changes to a property such as hanging pictures, installing shelves or starting a garden was another topic on which property owners and tenants did not

agree. Tenants expressed that they felt the need to make basic updates to a house in order to make it feel like their home. Property owners were also very vocal on this issue, again bringing it back to their property rights and issues around potential damage.

Evictions were an emotional issue during the consultation with both tenants and property owners sharing stories of stressful, difficult and costly evictions. Tenants who commented on this topic articulated the perception of unfairness whereby the property owner or manager holds all the cards and can upend their life at any time by asking them to leave. They advocated for the end of the notice to leave without grounds. Conversely, property owners and managers were adamant that the notice to leave without grounds should stay.

1.2 Engagement

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE OPEN DOORS CONSULTATION INCLUDED:



1.3 Method

The Department used Bang the Table’s [EngagementHQ online consultation platform](#) to collect most data. To publicise the engagement the Department distributed the online survey by utilising social media platforms, the Department’s website, handing out brochures at community and industry consultation sessions and displaying posters at the Housing Service Centres.

The online survey was sent out via email by the RTA to approximately 617,500 recipients (570,290 tenants and 47,210 property owners/ property managers), as well being mentioned on the postcard survey. Further engagement was also achieved via the RTA outgoing email banner, text messages sent to 134,042 mobile numbers, publication of an ‘Open Doors’ tile on the RTA websites, news article published on the RTA website and front counter television displays.

The postcard survey, sent to RTA clients who did not have an email address listed, was distributed to 174,000 recipients, as well as being available at 23 community and industry consultation sessions, at 21 Housing Service Centres and handed out when the Minister was door knocking.

Table 1. Number of responses, before and after cleaning

Data Set	Original total	Cleaned total	Number removed
Postcard survey ^ Postcards received by DHPW.	14,146^	11,306	2,840
Online survey	19,965	19,965	0
Written responses	1,464	842	622
Forum posts and comments	4,552	3,984	568
Social media posts and comments	2,338	2,190	148
Snap polls	96,649	96,649	0
Total	139,114	134,936	4,178

1.4 Sentiment

Queenslanders are generally more satisfied than dissatisfied with their renting experience. There was wide variation in this result between the online survey and postcard survey. Across both surveys almost one in three tenants and one in four property owners are dissatisfied. See Table 2.

Table 2. Overall experience of renting in Queensland, by respondent type

Respondent type	Tenant	Property owner	Property manager	Total
Source: Postcard survey and online survey data combined. ²				
n	22,838	6,639	881	30,880
Satisfied	39%	47%	48%	42%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	30%	29%	39%	30%
Dissatisfied	31%	24%	13%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

² A post-call survey conducted by the RTA during the consultation period found higher levels of satisfaction (62%) than were reported in the online survey. For details of this survey, see 2.2 (RTA post-call surveys).

Tenants most often report that the rules about renting favour the property owner, while property owners and property managers believe the rules are skewed in favour of the tenant. One in four across all groups believe the rules are balanced. See Table 3.

Table 3. Who Queenslanders think the rules about renting in Queensland favour, by respondent type

The rules about renting...	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total
Source: Postcard survey and online survey data combined.				
n	22,716	6,677	889	30,798
Are in the rental property owner's favour	63%	18%	12%	50%
Are in the tenant's favour	3%	47%	56%	15%
Balance tenant and property owner interests	22%	28%	24%	23%
Don't know	12%	7%	8%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

1.5 Suggested solutions

Respondents to the consultation suggest many ways to improve their renting experience. As most individuals who responded to the postcard survey were tenants (95%), it is perhaps unsurprising that the answers to the question 'what's the one thing you'd change to improve your renting experience' were mostly ideas which favour tenants - lower rent, better property management, more timely and higher quality repairs and maintenance, improved treatment from owners/managers, ability to keep pets, lease stability, less frequent inspections, ability to make small changes, and less trouble with bonds.

The online survey had a more even split between tenants, property owners and property managers. In this survey the suggestions were similar to the postcard survey with the additional suggestions of increased fairness between property owners and tenants in terms of the law, making long-term leases available, better dispute resolution processes, and suggestions for improving housing standards (in terms of security, safety, energy, etc.).

The suggestions that came out of the written responses were also varied. Property owners often made suggestions which were directly at odds with what tenants suggested, and vice versa. The suggested solutions from both these groups can be found in more detail in the consultation findings section (mentioned in each theme when they are relevant). Property managers mainly made suggestions which directly related to their work, for example, keeping inspections the way they are and allowing property photography to include tenant's belongings within reason.

2 Consultation findings

In this chapter, we first present an overview of the demographic profile of respondents and their renting experiences in Queensland, followed by a synthesis of all data sources, arranged by the five consultation themes. This shows the relative importance of topics within the consultation, and the sentiments of respondents who mentioned these topics.

A total of 137,776 responses were received from tenants, property owners, property managers and other stakeholders from all over Queensland. These comprised:

- 19,965 responses to the online survey
- 96,649 responses to the snap polls
- 14,146 postcards returned to the Department
- 2,190 posts and comments on social media
- 4,826 other written responses (including forums posts and comments and peak body submissions).

In the surveys, respondents were asked to indicate if they were a tenant, property owner, property manager or other stakeholder.

Overall, tenants formed the majority of responses (79%), with property owners making up almost one fifth (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Breakdown of sample, by respondent status and age

RESPONSES CAME FROM



FROM THESE AGE GROUPS (YEARS OLD)



Note. 'Other' refers to respondents who were not able to be identified or who specified that they were not a tenant, property owner or property manager. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data, postcard survey data, written responses (excluding forum posts and comments).

Figure 2. Breakdown of respondents, by gender



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Source. Postcard survey data and Engagement HQ: Open Doors to Renting Reform online survey data.

Regarding their rental experiences, Queenslanders were generally more satisfied than dissatisfied. There was wide variation in this result between the online survey and postcard survey. Across both surveys almost one in three tenants and one in four property owners are dissatisfied. See Table 4.

Table 4. Satisfaction with renting experience, by responder type

Respondent type	Tenant	Property owner	Property manager	Total
Source. Postcard survey data and Engagement HQ: Open Doors to Renting Reform online survey data.				
n	20,976	4,318	536	25,830
Satisfied	38%	36%	42%	38%
Neither	30%	30%	36%	30%
Dissatisfied	32%	34%	22%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No data	176	79	4	259

Tenants most often report that the rules about renting favour the property owner while property owners and property managers believe the rules to be skewed in favour of the tenant – although one in three across all groups believe the rules are balanced. See Table 5.

Table 5. Who do rental laws favour, by respondent type

Respondent type	Tenant	Property owner	Property manager	Total
Source. Postcard survey data and Engagement HQ: Open Doors to Renting Reform online survey data.				
n	6,948	548	74	7,570
Favour property owner	56%	9%	8%	39%
Favour tenant	6%	63%	73%	27%
Balanced	38%	28%	19%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
No data	2,065	149	11	2,225

The five themes of the consultation were created by the Department ahead of the consultation period and as such they have shaped the discussion by informing the questions posed by the Department and the topics covered by responses from community.

2.1 A house and a home



2.1 A HOUSE AND A HOME

HOT TOPICS

Tenants want to make a house their home, while property owners want to protect their investment.

Pets and minor modifications were contentious issues as both have the risk of altering or damaging the rental property.

Property owners believed that property inspections should be frequent so that they can access and monitor their investment.

PETS

MINOR MODIFICATIONS

ENTRY AND PRIVACY

Of the five key consultation themes, this theme was the most frequently mentioned—it accounted for more than a quarter (27%) of responses across all channels.

The topic of pets in rental properties was the most discussed issue in the online forums (20% of responses via this channel mentioned pets) and second most discussed in other written responses (16% of all comments). Property owners were particularly concerned



Owner response

If tenants are going to have the right to have pets, they should be responsible for any damage and cleaning caused by the pet ... there should be a separate and substantial pet bond.



Tenant response

It should be the choice of the tenant if they have pets. It is unfair that a tenant is not able to enjoy the companionship, safety and health benefits of having a pet. Tenants have already provided financial protection, in the form of a bond, for agents and owners. Landlords should not be able to insist on an additional bond to cover animals.

about retaining their 'right' to refuse pets, the introduction of pet bonds, and the risk of damage to their property from pets. However, some owners were partial to the idea of a pet bond, if it covered the cost of potential damages to their property.

Most tenants reported that they would like rental properties to be pet-friendly. There was a mixed response among this group to the idea of pet bonds, with some tenants being open to the idea while others were opposed, instead believing that pets should be automatically allowed in all residences. In the snap poll on this issue, 75% of respondents indicated that a pet bond would help tenants and property owners reach an agreement around keeping pets.



Snap Poll

Would a pet bond help tenants and property owners reach agreement around keeping pets?

75% say YES

Peak bodies typically aligned with the interests of the groups they represented. While some bodies suggested that tenants should be able to rent with pets without any additional bond (QCOSS, QYHC, TQ), others were more apprehensive (PCA QLD) or felt a pet bond was necessary (REIQ). SCA Queensland emphasised that even if property owners or managers allow their tenants to have pets, approval from the body corporate (if there is one) is still required. Without their approval, tenants are not allowed pets, even if they have the permission of the property owner or manager.

Open Doors to Renting Reform Report

Tenants dominated the discussion surrounding entry practices and privacy (61% of written responses which mentioned this topic were from tenants). In the snap poll, most respondents (55%) thought that fair notice prior to entry into the home for non-urgent reasons was 7 days. Tenants also expressed the view that routine inspections were an invasion of privacy and that they should be less frequent. Most property owners felt there was no need to change current entry requirements, while some wanted to increase inspection frequency. This topic was frequently mentioned in the online surveys and written responses.

Tenants frequently suggested that quarterly inspections be abolished for long-term tenants or those with a history of good behaviour. Some property owners would like to see the laws around photographing at inspections relaxed so that photos can include some of the tenant's belongings.

Allowing tenants to make minor changes to the property in which they live was another topic that was much discussed—it was frequently mentioned across all response channels. Property owners were more likely to mention this issue than tenants and, at times, property owners were sympathetic to the need for tenants to put a personal touch on their living space. However, many were wary of the scope of the changes which could be attempted if tenants were given the green light to make modifications as they see fit.

Property owners also frequently questioned whether their property would be returned to its original state if they were not able to refuse certain modifications. Tenants generally advocated for a moderate amount of control over their rented property, such as the ability to hang pictures, plant or maintain a garden, or paint a wall. This was reflected in the snap poll as 65 per cent of respondents thought that a property owner shouldn't be able to stop tenants from making minor modifications.



Owner response

Inspections are critical in identifying and repairing damage and safety issues to buildings that renters have not reported.



Tenant response

Each time I have an inspection every three months, it feels like a kick in the guts and that I cannot be trusted. What I would like to see is tenants with a good track record ... be allowed to have their inspections reduced to twice a year or yearly.



Snap Poll

What is fair notice prior to entry into the home for non-urgent reasons?

55% say 7 Days



Snap Poll

Should a property owner be able to prevent tenants from making minor modifications?

65% say NO



Tenant response

In our current tenancy, we are expected to ask permission to even use bluetaq for posters on the walls!! We ignore this one, but we have refrained from making the place our own by hanging picture hooks, and other decorations because of the lease agreement. It is degrading and humiliating not to be able to live in the house you are essentially paying the mortgage for another person for.

2.2 Property condition



2.2 PROPERTY CONDITION

HOT TOPICS

Tenants were hesitant to report that they needed repairs or maintenance. They feared rent increases or eviction in retaliation.

There was disagreement between property owners and tenants regarding who should be responsible for minor maintenance issues.

Tenants were supportive of minimum standards to address safety issues, while property owners felt that the regulation would force them to increase rent or leave the rental market.

REPAIRS AND
MAINTENANCE

MINIMUM STANDARDS



Owner response

In general, owners will repair and maintain properties as needed, both as part of their obligation and also because renters will be satisfied and remain longer at the property

Property condition was the third most mentioned consultation theme due to the high frequency with which all groups discussed repairs and maintenance. Maintenance was regularly mentioned in the postcard surveys, on the forums and in other responses as tenants noted both the need for timely repairs and maintenance, as well as situations when repairs and maintenance were ignored or not dealt with quickly by property owners and managers.

Tenants also expressed concern that asking for

repairs and maintenance could lead to an increase in their rent or to a notice to leave without grounds. Some tenants suggested that property owners be fined for not completing repairs in a timely manner.

In contrast to the opinions of tenants, snap poll data indicated that for three-quarters of respondents (75%) emergency repairs were completed within a reasonable timeframe. Property owners had a moderate interest in the topic of repairs with many detailing examples of damage by tenants and/or requests for maintenance that they felt were unreasonable. There was disagreement between property owners and tenants regarding who should be responsible for minor maintenance issues.



Tenant response

Most tenants worry that if they request basic essential repairs, their landlord will be more likely to increase the rent or kick them out. Landlords should be required to undertake essential repairs in a timely fashion



Snap Poll

Are emergency repairs completed within a reasonable timeframe at your rental property?

75% say YES



Owner response

Although the concept of a minimum housing standards has merit, in practice rental accommodation comes in all shapes and sizes so applying universal standards to both new and pre-existing dwellings may be problematic. Any minimum housing standards imposed on rental accommodation should be limited to addressing the following: structural condition; and repair and sanitation; and cleanliness and freedom from pests



Snap Poll

Have you ever seen a rental property with serious safety problems?

62% say YES

Minimum housing standards were heavily discussed in the written responses. This was one of the most mentioned topics with 30% of respondents including a comment on minimum standards in their response. However, this topic was not often mentioned in online surveys, postcard surveys or on the forums.

When minimum standards were mentioned, tenants were vocal about the need for stricter standards while property owners expressed concerns that unnecessary and expensive regulation would be introduced into the rental market. The majority of respondents (62%) indicated that they had seen rental properties with serious safety problems in a snap poll. Potential solutions to ensure Queensland rental properties are well maintained and in good repair sourced from snap poll data included both mandatory times for repairs to be done by (44%) and minimum standards for repair and maintenance (32%).



Tenant response

Maintenance should be kept up-to-date and upgraded to meet current safety standards. I have heard the excuse that the landlord cannot afford the maintenance. Then why are they renting the property if such an old, dilapidated home is, or could become, a health hazard to the tenants? There should be a standard met for rental homes that should be checked by authorities and complied with, outlining such hazards as lead paint, ongoing mould issues, asbestos, safety glass, electrical safety standards etc.

Recommendations from peak bodies largely aligned with their constituents. Bodies representing tenants (QCOSS and TQ) advocated for specific minimum housing standards (such as insulation) and stated that the standards need to be clearly articulated and enforceable. Bodies representing property owners or managers (POAQ and REIQ), on the other hand, stressed that minimum standards should not extend beyond basic health and safety matters and must have some flexibility to account for differences between dwellings.



Tenant response

I am renting a unit (with a big roof) and very much would like to have solar hot water and power but it is nearly impossible to do so when you are renting.



Snap Poll

What would encourage more Queensland rental properties to have energy and water efficiency features, like solar panels or water saving devices?

**65% say
Owner Incentives**

Sustainability and minimising living costs were not mentioned in a notable amount of responses.

However, the topic of costs associated with gas, electricity and water was mentioned by both tenants and property owners in written responses. Respondents in the snap poll believed that the best option to encourage more Queensland rental properties to have energy and water efficiency features was owner incentives. Tenants noted that they would like the opportunity to install solar panels on their rental properties to decrease utility bills while property owners advocated for incentives or subsidies to encourage energy efficiency (to ensure their costs do not increase).

2.3 Flexibility and security



2.3 FLEXIBILITY AND SECURITY

HOT TOPICS

Tenants were interested in the long-term security which would be afforded by longer leases. Provided they had the right tenant, property owners were also interested in the financial stability of longer leases.

Property owners were concerned about retaining their right to end a tenancy without grounds.

ENDING LEASES

LONG-TERM LEASES

NOTICE TO LEAVE
WITHOUT GROUNDS



Tenant response

We have been told we are fantastic tenants, but 12 months is too short. We would ask if landlords could be forced to offer much longer leases to good tenants, say 5-year leases. This is common overseas and gives much greater security and peace of mind.

Flexibility and security was the least discussed theme across all the response channels. However, the costs and benefits associated with making long term leases available was a dominant topic in the online surveys. Across all channels, tenants advocated for the introduction of longer length leases. They believe that this will increase the security of their tenancy. There was minimal mention of this topic by property owners, though some mentioned that they were open to the idea of longer leases to keep good tenants in their properties.



Snap Poll

Should a property owner need to give a reason if they want to end a tenancy?

57% say YES

Issues around ending leases (which encompasses notices and evictions) were frequent discussion topics on the forums (17% of comments) and written responses (19% of responses mentioned notices to vacate specifically) and were occasionally mentioned in responses of other types. Property owners' greatest concern was ensuring that their right to issue a 'without grounds' eviction notice remains intact. They also expressed concerns about property owners having to give more notice to end a tenancy than tenants do. Snap poll data indicated that most people (57%) thought that a property owner should need to give a reason if they want to end a tenancy but there were numerous fair reasons that were suitable. When tenants mentioned this topic, they focussed on the distress of possibly being evicted 'without grounds'. Tenants suggested this clause be removed from the Act.



Tenant response

Tenants who have complied with the conditions of their lease should be entitled to have their lease renewed unless the property owner, or a spouse, parent, or child of the property owner, wishes to move into the home, or the owner requires the home to be vacant in order to undertake major renovations.

Peak bodies representing property owners suggested that the length of notice periods be changed to the same time period for property owners and tenants (POAQ).

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They also suggested that ending a tenancy without grounds remains an option in order to maintain the property owner's rights (REIQ) and the need to 'negotiate appropriate tenancy terms' (REIQ) is based on the premise of flexibility and security. TQ advocated for stricter laws around when tenancies can be ended and for preventing unfair evictions while QCOS requested improvements to privacy and more secure tenure (the availability of longer lease terms).

Caravan parks were not generally a popular topic of discussion but in a snap poll almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents indicated that caravan owner-residents in caravan parks need better protection from park closure or change of use.



Owner response

Removing an owner's right to control who resides in their property would be detrimental to both owners and tenants. From what I understand, most owners are happy to keep good tenants in place, however, both owners and tenant's needs and or expectations can change overtime. At the end of the day, it is the owner who has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars and is taking the financial risk and as such I should have the right to decide who lives in my property and to what standards are upheld in relation to the property.



Owner response

The only major change needed is to balance the notice required to leave. Why do tenants only have to give 2 weeks and we as landlords have to give 2 months. Please just make it 2-3 weeks both ways.



Snap Poll

Do caravan owner-residents in a caravan park need better protection from park closure or change of use?

64% say YES

2.4 Better protections



2.4 BETTER PROTECTIONS

HOT TOPICS

Property managers were a source of concern for both tenants and property owners.

Resolving disputes (inc. QCAT) was frequently mentioned, especially by property managers.

There was support from tenants and property owners to invest more in Queensland social housing.

PROPERTY MANAGERS

DISPUTE RESOLUTION



Tenant response

I have felt in some instances that the real estate agent managing the property has actively hindered my attempts to have them pass on requests to the landlord, and then lied about their response. There was no way for me to know for sure.



Owner response

Estate agents do not check references for their tenants properly, so they aren't aware of what these 'tenants' have done in other properties. That sense of responsibility for other people's property doesn't seem to exist with many people.



Owner response

If a tenant does not move out by the set time, the time it takes to apply to QCAT to have them removed takes too long. Even after an order has been served, I have had tenants still refuse to move, and then I have to go back to QCAT to get an order given for Police to remove them. Once this process took nearly two months.

'Better protections was the fourth most talked about consultation theme due almost entirely to the frequency with which all groups discussed the topic of property managers. In the postcard surveys property management accounted for 14% of responses, in online surveys this figure was 12% and in the written responses 28% of responses had some mention of property managers.

While tenants were the most vocal, both tenants and property owners expressed that they were displeased with property managers (the split in responses was 71% from tenants, 25% from property owners and 4% from property managers in the written submissions). Tenants felt that property managers did not effectively address issues associated with the property, communicate poorly and have too much power. Property owners felt that property managers were not doing enough to stop bad tenants living in their property—for example, checking referees, checking tenancy databases and generally vetting prospective tenants. Many of those with a positive relationship with a property manager indicated that they had experienced longer-term leases, facilitating better upkeep of the property.

Dispute resolution was frequently discussed in written responses (28% of responses mentioned this) but did not draw many comments via other feedback channels. From the written responses it can be said that both tenants and property owners were concerned with the delays and complicated processes at QCAT. Property owners were overwhelmingly dissatisfied, feeling that QCAT is biased

against them and that there is no reasonable recourse for property owners or managers without legal representation.



Tenant response

I have been here for years and have a great relationship with the property manager and owner.

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On the forums the topic of tenant and property owner history being recorded was a popular one, accounting for 10% of comments. This topic is interpreted as relating to tenancy databases as the database for tenants includes their rental history.

Databases were not a popular topic across other response channels. Of the responses on this topic, the sentiment was that the current tenancy database laws do not strike the right balance between deterring poor tenant behaviour and providing enough protection for property owners (this view was also reflected in the snap poll on this topic where 62% of respondents held this opinion). Property owners felt that databases were a crucial tool in selecting tenants and advocated for tenant listings to remain in databases for longer periods. Tenants were worried about their privacy and how databases would affect their renting situation, they advocated for similar databases for property owners and managers.

The topic of better protections for vulnerable Queenslanders was also not discussed in detail—12% of written responses mentioned disabled and elderly renters and there was a negligible amount of mentions via the other response channels. In the context of this discussion, vulnerable Queenslanders refers to:

- renters experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV)
- renters with disability
- elderly renters
- renters on fixed incomes
- single income renters
- female renters.



Snap Poll

Do the current database laws strike the right balance between deterring poor tenant behaviour and providing sufficient protection for property owners?

62% say NO



Tenant response

Unless you can afford a lawyer it's a different level, so as a typical family we are having to fight a system that doesn't provide or protect us as tenants.



Tenant response

There should be a centralised database for landlord history: all fine[s] imposed, complaints made and their resolutions, etc. Renters have no way of knowing who their landlord is and so they can't make an informed decision, it is ridiculous.



Owner response

Databases are a vital and legitimate tool for owners and agents, similar to credit and criminal history checks ... It encourages renters to meet their obligations of the tenancy agreement. Listings need to be created quickly and remain for at least 7 years to be effective.

Comments that fell under this topic were generally made by tenants, who often spoke to their personal experiences of vulnerability. Some tenants indicated that there were not enough rental properties that catered to the elderly or those with disability. While some property owners recognised that these groups can often make the best tenants, they also commented that catering to all would be almost impossible.



Snap Poll

If sufficient evidence is provided of domestic and family violence, should a tenant be able to end their tenancy obligations at short notice, without going to QCAT?

82% say YES

Many respondents also indicated that if enough evidence of DFV exists, tenants should be able to end their tenancy obligations at short notice, without going to QCAT (82% said 'yes' to this snap poll question). While property owners were typically sympathetic, they did not feel they should be financially disadvantaged to protect such vulnerable persons, and repeatedly called for a fund to be created to assist those experiencing DFV.

In terms of peak body recommendations, those advocating for tenants called for more investment in public housing, a ban on private tenancy databases, improved protections for tenants, a code of conduct for managers, and greater regulation of the private rental market.



Owner response

Seniors and disabled people often are the best renters for a variety of reasons. Where feasible, modifications including installation of accessibility features such as grab rails, ramps and lifts will attract and keep better renters.

A recommendation was made that suggested adding provisions to the RTRAA that allow a co-tenant to end their liability under a lease agreement where the fixed term of the lease agreement has ended, or the lease is a periodic agreement. Peak bodies representing property owners made few recommendations on this theme. When they did, they called for faster timeframes for QCAT hearings and for requirements for tenants to provide a forwarding address when they vacate. Additional ideas from peak bodies included expanding the South East Queensland (SEQ) Housing Supply Expert Panel and allowing it to set targets for affordable and social housing, renewing social housing and unlocking government land, and improving management of social housing (all from PCA Australia QLD (in conjunction with QCOS)).



Owner response

Whilst accommodation for disability needs to be VERY important for disabled tenants, it shouldn't become an essential for all rentals.



Tenant response

Literally no rental properties cater to the disabled. NRAS [National Rental Affordability Scheme] is massively under supplied, the few properties that come up that would be suitable for the disabled (e.g. ground floor houses) are rare, particularly in areas with good access to medical facilities (a necessity for people with disabilities).



Snap Poll

Would an "accessibility disclosure" declaring the level of accessibility (e.g. ramp, grab rails) help tenants choose suitable rental properties?

84% say YES

2.5 Looking and leasing



2.5 LOOKING AND LEASING

HOT TOPICS

Tenants were concerned about high rent and were stressed by repeated rent increases.

Property owners believed they need to increase rents to cover costs and keep up with the market.

Tenants felt that the bond amount is too much, while property owners felt that it is not enough. Both parties felt disadvantaged by the bond system.

CHANGES TO RENT

BONDS

AFFORDABILITY



Tenant response

It is difficult enough to find affordable housing, but it is now necessary to predict future rent increases to ensure that I will be able to afford to continue to rent the property. I have been a long term tenant and been priced out of properties due to repeated and unsustainable rent increases.

While this theme was the second most frequently mentioned of the five consultation themes, this is entirely due to the amount of responses on the topic of rent—29% of postcard surveys mentioned rent. Looking and leasing was the most popular theme overall for social media posts and comments with 27% of posts/comments mentioning this.³

Rent, rental affordability and rent increases were the most frequently mentioned topic in postcard surveys (29% of responses) and were also often talked about through other channels (for example, in written responses rent increases and affordability were mentioned in 12% of responses).



Owner response

Landlords are just ordinary people with a long-term dream that entering the rental industry is one way of becoming self-funded or at least assist in the funding of their retirement. This is responsible planning, one that will also result in not relying/burden the public purse in retirement. Should be considered as an equal party instead of being exposed to all the risk.

Tenants feel overwhelmingly dissatisfied and stressed about paying rent that they believe is too high. Tenants expressed that they live in a constant state of fear about rent increases, and many expressed the crippling effects of repeated and unsustainable rent increases. Several property owners, on the other hand, stated that they need to be able to increase rents to cover costs and keep up with the market.

While property owners often spoke about their properties in terms of their investment value, this was not a common topic of discussion overall. In forum posts and comments many property owners discussed the issues which affect financial pressures for them (11% of comments) and there was some discussion of divestment because of low rental yields across all response channels. Of the few tenants who commented on investment, the sentiment was dissatisfaction in the power imbalance that the investment market creates.

³ Social media posts and comments were analysed using Gavagai Explorer. Social media posts and comments include direct replies to questions asked by Housing for Queensland or replies or comments made to the comments by other page users. Some respondents also made their own posts on the Housing for Queensland Facebook page.

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Related to the issue of investment are comments about the rental market as a whole. This topic was not heavily commented upon however, some tenants shared views on this in the written responses. Tenants expressed that they wanted more assistance to enter the property market and that currently they feel disenchanted at their prospects of purchasing a property of their own in the future. Of the very few property owners who commented on the rental market, the feeling was that if the current tenancy legislation does not better recognise the rights of owners, they will leave the market.

Payment methods for rent was not a topic which garnered a lot of responses during the consultation. From an examination of the written responses it can be said that most tenants that commented on payment methods were dissatisfied. Property owners were also dissatisfied. Both parties commonly expressed concern about payment methods that incur additional charges which do not get passed on to the property owner. Similarly, snap poll data indicated that respondents said 'no' (67%) to whether it was fair to have processing or dishonour fees applied to rent payment methods.

The issue of payments for utilities was also grouped under this topic with both tenants and property owners expressing that water rates should be billed directly to the tenant (with minimal delay so that tenants can budget for the expenses).

Bonds were mentioned by both tenants and property owners at a low rate across all response channels (this topic made up 8% of responses to the online survey and 4% of responses to the postcard survey). From an examination of the response channels, most tenants that commented on bonds were dissatisfied and made complaints about issues around the bond and exit process (27% of snap poll respondents had their bond held unreasonably). Property owners were also dissatisfied but for opposing reasons. Tenants believe the bond amount is too much, whereas property owners believe it is not enough. Tenants feel the current bond system disadvantages them, whereas property owners feel it disadvantages them.



Tenant response

Some real estate agencies do not offer a way to pay that does not incur a cost to the tenant and having seen their contracts, their main method of payment accepted is a rental card that is from a third party. This is common practice and should not be allowed to happen.



Tenant response

I have recently received 12 months of water invoices in one hit. This is totally unfair as a tenant I feel I should receive the invoice within a month of them being paid by the owner. I should have the ability to adjust my water usage if perhaps it is too high.



Owner response

You also need adequate funds to deal with tenants who don't pay, tenants who wreck things and tenants who leave a place filthy and I can assure you the bond is not anywhere near sufficient to cover these expenses.



Snap Poll

Is it fair for processing fees or dishonour fees to be applied to rent payment methods?

67% say NO



Snap Poll

Have you ever had your bond withheld unreasonably?

73% say NO

Discrimination, information and advertising were rarely mentioned in responses. For information on discrimination, see the better protections theme. On the topic of information, the only notable opinion from tenants was that there is too much information collected when they begin a tenancy—they feel that this is invasive. If advertising was mentioned it was generally to say that some advertisements for rental properties are misleading and do not reflect the actual state of the property.



Tenant response

A lot of the information that has been asked has been irrelevant to a rental property. e.g. Rego of vehicles, insurance details, medical information, 2 personal references etc....I would have thought rental history reference and the ability to meet the rent was the most important thing. Let's standardise the forms so we all know where we stand

3 Appendix - Background

The Queensland Government is committed to rental law reform that offers better protections and improves housing stability in the rental market. The *Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2027* is a 10-year framework driving key reforms and targeted investment across the housing continuum. The confidence pillar of the Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2020 outlines actions to ensure housing systems are fair, contemporary and assure the safety and dignity of all, including by reviewing and modernising the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (RTRA Act).

The Queensland Government amended the RTRA Act in 2017 to provide for minimum housing standards for rental accommodation to be made by regulation. These minimum standards will help to ensure all Queensland rental accommodation is maintained in a condition that minimises risks to occupant health and safety. During the 2017 election, the Queensland Government committed to consult stakeholders on the detailed content of minimum standards.

On 30 September 2018 the Queensland Government launched the Open Doors to Renting Reform consultation program in order to gather responses on shared experiences and ideas from tenants, rental property owners, property managers and the broader community on how renting in Queensland could be improved. The aim was to gather feedback which would inform policy and reform development to ensure Queensland rental laws are fair, contemporary and consider the security and wellbeing of all, now and into the future.

4 Appendix – online survey analysis

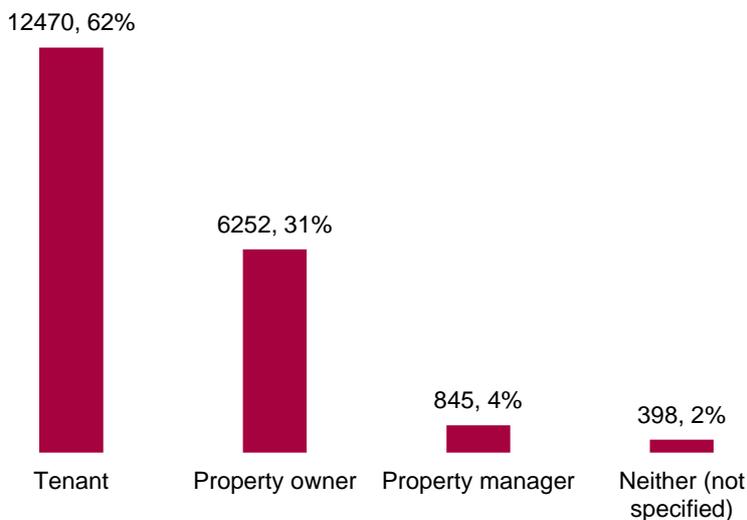
4.1 Respondent profile

Overall, there were 19,965 respondents to the online survey. Tenants were the dominant respondent group, representing 62% of all respondents and there were more than twice as many tenant respondents as there were property owners. Property managers made up only 4% of respondents. There were a small number of surveys (2%) where it was not possible to determine a respondent category (see Figure 3).

Compared to population levels,⁴ respondent demographics were skewed towards females between the ages of 26 and 64. Queenslanders over 65 were underrepresented in the online survey. However, this was compensated for by their overrepresentation in the postcard survey. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people were slightly underrepresented.

According to data from the RTA and ABS, there are between 600,000 and 700,000 tenants in Queensland.^{6,7} Extrapolating from the proportion of properties owned by property owners reported in the online survey, it is estimated that there are between 400,000 and 500,000 property owners. This ratio of tenants to property owners indicates that the survey is broadly representative of the population.

Figure 3. Respondent profile



Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

⁴ [ABS Census data](#), 2016.

⁵ The number of respondents under 25 was also lower than Queensland population levels; however, this is to be expected given that the proportion of Queenslanders between 15 and 25 who rent is lower than other age groups.

⁶ ABS Census data, 2016.

⁷ RTA data, as supplied by DPHW.

4.1.1 Classifying types of respondents

Across the board, views among tenants and property owners and managers diverge quite considerably. Therefore, the data in many of the tables in this section have been broken up into these three groups.

In some cases, respondents could fit into more than one category, for example a tenant could also be a property owner. In these cases, the following rules were used to classify the respondent:

- If a respondent was a property owner, they were classified as property owner regardless of whether they also belonged to any of the other group.
- If a respondent identified as a property manager, they were classified as property manager regardless of whether they also were a tenant.
- Only respondents who identified only as a tenant were classified as tenants.

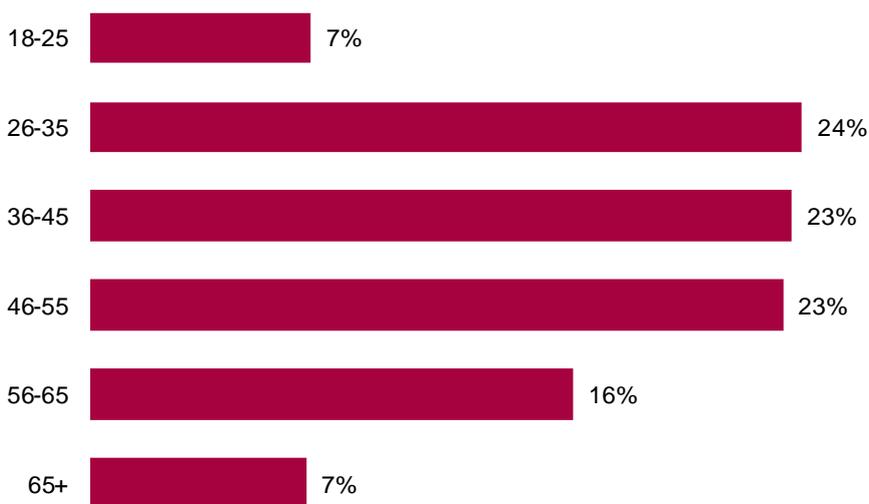
4.1.2 Respondent age and gender

There were more female respondents (67%) than male (33%). This is quite different to the postcard survey where males and females were more evenly represented.

All the age groups were quite well represented in the online survey. The biggest age groups were those in the middle, spanning 26 to 55-year-olds. Only a small proportion of respondents (7%) were 65 plus (see Figure 4).

This age profile is quite different compared with the postcard survey where 64% were 65 or over. We understand this is likely because postcard surveys were sent to RTA clients without listed email addresses—these clients were more likely to be older and not have access to a computer or the internet.

Figure 4. Respondent age



Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.1.3 Other demographic groups

A small number of respondents reported having a disability (7%), speaking a language other than English at home (5%) and being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (2%).

4.2 Profile of tenants, property owners and managers

4.2.1 Profile of tenants

The online survey included responses from 12,470 tenants and some of the survey questions were specifically for this group. This section addresses the data from these questions, which were mainly about profiling tenants.

How long have tenants been renting

Almost one-third of tenants (31%) had been renting for 5 to 10 years. Thirteen percent had rented for more than 20 years while only 6% had rented for less than a year.

Who manages rental properties

Most tenant respondents (91%) had their properties managed by a property manager or real estate agency (see Table 6).

Table 6. Proportion of tenants by who manages their property

Who manages rental property	Percent
n	13,905
A property manager or real estate manager	91%
The owner	7%
Queensland Government	1%
Other	1%
Total	100%
No data	6,060

Note. This table uses uncleaned data; therefore, the total n is larger. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.2 Why tenants rent

Tenants rent for a variety of reasons, but most commonly they rent because it is the best option they can afford (65%). A significant proportion (29%) indicated that they are saving to buy their own property. Being able to live in more desirable location was important for more than one-quarter (26%) of tenants (see Table 7).

Table 7. Proportion of tenants by why they rent

Reason	Percent
n	12,470
It's what I can afford	65%
I am saving a deposit to buy my own property	29%
I can live in a location where I couldn't afford to buy	26%
It's more flexible than owning a property	18%
It's more cost effective than buying and owning a property	16%
Other	16%

Note. This data is based on a “select-all-that-apply” survey question so the correct n for calculating percentages is difficult to establish. Therefore, the n is all respondents who identified as tenants. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.3 Summary of other reasons why tenants rent

In responses to question 4.3.1, tenants also outlined the other reasons why they rent. This data was summarised using Gavagai Explorer and is detailed in the section below.

Cost of rent

There were 665 responses that discussed the cost of rent. Some respondents suggested that their rent costs were reasonable, but many other respondents suggested that rents were too high and comprised a significant portion of a tenant’s monthly income.

“I rent privately, and my rent is very reasonable.”

“Rent is expensive for a single parent and I've been unable to escape the rut I'm in ... I am not saving money whatsoever spending more than 50% of my income directly on rent alone.”

Many respondents stated that they were in a challenging position whereby they would like to buy a house but were unable to do so. The cost of rent was put forward as one of the main reasons why some tenants were unable to start saving for a deposit or to save enough money for a deposit on a property in a particular area that the tenant likes or wishes to buy a property in.

“I rent because I can't afford to save for a deposit. I can't afford to save for a deposit because rent and utilities are so high. With the amount I pay in rent, a mortgage would be cheaper, yet without the deposit, I have to rent. It's a catch 22 and again, in favour of the Landlord.”

Because of this ‘catch 22’ situation some respondents suggested that they would have to continue renting despite not wanting to do so.

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“I am unable to save for a property deposit and rent at the same time as rental in safe areas is high. So, I am stuck renting.”

“I hate renting but cannot afford to buy and will never be able to save a deposit because of the cost of rent in this state. Am trapped in rental hell.”

Some respondents suggested that renting used money that they could potentially utilise as a deposit for purchasing their own property.

“I’ve moved 3hrs from where I grew up, so I could afford to rent. I have enough money currently for a deposit out here but not the income at present. By renting it’s going to eat into my deposit savings.”

Some respondents suggested that they chose to rent for lifestyle and investment and/or taxation purposes.

Affordability of buying

There were 659 responses that discussed the affordability of buying a property. Some respondents simply suggested that they were not currently able to buy, despite many wanting to own their own property, while others provided greater detail. Reasons for not being able to afford a house included not receiving government assistance if a tenant decides to purchase, high interest rates, not being able to afford loan repayments, being on a pension, having to care for other family members or dependents on a limited income or pension, and the increases in property prices over recent years.

“I would love to buy a home but the rent assistance I get from the government would be gone and I would therefore not be able to afford it. The government will pay me to pay for someone else’s negatively geared home and not have a secure home but not for me to buy my own home as a low-income person (single parent one child, single due to domestic violence).”

Some respondents suggested that they were not able to save enough money for a deposit. Specific reasons for this included having no savings, having to pay for medical/ health bills, earning a low-income, being a single worker, not being able to combine savings with a partner, family member or another person, and other personal circumstances.

“I have no savings, so therefore can only afford to rent.”

“I would like to buy but I can't save a deposit given my circumstances. However, I have been able to pay my rent without issue for all of the 11 years living in Brisbane. Very demoralizing.”

Some respondents suggested that they struggled to find suitable properties for purchase within their budgets.

Employment circumstances

There were 354 comments that discussed employment circumstances. Many respondents indicated that they were renting a property due to only being in an area as a result of their employment situation. Specific reasons for this included only having a short-term work contract, having to work in distant remote or regional locations, the rental property being located close by to their work location, friends and/or family or in a nice area, regularly changing work conditions and/or requirements, and only working part of the year in a particular location. For some other respondents they suggested it was because they have to 'fly in, fly out' for work.

"Locations suitable for changing work and school requirements. We are a large family and it is not feasible to buy a house large enough."

"I work part of the year in this area and need to rent a property while here ..."

Some respondents suggested that they rent because they are required to regularly move locations as a result of their own or a family member's employment. The Australian Defence Force was suggested as one example of an employer that can require tenants (and sometimes their families) to move regularly.

Some respondents suggested that they rent because their company covers the cost of them doing so or supplies them with a property to live in as a result of their employment situation.

Some respondents suggested that they were not willing to consider purchasing a home until they found a job that they loved doing.

Moved to a new location

There were 165 responses that discussed moving to a new location. Some respondents had move to Queensland from outside of Australia and renting was a good way of getting settled into the country and state.

"Just moved to Australia so it seemed like a good start."

Other respondents stated that they had moved to Queensland from interstate. Reasons they put forward included that they were renting because they were unsure where they wanted to ultimately be based, because they wanted to discover and get to know different areas, because it is seen as a 'family-friendly' state, because they were still looking for a suitable property to purchase and because they had nowhere else to stay and therefore had to rent a property. Some other respondents mentioned that they were renting because they were unsure if they would continue to stay in Queensland or not and because they knew that they would only be in a particular Queensland location on a temporary basis.

"I moved interstate from Melbourne, so renting is giving me an opportunity to check out different areas of Brisbane before I buy."

"I relocated from interstate and this was a better option for now."

Other respondents reported that they had moved from one part of Queensland to another. One respondent stated that they had moved to a nearby town because they had bought their own land and were currently sourcing finance in order to build their own property. Another respondent mentioned that they had moved in with a family member in order to renovate and then sell a property owned by the tenant in a different location.

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Age

There were 156 respondents that discussed age. Some respondents mentioned that they were too old and that they had been renting for many years and, as a result, it was too late for them to consider buying a property or that they did not have enough assets to qualify for a home loan.

“... Can't afford to buy as a single Mother. Now too old and too poor!”

“I have never been in a financial position where I could purchase a home and I am now considered too old to undertake a housing loan.”

Some respondents suggested that they were too old to get a home loan while others had previously owned, then lost property and that they were now too old to purchase property.

“I was an investor that went bankrupt due to a bad business deal. I lost 6 houses and a motel and now unable to buy another property due to my age.”

Some respondents advised that they had been concerned by the interest rates at a previous time when they might have considered purchasing a property.

“I left it too late to buy a property after my divorce. I was worried about interest rates as my marital home was in the time of very high rates. I was worried on one income I would have difficulty paying off mortgage. Never could save a large enough deposit. Then was told I would have to pay out the loan at 70 years of age rather than a longer-term housing loan once I reached 60 yrs. that would then take most of my Super.”

Waiting to buy or build

There were 148 responses that discussed waiting to buy or build a property. Many respondents indicated that they were reviewing the current market, deciding what area(s) they would like to purchase property in or are waiting for the right opportunity/ to find a property at the right price

“Have relocated interstate. Reviewing what area we would like to purchase in.”

“I haven't found a suitable property to purchase in my budget.”

Some respondents suggested that they were renting because they were either building their own property somewhere else or were planning on doing so.

Some respondents suggested that they were waiting to receive some money (such as from a settlement) which might enable them to purchase property.

“I have separated and currently dealing with lawyers and mediators. I am about to receive a sum of money which will allow me to purchase another home. I have owned properties since I was 21.”

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Testing out area

There were 105 responses that discussed testing out an area. Most respondents indicated that they were renting in a particular area or suburb to decide if they liked it or not before considering whether to purchase a property there or nearby.

“I sold my property and wanted to move into a new area. I decided to rent to see if I like the area before purchasing a home there. I am ready to purchase a home and renting allows me to wait for the right property rather than purchasing under pressure. I previously did the same thing when I moved from NSW to QLD.”

Some respondents indicated that they rented because they liked an area or suburb but also knew that they cannot afford to purchase a property in that area. Sometimes the respondents might have purchased a rental/ investment property in another area.

“I rent where I want to live but cannot afford to buy, and we bought our own rental property in an area we could afford but don't want to live in.”

Some respondents suggested that they rented in a new area because it was convenient for being close to family members and/or friends. Other respondents suggested that they don't intend to be in an area on a long-term basis so buying a property there was not feasible or realistic for them.

“I originally decided to rent in an area convenient to my children's school but now house prices in Qld are unreasonably high.”

Sold previously owned property

There were 89 comments that discussed selling a previously owned property. Some respondents indicated that this was because they simply wanted to move to a new area, some indicated that they were renting because they were still deciding what they should do next and/or they did not want to commit to buying in the current market.

“Have sold a house & have not wanted to commit to buying another property in the current market”

Some respondents suggested they were renting because they could not afford to buy again, some because they had a made a loss on the sale of their previous property or some because of other circumstances such as the collapse of a business owned or operated by a family member.

“Husband's business collapsed, and we sold through necessity. Because of our age and inability to provide a deposit we are left with no option.”

Family reasons

There were 89 comments that discussed family reasons. Many respondents suggested that they could not afford to buy as they had experienced a breakup, divorce or separation. Some of these respondents indicated that it happened recently while others did not indicate when it occurred. Some individuals stated that renting was only a temporary situation until the divorce settlement with their former spouse had been settled. Some also indicated that they had no choice but to sell the property in order to cover settlement costs.

“I lost my house in a divorce and now cannot afford to buy again.”

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Some respondents indicated that as a result of being a single parent or carer of children they were unable to purchase their own property and had to rent.

“I have no other option but to rent. I am a carer of a disabled child and single parent. I cannot afford to buy a property without a working income but there is no respite when you child is disabled.”

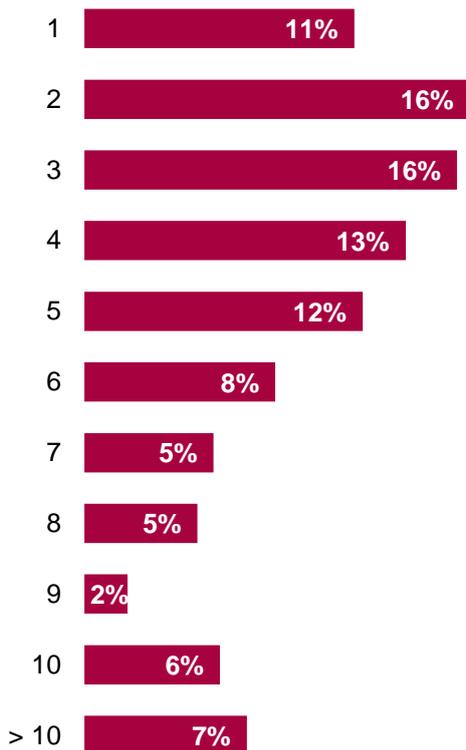
Some of these respondents indicated that because they were a single parent, they were unable to obtain a home loan from a bank. One respondent indicated that they rented where they do because it was close to their child’s school.

“Can’t save a deposit to buy and bank won’t give me a mortgage since I divorced and became single. Was forced to sell by bank when ex wanted out.”

How many rental properties tenants have rented

Tenants most commonly indicated they have rented two (16%) or three (16%) properties, with almost all tenants (93%) indicating they had rented 10 or fewer properties. Only seven percent (see Figure 5) have rented more than ten properties.

Figure 5. How many rental properties tenants have rented

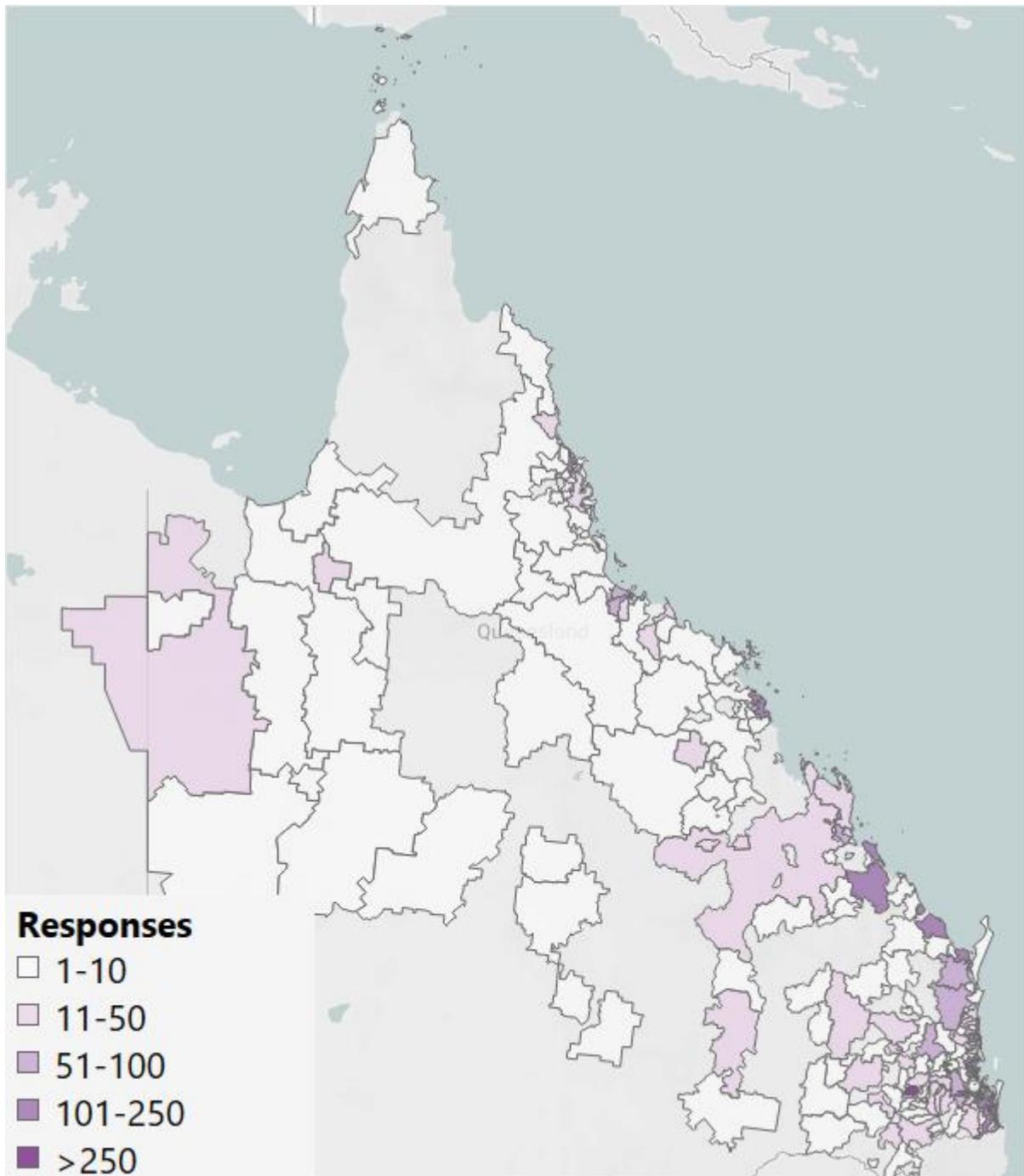


Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

Where do tenants rent

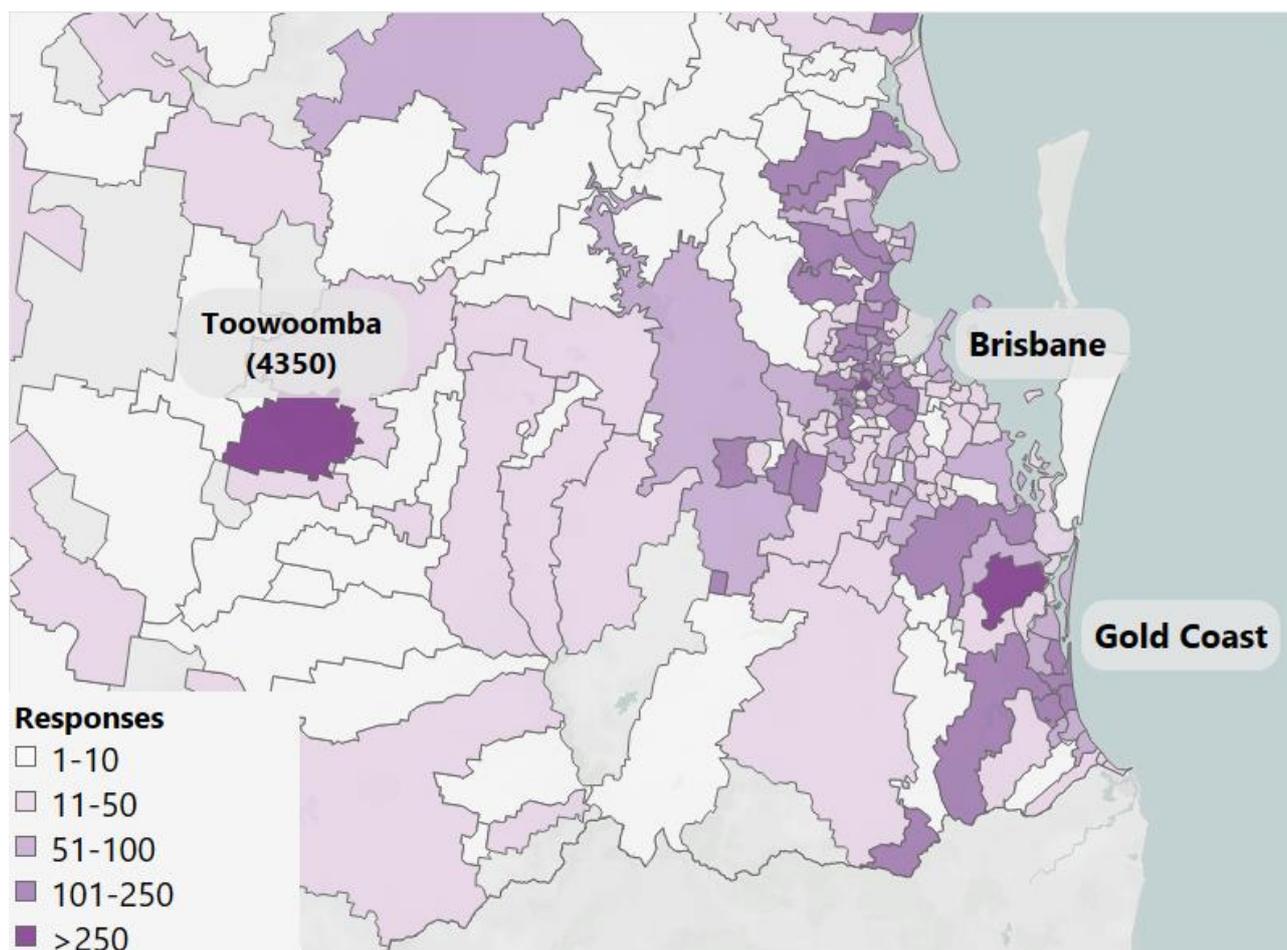
Tenants rent across Queensland but are concentrated around coastal and metropolitan regions (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). The most common postcode where tenants live are 4350 (2.5%), 4101 (2.1%) and 4209 (1.9%).

Figure 6. Density of tenants across Queensland



Note. Darker shading indicates higher density. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

Figure 7. Density of tenants across Brisbane area



Note. Darker shading indicates higher density. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.4 Profile of property owners

The online survey included responses from 6,252 property owners and some of the survey questions were specifically for this group. This section shows the data from these questions, which were mainly about profiling property owners.

Reasons for property ownership

The reasons for property ownership are most commonly financial, either as part of long-term goals of financial security or to earn an income (see Table 8).

Table 8. Reasons for property ownership

Reasons	Percent of property owners
n	6,252
To invest in my future financial security e.g. retirement, superannuation	50%
To earn income	21%
For tax purposes e.g. trust structures, negative gearing	14%
I didn't want to sell when I moved to a new property	13%
I inherited it	1%

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Other	5%
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Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.5 Why else do property owners own rental property

In total there were 435 responses to question 5.4.1 (Why else do you own a rental property?).

Owner has moved

There were 130 responses that discussed an owner having moved away from his/her property. In some instances, respondents suggested that the owner had been forced to leave his/her property and rent it out. Suggested reasons for this included the loss of a job, an employer forcing the owner to relocate for work reasons and other financial reasons.

“I’m a defence member and was forced to move for work purposes and it was not a financially wise decision to sell.”

“It was a forced rental, loss of jobs meant had to move where the work was and HATE that I have to rent the house of my dreams to complete strangers.”

Some respondents suggested that they had not been forced to move into or rent out their property. Indicated reasons for this include wanting to move in once they have started a family, wanting to have a retirement property, wanting to secure work in a nearby area before moving into (or back into) it and not wanting to leave a property empty.

“We bought a long-term home which we don’t want to move into as yet due to its size. Once our family grows, we will move there.”

“This house is our retirement house and hope to move into it if can secure work back where our house is.”

Investment property

There were 109 responses that discussed property ownership as an investment. Reasons given for purchasing an investment property included earning rental income both for the owner and his/her children, being able to pay off a mortgage more quickly and being able to use the money to pay rent elsewhere.

“To earn some income and to build to save towards our own retirement.”

Some respondents suggested that they had made a poor investment. Reasons for this included market downturns, low capital growth levels, low rental amounts, and consideration of other bills and levies that a property owner is responsible for.

“I purchased my house to ensure I have somewhere to live when my current work finishes. Commercially this house is a poor investment as it is in a regional area with a capital growth of about 1% and basic rental. Based on the capital value of the house the tenant is only paying 5% without consideration for council rates, routine maintenance, insurance and any administrative costs. This return does not provide any allowance for tenant defaults. As I have gained confidence in my tenant and to reduce costs, I manage the property myself. If additional risk or costs were added to this property, I would seriously proceed to terminate the lease and either live in the house myself or sell it.”

One respondent suggested that they were part of a property development company which specialising in investing in and then selling properties.

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Unable to sell

There were 108 responses that discussed property owners being unable to sell their properties. Many respondents suggested they were unwilling or unable to sell because they would make a significant loss, because they would not be able to cover the amount still owing on the mortgage if they sold at the current market price, because the property had been damaged by natural disasters or they would have to pay a large amount of capital gains tax to the government.

“Property prices have significantly decreased in Townsville and I’d be selling my house at a loss. I’d like to sell it, but can’t justify the capital loss when the rental income covers repayments.”

“I would sell but the capital gains that I would have to pay, I’m at the point of ditching them, with land tax cost of this year at \$7559.50 Property’s without mortgage, \$20,000 income, and then have to pay income tax, and then the damage to the property there seems no point.”

Some respondents suggested that they were unable to sell because the property is located in ‘an economically depressed area’.

“Cannot sell market is so bad I cannot even sell my home for what I paid 15 years ago due to council parking issues and low socio-economic people moving to islands with drug issues and not wanting to work ...”

To live in

There were 75 responses that discussed owning a property as a place to live in. Many respondents suggested that they wanted to purchase a property so that one day themselves, or their family members (such as their children), could live in. Many of these respondents suggested the property had been purchased for retirement purposes or to ensure the safety of their family members.

“We want to live there one day so we bought houses that we would like to live in.”

“Buy properties so that my children will have at least one property to live in as they may not be able to afford to buy one when they are older because of the cost of properties.”

Some respondents indicated that they had purchased a property in order to redevelop it before living in it.

“We want to redevelop the site and live there some day.”

One respondent suggested that they had purchased the property as a place to live in but were unable to afford to do so and had to rent it out instead.

“Was bought as my first home, and wanted to keep it, but could not afford to live in it after 18 months, and so I kept it, to try and pay it off.”

Work and/or study reasons

There were 68 responses that discussed work and/or study reasons. Many respondents suggested that they had purchased a property and then had to move away for work and/or study related reasons.

“We renovated the property to live in, then moved away for work, we will return at some point in the future.”

“I had to move for education, University.”

Some respondents indicated that the move would be temporary, and they intended to move back into the property at a later stage while some were unsure if they would return or not.

“I temporarily work in another town but will return to my primary home soon.”

Some respondents mentioned that they had purchased a property to support family members while they pursued study opportunities.

“To provide accommodation to children while they are studying so they can have more stable (and frankly a much better standard of housing) than was available to them as a student. Some rental properties are very poorly managed and maintained and would probably be deemed either uninhabitable or a significant health risk if they were ever inspected.”

Family use and benefits

There were 31 responses that discussed family use and benefits. Most respondents suggested that owning a property was to the benefit of members of the owner’s family and to provide for family members if they are unable to afford it.

“Provide secure accommodation for family living in Brisbane.”

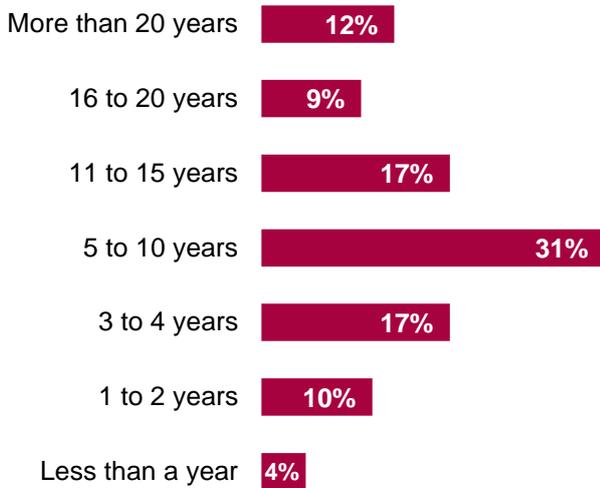
“To provide a house for my children if they are unable to afford their own property.”

Some other reasons included owning a property for use as a holiday house, to assist a family who cannot afford housing and to help family members pay less in rent.

4.2.6 How long property owners have owned rental property

Almost one-third of property owners (31%) had been renting for 5 to 10 years. Twelve percent had owned property for more than 20 years while only 4 per cent had owned property for less than a year. The length of time property owners had owned property was remarkably similar to how long tenants had rented (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Proportion of property owners by number of years owning rental property

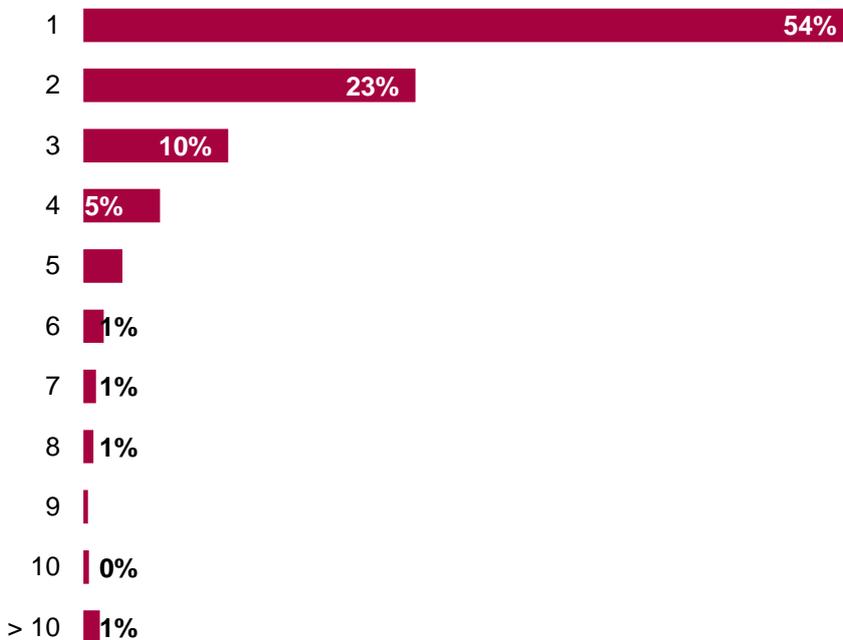


Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

7.1.1 How many rental properties do property owners own

A majority of property owners only own one property (54%), with almost a quarter indicating they own two. Few property owners own more than five properties (5%, see Figure 9).

Figure 9. How many rental properties property owners own

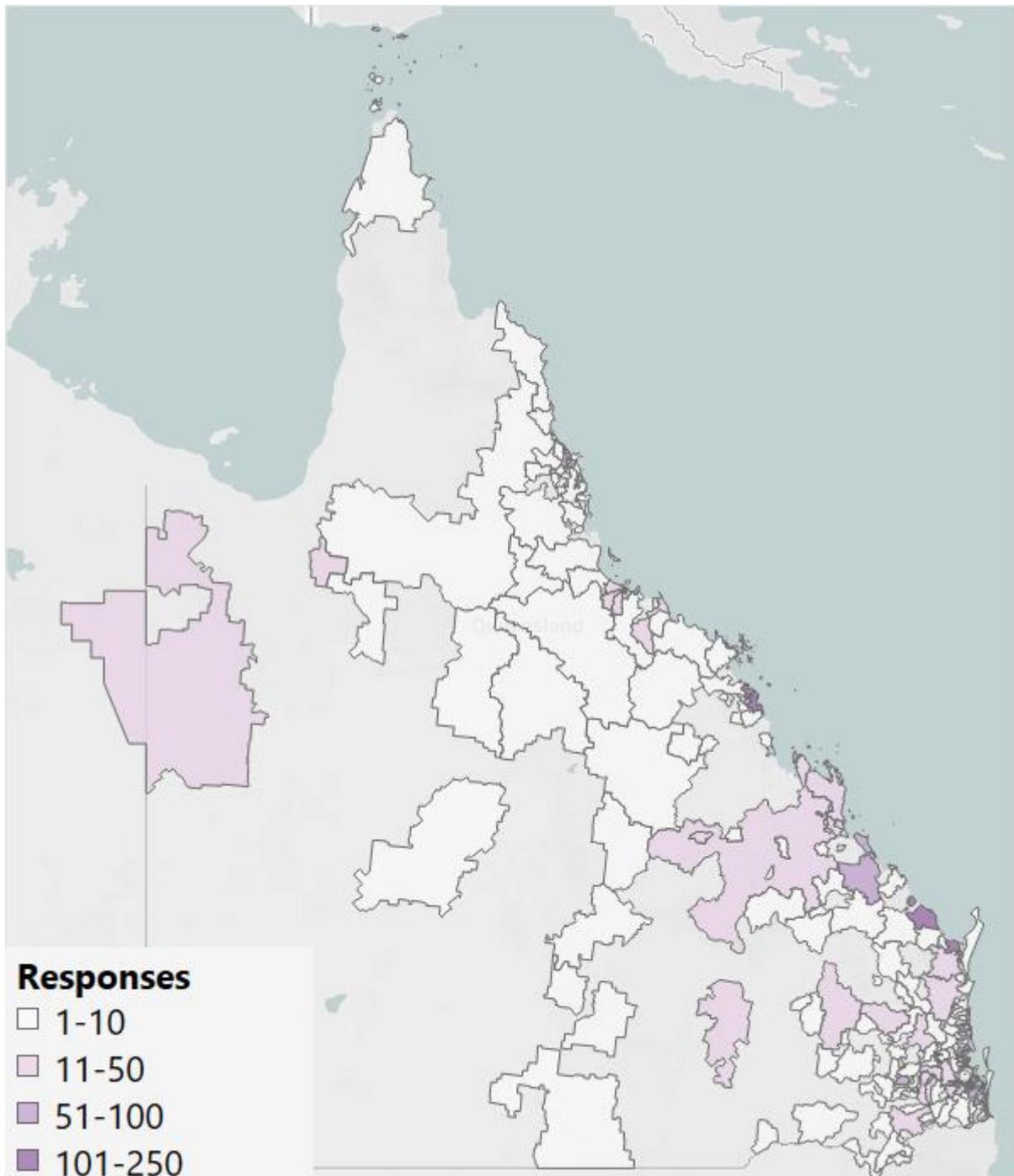


Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.7 Where are property owners' properties

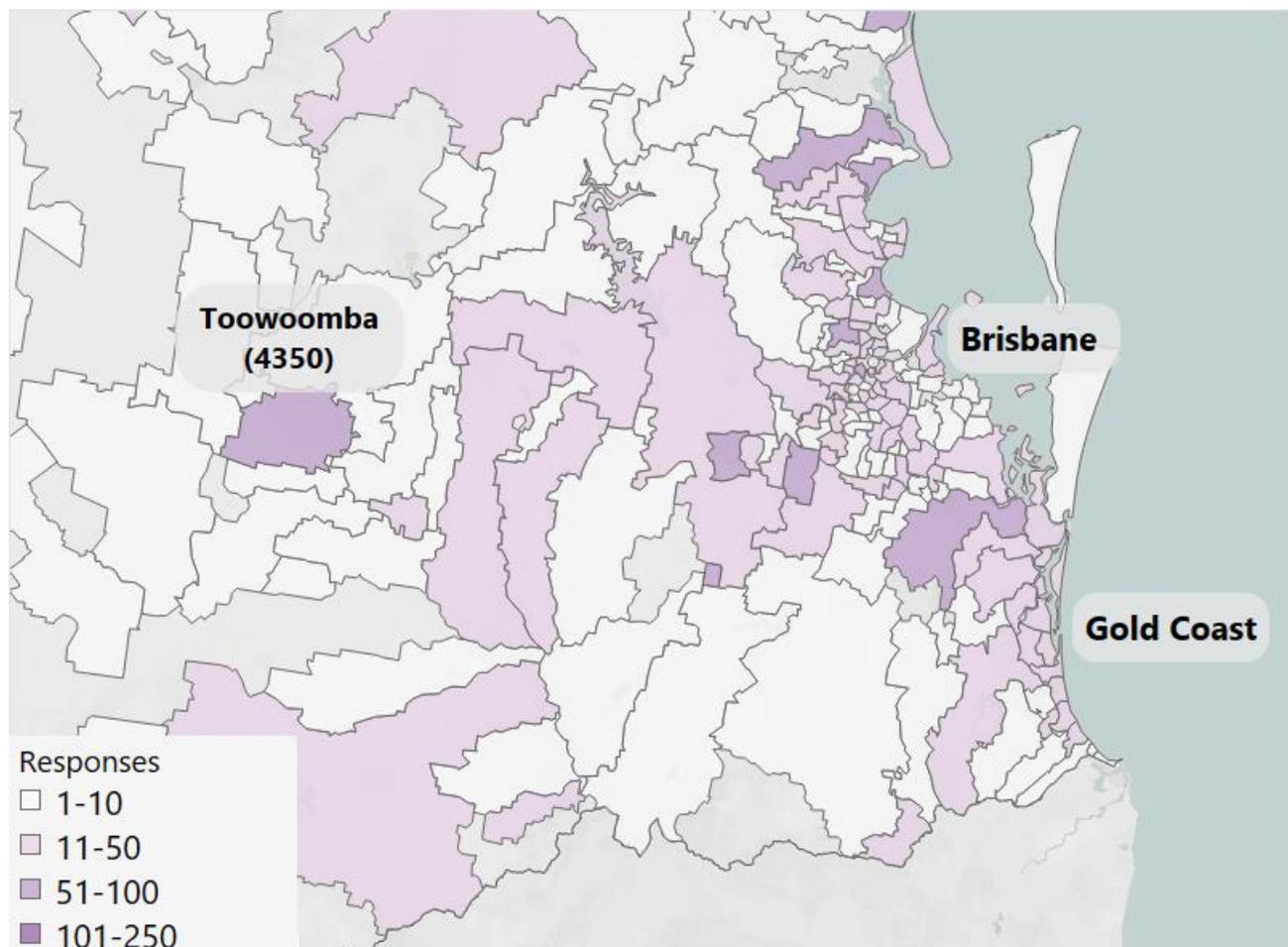
Property owners' properties are located similarly to tenants' properties—along the coast and in metropolitan centres. The most common locations for properties are 4670 (2.5%), 4350 (2.3%), 4655 (2.3%), 4740 (2.2%) and 4305 (2.2%) (see Figure 10 and Figure 11).

Figure 10. Density of owners' properties across Queensland



Note. Darker shading indicates higher density. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

Figure 11. Density of owners' properties across Brisbane area



Note. Darker shading indicates higher density. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.2.8 Profile of property managers

The online survey included responses from 845 property managers and some of the survey questions were specifically for this group. This section shows the data from these questions, which were mainly about profiling property managers.

Capacity in which property managers manage property

By far the biggest respondent group among property managers were employees in real estate or property management companies, which represented more than three-quarters (76%) of all property manager respondents (see Table 9).

Table 9. In what capacity property managers manage property

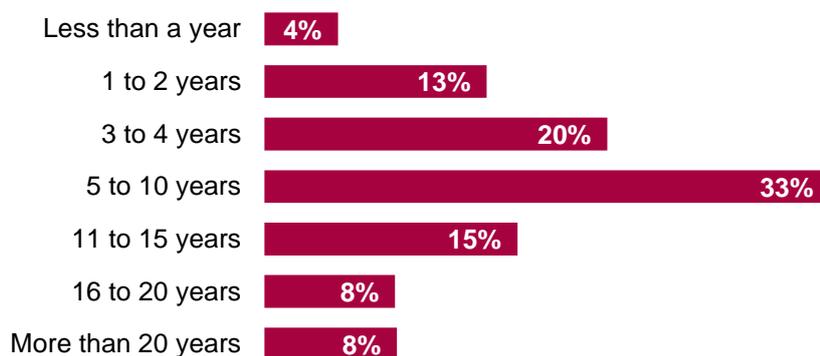
Do you manage rental properties as...	Percent of property owners
n	845
Employee in a real estate agency or property management firm	76%
Small business or sole trader	15%
Manager of a body corporate or community title complex	5%
Manager of a caretaker living on-site	4%
Self-managing property owner	1%
Manager of a caravan park, rooming accommodation or residential service	0%
Other	6%

Note. When indicating that they manage rental properties in a way other than those listed, respondents most often indicated they work for a Community Housing Provider or the Department of Housing and Public Works. Percentages may sum to more than 100% as this was a multiple select question. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

How long have property managers managed rental properties

One third of property managers have managed property for five to ten years, with one fifth having managed them for three to four years. Few property managers have managed property for either less than a year or more than 20 years (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. How long have property managers managed rental properties



Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.3 Renting experience

Renting experience questions were asked of all respondent groups. As views and perspectives vary significantly between these groups, the data have been broken up into these groups to ensure it can be interpreted appropriately.

4.3.1 Satisfaction with renting experience

Overall, respondents were evenly divided between being satisfied and dissatisfied with their renting experiences in Queensland, with about one-third being satisfied and one-third being dissatisfied. The remainder reported being neither satisfied or dissatisfied (Table 18).

Tenants were less likely to report being satisfied (28%), compared with property owners (46%) and property managers (47%) (Table 10).

Table 10. How respondents feel about renting experience, by respondent type

Satisfaction	Tenants	Property owners	Property manager	Not specified	Total
n	12,431	6,177	835	389	19,832
Satisfied	28%	46%	47%	26%	34%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	33%	30%	38%	28%	32%
Dissatisfied	39%	23%	15%	46%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No data	39	75	10	9	133

Note. This table uses uncleaned data; therefore, the total n is larger. Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.3.2 Changes to improve renting experience

There have been several suggestions for improvements to the renting experience around which respondents have clustered. For tenants, the most popular suggestions were allowing pets in rental properties (14%), reducing the number of inspections (15%), and allowing tenants to lodge complaints against property managers (14%) (see 0). Property owners were overwhelmingly concerned with the issue of fairness between themselves and tenants in the eyes of the law (31%). Property owners were also keen to have an avenue to make complaints about property managers and agree on longer-term leases with their tenants (both 11%).

Table 11. Frequency of topics (machine-assisted modelling)

Satisfaction	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total
n	10,593	3,922	492	15,308
Balance laws between tenant and property owner	11%	29%	25%	16%
Create a means of lodging complaints against property managers	13%	10%	7%	12%
Issues regarding renting with pets	14%	4%	5%	11%
Make longer-term leases available	12%	8%	9%	11%
Ability for tenants to make minor cosmetic changes without notice	8%	9%	8%	8%
Issues regarding Bond amount	7%	10%	8%	8%
Timely maintenance	9%	6%	6%	8%
Rental affordability, especially for those on fixed incomes	7%	4%	4%	6%
Reduce number of property inspections	7%	2%	2%	5%
Disputes/ RTA/ QCAT	4%	6%	10%	5%
Suggestions for improving housing standards (security, energy and water efficiency, cooling)	2%	1%	2%	2%
Notice to vacate	1%	3%	7%	2%
Improve the standard of inspection reports	1%	2%	2%	2%
Better communication between all parties	1%	1%	1%	1%
Off topic	3%	5%	4%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. Those who did not specify their status (tenant, property owner or property manager) are excluded (n=301).

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.3.3 Who renting rules favour

Overall, half the respondents reported that rules about renting in general are in the property owner’s favour and about one-quarter (24%) that it is in the tenant’s favour (see Table 20).

This overall pattern is potentially explained by there being many more tenant respondents than property owner and property manager respondents. When broken up by these respondent types, the data show that a majority of tenants (75%) feel that rules are in owners’ favour, while a majority of property owners (61%) feel that the rules are in tenants’ favour. Property managers’ views are more aligned with property owners than tenants, with almost three-quarters (73%) reporting that rules are in tenants’ favour (see Table 12).

These opposing views among tenants and property owners are evident in many of the responses and comments made to the consultations.

Table 12. Who the rules about renting favours, by respondent type

Satisfaction	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total	Not specified
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n	12,436	6,212	841	19,876	387
Are in the rental property owner's favour	75%	7%	8%	50%	208
Are in the tenant's favour	3%	61%	73%	24%	80
Balance tenant and property owner interests	14%	27%	18%	18%	69
Don't know	8%	5%	1%	7%	30
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	-
No data	34	40	4	89	11

Note. For clarity, respondents who did not specify whether they were a tenant, property owner or property manager are excluded from percentage calculations in this table.

Note. This table uses uncleaned data; therefore, the total n is larger.

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

A high proportion of survey respondents reported being confident about what is required of them and others when renting, and where to find information or help. In these areas, there were only small variations between respondent groups.

One fifth more property owners than tenants indicated that tenants generally treat their rental property as their home and 15 percent more property owners indicated that problems get sorted quickly and fairly compared with tenants (see Table 13).

Table 13. Percent of respondents agreeing by respondent type

Survey statements	Responses to question	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total
Tenants can generally treat their rental property as their home	19,885	37%	56%	62%	44%
I understand what's required of me when renting	19,778	92%	89%	92%	91%
I know what's required of others when renting	19,815	67%	80%	86%	72%
I can ensure others do what's required of them without fear of eviction, property damage, higher fees	19,783	28%	40%	47%	33%
I know where to find information about what's required of tenants, property owners or property managers	19,828	72%	78%	84%	75%
When there's a problem with the rental property it generally gets sorted quickly and fairly	19,832	36%	51%	59%	41%
I know where to get help with problems about renting	19,814	65%	72%	81%	68%

Note. For clarity, respondents who did not specify whether they were a tenant, property owner or property manager are excluded from this table (n=394).

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.4 Property conditions and standards

Overall, more than one-third (36%) rated their property as excellent and almost half (48%) rated it as good. Only 12% of all respondents rated their property as poor. Tenants were 2.8 times more likely to rate their property as good rather than excellent and property owners were 2.4 times more likely to rate their property as excellent rather than good (see Table 14).

Table 14. Ratings of property condition, by respondent type

Condition of rental property	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total	Not specified
n	12,470	6,252	845	19,965	398
Excellent - no repairs or maintenance needed	21%	65%	44%	36%	28%
Good - some repairs or maintenance needed	59%	27%	42%	48%	47%
Poor - needs repair or maintenance for health & safety	17%	2%	3%	12%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No data	337	339	92	813	45

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

A very high proportion of survey respondents were supportive of minimum standards, with many of the standards listed in the survey being rated as important by a high proportion of respondents. While room dimensions and accessibility were most commonly reported as less or not important, they were still rated as important by a large proportion of respondents (see Table 15).

Table 15. Proportion of respondents rating minimum standards to be set for rental properties as ‘important’, by respondent type

Satisfaction	Responses to question	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total
Structural condition and safety	19,768	98%	96%	97%	97%
Repair, sanitation and drainage	19,766	97%	93%	94%	94%
Cleanliness and freedom from pests	19,853	96%	95%	95%	95%
Preventing damp (unwanted moisture) and its effects	19,775	95%	91%	90%	90%
Supply of utilities e.g. water, sanitation, electricity	19,803	95%	94%	94%	94%
Privacy and security	19,653	93%	85%	88%	88%
Supply of facilities e.g. laundry, cooking, storage	19,705	86%	82%	86%	86%
Ventilation and insulation	19,719	88%	75%	73%	73%
Lighting	19,746	79%	75%	75%	75%
Features that minimise the cost of living e.g. insulation	19,684	70%	50%	53%	53%
Accessibility e.g. modifications for people with disability	19,712	55%	38%	44%	44%
Room dimensions	19,780	36%	25%	22%	22%

Note. For clarity, respondents who did not specify whether they were a tenant, property owner or property manager are excluded from this table (n=394).

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.4.1 Summary of additional comments about minimum standards

This section provides a thematic analysis of question 2.3 from the online survey (‘Is there anything else you would like to share with us?’).

Property conditions

There were 3,269 comments that discussed property conditions. Many respondents suggested that it was important for a property to be clean at the point that tenants move into it, while it is occupied and when the tenant leaves.

“That when entering a rental property you expect it to be clean. It should not matter how many weeks or months that the property has not been lived in for the state of the property should be completely clean, free of dirt, gunk, mould, etc. If it isn't found in that condition to begin with then the rental property managers should either get it re-cleaned once you have moved in as it should not be your concern to clean the place before you move in ...”

Some respondents suggested that a minimum standards list should exist for rental properties. This could potentially lead to improved transparency and a better understanding of the type and nature of issues commonly found in different rental properties.

“I'd like to see a basic minimum standard set for rental properties. Some issues I've seen are: 1. Major paint peeling inside and out 2. No laundry provided (i.e. Nowhere at all to

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place a washing machine) 3. All structures must be sound - previous properties of mine have had decks that were rotting and too dangerous for us to use 4. I'd like the landlord to take responsibility for testing fire alarms at least once per year to ensure my property is safe - so the responsibility of testing is shared between tenant and owner."

Some respondents suggested that property owners and managers did not fully understand property management and felt that they could use it to exert more influence over a tenant.

"Property management is often misunderstood by property managers as a ticket to mistreatment and distrust of tenants. We are landlords ourselves and have received extremely poor service from [redacted]. She has failed to attend meetings and has sent less experienced staff who are unable to answer questions. She has refused to attend the property with us at commencement of lease to discuss key repair issues (e.g. clothes line with unusable cable, stair and deck railings loose, garage remotes that don't work, locks and keys that don't work)."

Some respondents indicated that they were paying high rental amounts which did not reflect the current state of the properties they were in. Some reasons provided for this included a high number of short-term rental agreements, an uneven renting relationship which favours the property owners, and tenants simply needing to cover their basic needs and have a place to live.

"There are some truly horrific properties out there in the market, while the cost to rent these is still very high. For example, you will see kitchens in terrible order, very outdated and yet landlords are still asking for \$400 + a week when the kitchen is in original condition from the 40's or 50's. All properties in Qld for rent should have air-conditioning - this should be non-negotiable. A lot also have those very awful window-box air-conditioning units that are very old and a potential health hazard. If cosmetic updates are generally tax deductible under negative gearing rules, why are landlords allowed to rent out truly appalling [sic] properties?"

Tenants

There were 3,212 comments that discussed tenants. Many respondents talked about the quality of tenants, both good and bad. Some respondents simply suggested that they had 'good' or 'bad' tenants without providing reasons why they felt this to be the case while others provided reasons. Some reasons why tenants were considered to be good or easy to manage included them being screened properly before being approved, being long-term tenants in the same property, respecting the property and being clean and tidy, engaging with the property owner or manager if any repairs are required or any changes requested, paying their rent and any other payments on time, garbage and junk mail are regularly removed, and pets (if allowed) are properly looked after.

"I have been very lucky to have ideal agents managing my property and have screened the tenants for me very professionally."

Many respondents felt that tenants should respect a rental property as if it were their own home as they felt it would improve the relationship between tenant and property owner or manager.

"It would be nice if tenants treated the rental property as if they owned it, and looked after the property, and property owners treated the tenants with respect, however with all things, you have tenants that do not do the right thing and do large amounts of damage and have no respect for the owners property and then you do come across the tenants that do care for the property. If the tenants were all like the latter, I feel that the property owners would be more willing to work with tenants as there would be mutual trust ..."

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Some reasons why tenants were considered bad or problematic included tenants being able to leave a damaged property with rent still owing, tenants producing and/or consuming drugs in/on the property, tenants' pets causing damage or annoyance to others in a rental property or building, tenants making changes to a property that have not been approved by the owner or manager, tenants not maintaining smoke alarms which could result in health and safety issues, tenants making unreasonable repairs and maintenance requests, and the cost of damage caused by tenants not sufficiently covered by their bond.

"It is too easy for tenants to do whatever they want and just walk away from a house with lots of damage done and lots of rent owed. The owner loses out has insurance does not always cover every cost. No matter how much an agent does to protect their agency and the owner, the tenant can still do whatever they want, and it takes ages to get them out of the house and by that time the house is in a horrible state and nothing is there is to help the agent or the owner ..."

Some respondents mentioned the tenure of tenants and suggested that having secure, long-term tenants who are respectful of the property as well as the owner or manager makes for a better all-round rental experience.

"... The tenants I ended up with are great and one has been with me for eleven years and the other for seven years. I think the secret to effective rental for investment is (a) provide a nice property and don't overcharge and (b) then ensure you are responsive to reasonable tenants needs and maintain the benefit of 100% occupancy in the tenants favour i.e. keep the rental increases to an absolute minimum. Through taking this approach renting has been a successful pathway for me ..."

Property owners and property managers

There were 2,910 comments that discussed property managers and/or owners. Some respondents indicated that they had positive experiences dealing with property managers and/or owners. Some respondents just provided general statements saying they had a 'good' or 'great' property owner or they 'appreciate the efforts they go to' while others provided more specific reasons why. Reasons provided for this included them being open to communication, responsive, willing to fix problems in a property when they arise or do repairs when necessary, acting in the best interests of all parties, they can be held to account if required, and they show flexibility.

"Our experience has always been good because we appointed quality Property Managers who have acted with the best interests of both our tenants and us as owners."

Other respondents indicated that they had negative or unpleasant experiences with their property managers and/or owners. Similar, to those with good experiences, some just said they had a 'bad' property owner while others provided more specific reasons why. Reasons provided for this included regular changes to the person the tenant must deal with in relation to any rental property issues or concerns, property owners not having insurance, property owners failing to address any maintenance or repair issues needed, and property owners not being open to communication.

"I feel that it's unfair that the housing market can fluctuate but rent increases at the end of each lease regardless. In my experience it is extremely difficult to communicate with landlords on rent price or RTAs. I have felt in some instances that the real estate agent managing the property has actively hindered my attempts to have them pass on requests to the landlord, and then lied about their response. There was no way for me to know for sure."

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Some respondents indicated that over the years they had experienced a mix of good and bad property owners.

“Whilst my current house and real estate are wonderful, I’ve had atrocious real estate and landlords previously, whereby I was in my last rental for 8 years and the mould was apparent and reported but too expensive for the landlord to fix. The real estate didn’t push it as they didn’t want to lose his business. Having said that, other great landlords have to go through too much to get had tenants out ...”

The legislation around rental properties was also raised as an important concern. Some respondents suggested that even though it was the right of tenants to withhold rent in particular circumstances, they were fearful of doing so out of fear they might be asked to vacate or forced into a difficult position.

“There is a difference between having clear rules and minimum standards and how that works in practice. Currently when a landlord is slow to act on an issue (or chooses not to at all), a tenant has little choice but to just wait. The legislation says that you can withhold rent, but as a tenant that then puts you in the difficult position of potentially losing your home because you have then forced the landlord (or put them in a difficult position) ...”

Rent

There were 2,440 comments that discussed rent. Many respondents suggested that rental amounts were too high and should be reduced, some suggested that high rental payment amounts prevented them from beginning the process of purchasing a property of their own (some felt they were simply paying off someone else’s mortgage by renting), and some suggested that they have been declined a rental property because their incomes were not deemed high enough to cover rental and other living costs. Some respondents suggested that regular rental payment increases were difficult to afford.

“We have 6 monthly rental increases that cause stress about finances. I believe this is too frequent and we are already paying more in rent than the average household in our area. This makes it hard to save for our own deposit ...”

The terms and conditions outlined in rental agreements were also discussed by some respondents. Some indicated that they understood and accepted their obligations believing it was their obligation to ‘treat the property as if it were [their] own’, some believed rental agreements were unfair and/or favoured the property owner or manager as tenants were unable to make some small changes while others cited the need for ongoing communication with their rental agencies to ensure that contractual obligations are met by all parties.

“... My rental experiences have all been excellent. It is a dual responsibility between the lessor and lessee. I understand my obligations, which are to treat the property as if it were my own i.e. keep it clean and tidy, etc pay the rent on time, and work with the lessor regards inspections, repairs, etc. I think this approach in most cases will result in an excellent rental experience, as it has with me.”

Some respondents mentioned the challenge of securing a rental property with affordable rental payments.

“I live on the Sunshine Coast and it took over 4 months to secure an affordable and practical rental that was located within walking distance to my daughter’s new school. The property I was approved for is \$30 a week more than my previous rental and it is a

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kilometre away from the school (which we have to walk as I do not drive). It was the closest and cheapest I could get. My rental history and references are impeccable.”

The length of rental agreements was also suggested by some respondents as a concern as well as the lack of stability this can mean for some tenants. Some suggestions made in relation to this were for tenants who have a good long-term renting track record to be offered longer rental terms if they wish and for any rental increases to be agreed and documented in advance.

“For long term renters and property owners, there needs to be rental agreements issued made for longer periods of time e.g. 1 year with 2- or 3-year options. And have agreed rental increases for at least one year in advance so that the agent can't get greedy and substantially increase the rent when your lease is about to expire. The only reason most real estate agents will not issue rental agreements for any longer than one year, is because they get paid extra money every time, they issue a new rental agreement. So that commission would be lost if they issued longer leases ...”

Repairs and maintenance

There were 1,527 comments that discussed repairs and maintenance. The condition of the property is clearly an important issue. Some respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the condition of their rental property as repairs are carried out when required while others indicated that they were not satisfied.

“We are quite comfortable with our housing. If we need repairs done our real estate acts promptly to correct any issues. Very satisfied.”

Many respondents suggested that ongoing repairs and ‘the quality of maintenance is very important. Different types of repairs and maintenance issues were mentioned by respondents including garden maintenance, removing mould, peeling paint, fixing electrical wires, structural issues, broken facilities, dealing with or overcoming previous poor-quality maintenance works and the time taken for a property owner or manager to act on required maintenance issues and get repairs done.

“... The expectations of renters are very high, yet the minimum standards for properties seem to be extremely low. I rent a house in a good suburb that is close to uni and work, but boy do I pay a high price for that. It has peeling paint, it has black mould, poor plumbing, bloated, chipped and disintegrating kitchen counters, cheap carpet that tear[s] easily, old blinds that snap and break just by opening them, a cheap stove and oven that heats unevenly and poor electrical work with crackling light switches ...”

Different reasons were given as to why respondents indicated that they were not satisfied or comfortable with the state of their rental property. These included repairs being required but not carried out and what could be done about it. Some indicated that they found it difficult to ask for repairs as they feared rents being raised or being asked to leave, that more needs to be done to ensure properties do not fall into states of disrepair, that regular inspections are required, that maintenance reports should be acted on instead of being ignored, and there being a maximum number of times a tenant can report the need for repairs before it is compulsory for them to be addressed.

“Tenants need to be able to report maintenance issues or lack of progress on maintenance issues without fear of eviction or increase in rent - at the moment people are too scared to follow up and real estate agents or landlords are not proactive about getting things fixed.”

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Other respondents suggested that there need to be clearer guidelines and maintenance standards for owners to adhere to when it comes to repairs and maintenance as well as some accountability.

“There needs to be clearer guidelines / repercussions for owners if they do not act on important maintenance issues. Breaching an owner is simply not enough.”

Payments

There were 1,025 comments that discussed payments. One of the biggest issues raised was the timeliness of payments including for rent, maintenance and other expenses.

“... I have seen time and time again tenants who damage and neglect properties then refuse to pay and just run the system out knowing they have appeal process after appeal process to delay the inevitable, they don't care they will just move on and trash the next house. A more expedient and regulated process needs to be put in place to evict and recover damages and unpaid rent. The government has a high expectation that all that is owing to them will be paid immediately on time and appropriately, and their property looked after, why is a property that's privately owned and leased out not getting the same expectation.”

Some respondents also indicated that tenants were required to pay for items or expenses or that there were disagreements between the owner or manager and the tenant over who should be responsible. Respondents cited examples of tenants having to pay for the installation of phone lines which will remain in the property after the tenants leave, tenants paying for fertiliser to improve a garden but asking the owner to pay for water as they will benefit from an improved garden, and tenants being forced to pay when disagreements arise between tenants and property owners and/or managers. Paying for damages caused by tenants and/or their pets was another concern raised by some.

“Phone lines in a new rental - I find it absurd that the tenant is required to pay for the one-time installation fee for a phone line. The owner should have to pay for this. Internet is an essential service in our society. The next tenants that move in benefit from this. It's so unfair. We've moved into 2 new places and paid the \$300 fee twice in 13 months all for the owner and new tenants benefit ... “

In some cases, respondents claimed that tenants were unable to get a good reference from their property owner or manager even when they had always made prompt rental payments and have been given back their bond on time.

“... Our last rental was coming to an end, partly because the owner was selling and partly due to issues we were having with our property manager. She refused to give us a good reference when we were applying for new properties (despite us getting all of our bond back and always paying on time) ...”

The question of who should be responsible for paying for the resolution of disputes between tenants and property owners and managers was another concern raised by some respondents.

“... There is nothing special about us or the property owners or agents, we have just had absolutely no rights, no right of appeal, no recognition of financial hardships, every time we have moved, we have been forced to play double rent for at least a month. In the last 7 years we have contributed over \$240,000 toward paying of other peoples mortgage or supporting property investments, yet we have been treated with no respect and certainly in a very unfair, ill balanced manner ...”

Needs

There were 932 comments that discussed the needs of people with disabilities. However, it is important to realise that different people have different disabilities which will require different support features and services.

“... Not a one size fits most option. Disability looks different for each person and their houses need to be improved based on those needs.”

Different rental property features and types of support required by people with a disability were mentioned by respondents. They included properties on the ground floor, properties located in areas with good access to medical facilities, the size and layout of a property's rooms, accessibility, properties being safe and clean, having ramps or lifts to improve access, the cost of housing (some respondents indicated that the cost of existing rental properties for people with disabilities are too high), rails and supports and the difficulties a disabled person can go through while trying to organise to view rental properties, organise hired help to move into or out of a rental property and find a place that is suitable.

“Literally no rental properties cater to the disabled. NRAS [(National Rental Affordability Scheme)] is massively under supplied, the few properties that come up that would be suitable for the disabled (e.g. ground floor houses) are rare, particularly in areas with good access to medical facilities (a necessity for people with disabilities).”

Some respondents indicated that there were not enough rental properties that cater for the disabled while some recognised that making more rental properties disability friendly was important but that doing so for all rental properties is unnecessary and would be almost impossible.

“Whilst accommodation for disability needs to be VERY important for disabled tenants, it shouldn't become an essential for all rentals.”

Pets

There were a total of 725 comments that discussed pets. Many respondents stressed the importance of being able to have pets in a rental property and indicated that not enough rental properties allow pets. Some simply said that pets should be allowed while others gave specific reasons why. Such reasons included pets being an important part of a family, pets being good for people's health and for teaching children different skills, pets doing less damage to a property than a human child, and having pets making people happier.

“It's really important that people be allowed to rent with pets. While this is a complicated issue, the system needs to change to allow responsible tenants with suitable pets to have pets and not for landlords to be refuse this as a default. Pets are a really important part of the family.”

Some recognised that it is important to first earn the respect and trust of property owners before being allowed to have pets in a rental property. Some suggested they would be happy to pay extra for their bond in order to keep their pets or subject themselves to additional conditions on their lease agreement.

“Renters should be given more rights regarding pets, I would be happy to pay extra bond in order to keep my well behaved pets if I were to move, as I am aware that there are concerns from owners in regards to them. Owners should be more accommodating of

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pets as long as tenants are aware that damages and costs are attributable to the tenant directly.”

Others respected the rights of property owners or managers not to allow pets in rental properties. Reasons for this include the decision to allow or not allow pets being up to the property owner, the damage that pets can cause a rental property, the amount of money it can cost to fix damages caused by pets, increased property insurance costs, and their potential to cause health issues for others living in a rental property.

“We always need to ensure that tenants are treated with respect but at the same time, tenants need to treat their rental place with respect and care. I am totally against the idea or possible ruling that tenants can have pets without [the] landlord’s permission. Pets can cause expensive damages that even a bond cannot cover.”

Upgrades

There were 588 comments that discussed upgrades. Many respondents simply mentioned the types of upgrades they wished to have in their rental property such as air conditioning units, insulation, ventilation, solar power (improved energy efficiency), water tanks and/or internet connectivity.

“Would be good to have solar power as I am stuck having to pay ridiculous energy costs. If I owned my own property I would have solar.”

Some cited the Queensland weather as a reason why such upgrades were required.

“Insulation is very important. Our house drops below 18 degrees inside in winter and over 40 degrees in summer air conditioning provided is insufficient to cater to the heat and the house is so drafty it cannot maintain an adequate temperature and makes for a hefty power bill amount.”

Some respondents talked about the high cost of installing the upgrades they desired while others mentioned the high cost of paying to use old technology.

“Technology in the house - old air conditioners are very expensive to run and cost people living in older (cheaper) properties to pay excessively for aircon, the same for appliances - no old ovens, burners or stove tops. The kitchen is an important space in the home, outdated white goods make living a hassle.”

4.5 Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA)

The online survey included a few questions specifically about current services and possible improvements to services provided by the RTA.

4.5.1 Satisfaction with RTA services

Overall, a high proportion of respondents were satisfied with aspects of RTA services. More than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the RTA website, bond lodgement/ refund requests and contact centre. Just over half the respondents were satisfied with investigation services on their behalf. The level of satisfaction was very similar across the different respondent types. However, many respondents indicated they had not used these services (see Table 16).

Table 16. Percent of respondents who gave a rating of ‘satisfied’ for RTA services by respondent type

RTA services	n	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total	Not used
Bond lodgement or refund requests	15,470	85%	83%	82%	84%	4,265
Website - www.rta.qld.gov.au	13,433	84%	83%	84%	84%	6,361
Contact centre	8,795	76%	74%	68%	75%	10,656
Resources e.g. webinars, video series, workshops	4,592	71%	75%	76%	73%	15,126
Free RTA dispute resolution service	6,664	64%	61%	70%	63%	12,953
Investigation services on your behalf	4,524	54%	51%	66%	53%	15,078

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.5.2 Improvements to RTA services

The online survey canvassed a range of options for improving RTA services. The most commonly sought improvements were access to renting data to aid decisions and more online lodgements or refund options. The pattern of responses was very consistent between the different respondent groups (see Table 17).

Table 17. Proportion of respondents who ticked ways that RTA services can be improved by respondent type

RTA services	n	Tenants	Property owners	Property managers	Total
Access to renting data that can help me make decisions	9,060	48%	41%	42%	45%
More online lodgement or refund options	7,429	40%	31%	36%	37%
Webchat for advice	6,252	33%	28%	34%	31%
More user-friendly website	4,685	24%	22%	25%	23%
Improve telephone services	4,613	23%	23%	34%	23%
More resources in different formats	2,543	13%	12%	18%	13%
Other	1,621	8%	9%	9%	8%

Source. Engagement HQ Online survey data.

4.5.3 Summary of additional comments about RTA experience

This section provides a thematic analysis of question 3.3 from the Online survey ('Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience with the RTA?').

Tenants

There were 452 comments that discussed tenants. Some respondents suggested that the RTA favours property owners and managers while others felt that it favours tenants.

"The RTA has always been helpful for us but their hands are tied when all power rests with real estate or owner! They should be able to make recommendations to Government

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to change legislation on behalf of Tenants that will enable tenants to live more comfortably or at least a little less stressfully ...”

“Less rudeness and apathy towards landlords and less bias in favour of tenants. Treat the landlord or owner with a little respect because without them taking a huge risk on their second most expensive investment tenants would have nowhere to live and the RTA could not exist.”

Some respondents made suggestions around tenancy agreements and laws suggesting that they are too ambiguous and open to different interpretations.

“The Laws are totally open to interpretation and far too ambiguous, and as far as Tenants are concerned not worth the paper they are written on. Good Tenants are being treated so unfairly and have such few rights without time consuming fights, just to be treated fairly and with any kind of respect.”

Some respondents made suggestions around the relationship between tenants and property owners with some indicating that owners had more control and power than tenants. Specific suggestions for improving the situation of tenants included for the RTA to re-introduce the tenant’s union and properly fund it, to provide support to tenants when tenancy agreements are breached by property managers, and to penalise managers when required.

“Provide immediate support to tenants when real estate agents breach the agreements made and hold them accountable. Penalties need to be imposed when real estate agents take advantage of financially vulnerable tenants that fear challenging things that are in breach of the agreement.”

Property owners and managers

There were 346 comments that discussed property owners. Some respondents suggested that the RTA should be more supportive of property owners and managers rather than tenants with some indicating that this had been to their financial detriment. Specific suggestions included for the RTA to show property owners more care, remove any biases held against them and for them to provide advice, information and updates directly to property owners and for them to be able to take actions against a ‘problem tenant.’

“Stop encouraging, aiding and abetting tenants to rip off landlords. It’s a disgrace, it shouldn’t be an ‘us and them’ situation. I’ve always had good relationship with my landlords and I see them as hardworking people as I am. The RTA has a lot to answer for. I was horrified by the advice I received, and it still bothers me years later.”

Some respondents suggested that property owners and managers exercise more control and rights than tenants and indicated that tenants should be provided with more support. Specific suggestions for the RTA included providing it with an increased budget to prevent incorrect owner and manager behaviours and practices, warning and/or punishing property owners and managers who are found to have acted incorrectly or unprofessionally, enforcing owners to do property repairs when required, and providing more information on when and how tenants could potentially break their leases early.

“More enforcement budget, I regard RTA currently as a toothless bystander enabling continuing abusive landlord practises.”

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Some respondents suggested that property owners should be held more accountable by the RTA when it comes to refunding bond payments and doing so relatively promptly. Some specific suggestions included that bonds should not be returned to tenants when property managers have not signed them, and damage has occurred in the rental property.

“Stamp out landlord abuse of the bond system. E.g. if the Tennant doesn't sign the bond release and agree with the landlord the Tennant may not be able to cover the next bond.”

Some suggested that tenants should be able to learn more about their potential property owners and managers in advance of entering into a rental agreement. One respondent suggested a centralised property owner database.

“There should be a centralised database for landlord history: all fine[s] imposed, complaints made and their resolutions, etc. Renters have no way of knowing who their landlord is and so they can't make an informed decision, it is ridiculous.”

Quality of support and information

There were 286 comments that discussed the quality of support and information provided by RTA. Many respondents simply expressed their gratitude to the RTA staff for the advice and support they had received but some expressed a desire to receive consistent information from different RTA staff and departments.

“I am very grateful to the very helpful and considerate staff at the RTA while I was going through a very stressful period. However, I was told slightly differing advice/information by different people at times and this was confusing. I think making sure there is consistency with the information would help. But other than sometimes long wait times, I am very appreciative of their help.”

Some respondents made other suggestions as to how RTA staff could improve their performance and deliver their advice and support more effectively. Some specific suggestions included using plain English (also referred to as ‘everyday language’) approach, providing additional support and information specifically to property owners and new tenants, and providing information about the RTA with every receipt of bond in order to raise awareness of the RTA and their role in providing property law resources.

“An improvement in the way things are explained. Not everyone can read and understand legislation and clauses, if next to certain information you can have a simple to understand text in every day English, that would be very beneficial I believe. People want the most direct answer and not have to study a Diploma in Law to understand.”

Some respondents made suggestions as to how the RTA could provide higher quality support and information. Specific suggestions included more training for RTA staff members to improve the consistency of information delivered to clients, providing more online support, providing simple and clear information for different types of complaints and not just those related to tenancy law, creating an ‘Ask Me Anything’ form related to rental and home ownership information or requests, improving the RTA dispute resolution system and processes, and providing advice and information in writing rather than just over the phone. One respondent suggested having an ombudsman to provide additional help.

“The RTA needs to have consistent training as the information provided is often conflicting between calls. I have had plenty of instances that I have hung up & called back knowing

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I've been given the wrong information initially only to be told the correct information at another call."

Property conditions

There were 189 comments that discussed property conditions. Some respondents suggested that the RTA should play more of a protective role in relation to enforcing minimum property conditions or standards. Specific suggestions included for the RTA to send out inspectors to check on maintenance and repair issues that have been reported by a tenant but not acted upon by a property owner as well as for owners to receive more protection from the RTA against abuse and neglect caused by tenants.

"Provide a service where they send someone to inspect repairs or maintenance that remain unfixed by landlord and then issue fines or citations for failing to do their job. The dispute service takes too long and has too many disadvantages for the tenant."

Some respondents suggested that property owners wanted increased protection to ensure minimum property conditions and to protect against damages. Specific suggestions included that property owners want the RTA to develop a system that ensures that they can apply for and receive fair compensation when damage occurs to their property, for the RTA to be given 'teeth to address property damage' and irresponsible property managers, and for the RTA to ensure that clauses related to repairs in a tenancy agreement can be enforced.

"Develop a fair system for landlords to ensure they are fully compensated for damage to their property. The current system favours tenants and they are let off while the landlord has to pay. This will eventually cause a shortage of rental properties as already many are getting rid of their properties because they have little or no returns after paying rates, insurance, agent fees, repairs and other imposed requirements."

Another respondent suggested providing more online support specially to help with ensuring minimum property conditions are maintained.

"More online support with accurate information to take pressure off call centre. Especially for disputes & repairs required but still not resolved after years of requesting."

Some respondents also made suggestions around background checks for inspectors who are responsible for determining whether a property has been damaged and to what extent.

"Anyone that is doing routine inspections should have back ground checks and police checks and if they are coming into any property without the renter home and there are children living there they should have a blue card (working with children)."

Rental bonds

There were 163 comments that discussed rental bonds. Some respondents made suggestions around the refund and transfer of bonds. Suggestions included enabling the RTA to transfer a tenant's bond from one rental property to another instead of forcing tenants to pay a new bond and go through the process of getting the old bond returned, ensuring bond lodgement form data is correctly entered and processed by the RTA, not refunding bonds when they haven't been signed off by all parties, clearing and processing online bond lodgement forms immediately rather than on a case by case basis, and simplifying the bond lodgement form.

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“I would also like to see my rental bond be able to be directly credited to a new rental property instead of having to wait for it to arrive after one has, moved. It can be quite difficult for one to have to pay for carpet cleaning, pest treatment, removal costs and then on top of all that bond on the new property, it just becomes a huge expense all in one hit.”

Some respondents suggested that they would like to earn interest on rental bonds held by the RTA.

There were also some suggestions for some property owners and/or managers to be investigated or punished by the RTA if they have kept a tenant’s bond and are found to be dishonest. Another suggestion made was for there to be more time allowed to settle bond disputes.

“Quicker responses for disputes services. If an agent has lied on a form for bond then the RTA should investigate instead of doing nothing.”

One respondent suggested the RTA should publish a list of property owners who have been unsuccessful with bond money claims.

“Provide tenants with a list of owners that have claimed bond monies and been unsuccessful, so we know who NOT to rent from.”

RTA staff

There were 114 comments that discussed RTA staff. Some respondents mentioned the consistency of information provided by different RTA staff and suggested this was frustrating and could be challenging.

“As an Agent, it would be ideal if all RTA staff members gave the same information and advice to tenants and agents, it seems that every time you call the RTA a different answer is given in relation to the same situation, the advice provided is very inconsistent.”

There were some suggestions made by respondents for the RTA to hire more staff for people to speak to, for staff to engage with each client on an individual basis rather than more generally, for the RTA to re-open its offices to enable face to face conversations, and for RTA phone line operating hours to be extended to enable more people to engage with the RTA.

“Re-open offices so that people can talk to someone one on one.”

A specific suggestion was also made by one respondent about better supporting people with a disability.

“People with a disability or mental illness needs to be looked after better and not just left to fend for themselves. Most of these people don’ t have the confidence to speak about their issues and need that support. This is currently lacking in the RTA.”

Legal rights

There were 73 comments that discussed legal rights. Many respondents suggested that there was a need for the RTA to improve the rights of tenants as well as improving tenants’ understanding and awareness of their legal rights. Suggestions as to how this could be done included further advocacy work by the RTA, teaching tenant rights in schools and making sure the RTA is more widely known.

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“Promoting the rights of renters, particularly to real estate agencies, as they can get away with some really lazy, negligent things and renters are scared to complain for fear of the lease not being renewed because the agents generally like to do the minimum amount of work possible where they do not receive any monetary gain.”

Another suggestion was for the RTA to require property managers to inform first time tenants of their legal rights.

“Require agents to inform first time renters or those renting for their first time in Australia about the RTA and how it can assist tenants when they are unsure of their rights. My agent experience is that the owners are their customers and who they represent, they sometimes leave out information that would help the tenant understand their rights.”

Some respondents suggested that tenants currently have no or very limited rights.

“Renters have no rights, let’s face it if you go to the RTA you’re going to be kicked out of where you live as soon as they possibly can. Renters should be notified about problem neighbours, issues, noise or smell problems before entering a contact instead of the nasties being swept under the carpet out of sight.”

5 Appendix – snap poll analysis

The snap polls were conducted to test sentiment on specific rental issues within the five consultation themes. The total number of snap poll responses was 96,649.

Respondents were not required to register when answering these questions, so no demographic information was obtained. As such, the ratio of tenants, property owners and property managers is not known. It should also be noted that there were no restrictions on the number of times a respondent could submit answers. The number of responses to each of the questions vary significantly.

5.1 A house and a home

Four of the snap poll questions were within this consultation theme.

Overall, respondents were positive about pet bonds, with three-quarters reporting that pet bonds would help tenants and property owners reach agreement around renting with pets. Alongside this, nearly half (48%) of all respondents thought that pets should be allowed in Queensland rental properties without needing to seek permission. Just over a third of respondents (35%) thought that property owners should be able to refuse tenants making minor modifications such as installing pay TV or curtains/blinds (Figure 13).

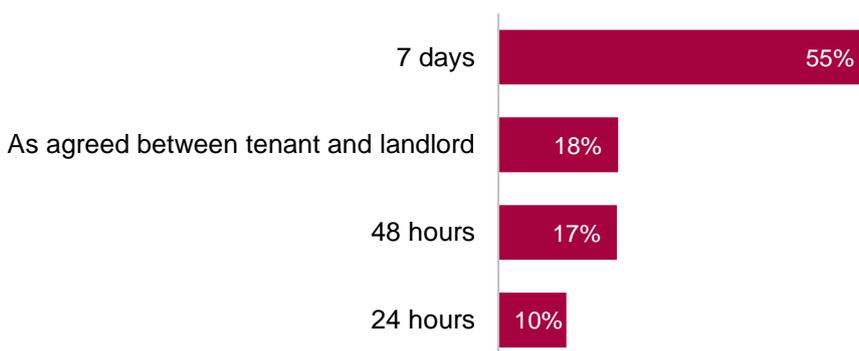
In response to the multiple-choice poll 'What is fair notice prior to entry into the home for non-urgent reasons?' most respondents (55%) indicated that seven days is fair notice (Figure 14).

Figure 13. A house and a home, respondents answering yes to snap poll questions



Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

Figure 14. What is fair notice prior to entry into the home for non-urgent reasons?



Note. n=1,671. Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

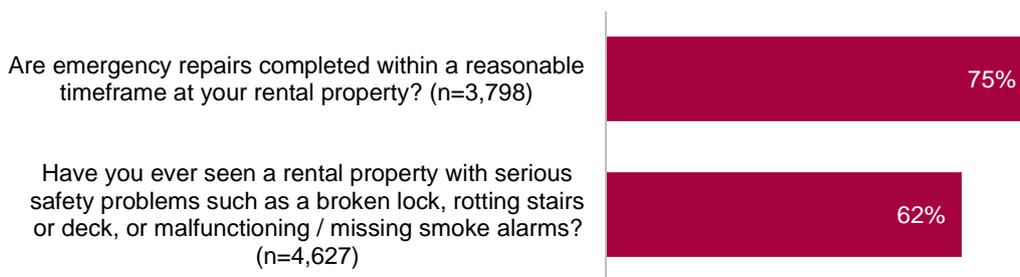
5.2 Property condition

Four of the snap poll questions were within this consultation theme.

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) indicated that emergency repairs were completed within a reasonable timeframe (Figure 15). While a significant proportion (62%) indicated that they had seen rental properties with serious safety problems, this question was phrased in such a way that it is not known whether tenants and property owners were referring to their own properties or properties more broadly.

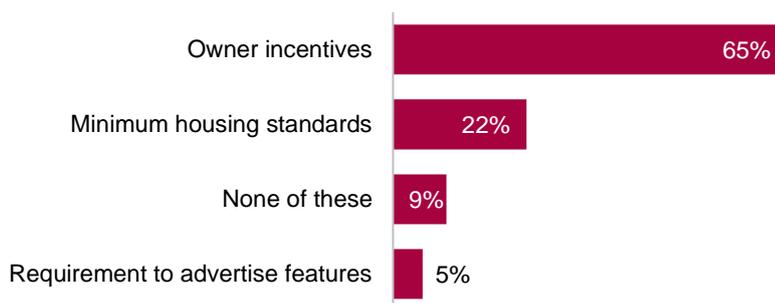
Respondents to the multiple-choice questions for this theme indicated that more Queensland rental properties would have energy and water efficiency features if there were incentives for owners (64%, Figure 16), and that mandatory times for repairs to be done by (39%) and minimum standards (36%) would help to ensure Queensland rental properties are well maintained and in good repair (Figure 17).

Figure 15. Property conditions, respondents answering yes to snap poll questions



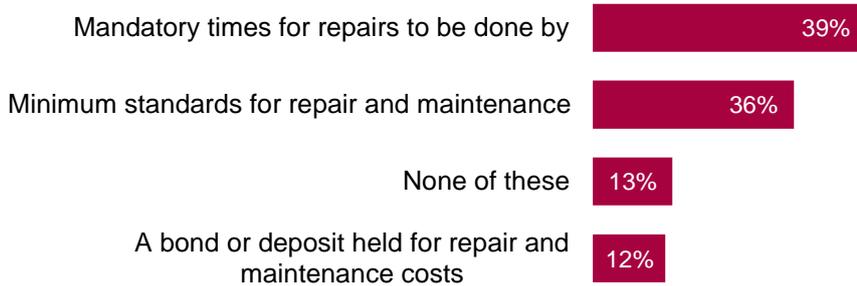
Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

Figure 16. What would encourage more Queensland rental properties to have energy and water efficiency features, like solar panels or water saving devices?



Note. n=4,726. Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

Figure 17. What would help to ensure Queensland rental properties are well maintained and in good repair?



Note. n=6,287. Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

5.3 Flexibility and security

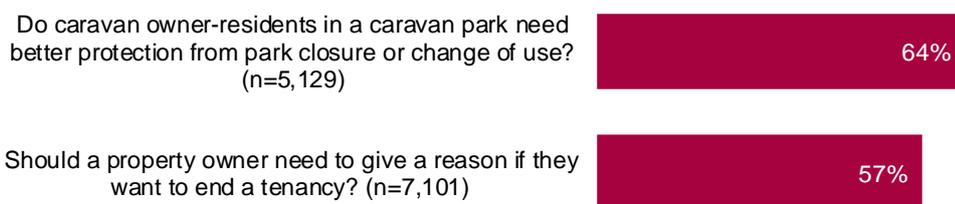
Three of the snap poll questions were within this consultation theme.

Almost two thirds of the respondents (64%) indicated that caravan owner-residents in caravan parks need better protection from park closure or change of use (Figure 18).

Over half of the respondents (57%) indicated that a property owner should be required to give a reason if they want to end a tenancy (Figure 18).

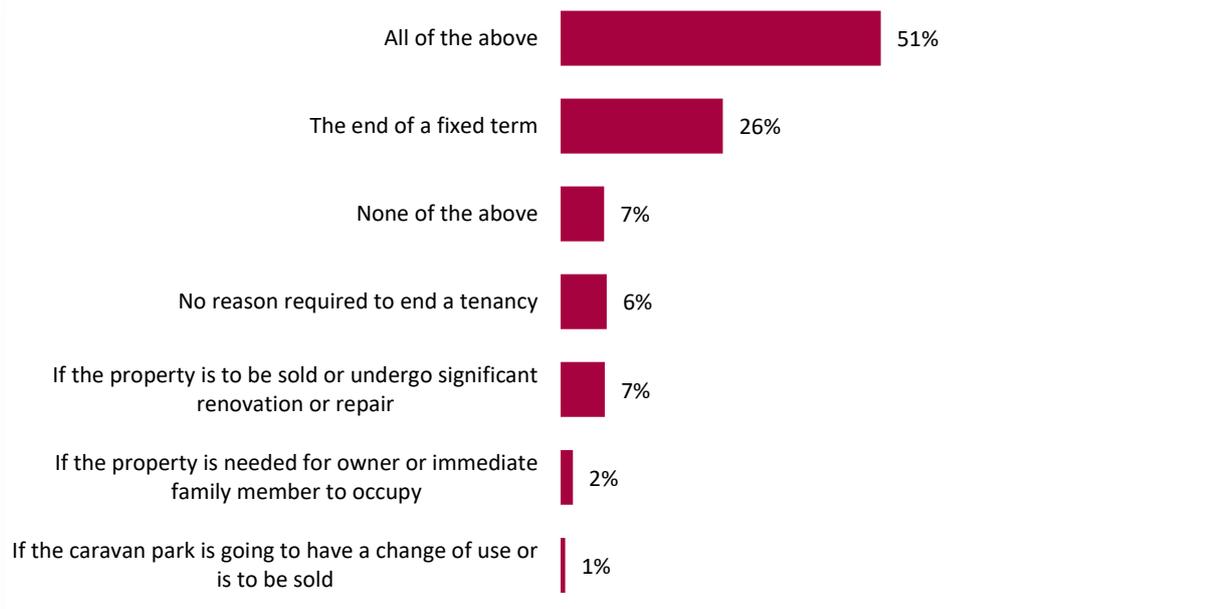
The majority of respondents believed that all of the listed reasons for property owners to end a tenancy were fair (51%, Figure 19).

Figure 18. Flexibility and Security, respondents answering yes to snap poll questions



Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

Figure 19. What is a fair reason for a property owner to end a tenancy?



Note. n=4,397. Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

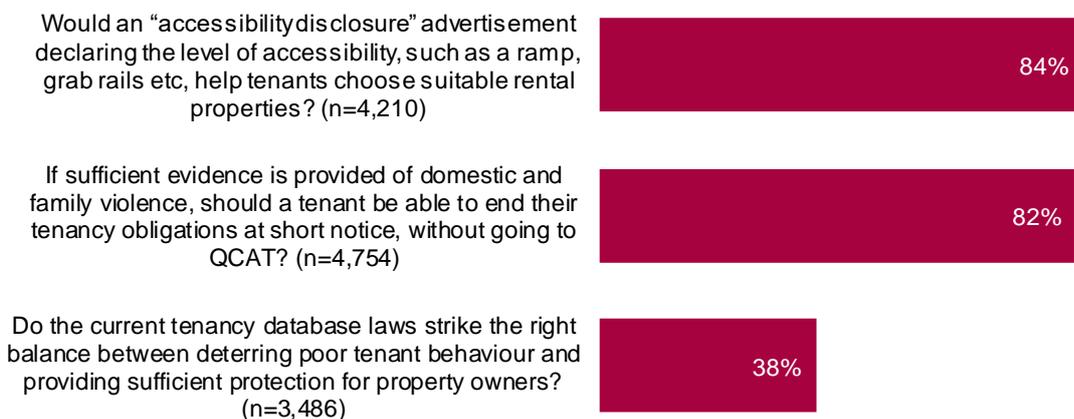
5.4 Better protections

Three of the snap poll questions were within this consultation theme.

Overall, respondents were positive about the need for protection and security. A high proportion of respondents (84%) indicated that advertisements declaring the level of accessibility would help tenants choose suitable rental properties (Figure 20). Many respondents (82%) also indicated that tenants should be able to end their tenancy obligations at short notice without going to QCAT if sufficient evidence of domestic and family violence exists.

Only 38 per cent of respondents indicated that the current tenancy database laws strike the right balance between deterring poor tenant behaviour and providing enough protection for property owners.

Figure 20. Better Protections, respondents answering yes to snap poll questions



Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

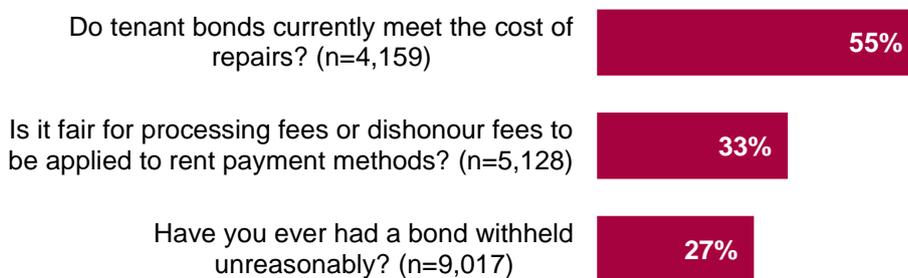
5.5 Looking and leasing

Three of the snap poll questions were within this consultation theme.

The questions in this section are somewhat difficult to interpret without knowing who—of tenants, property owners or property managers—provided the answers. For example, only tenants are subject to withheld bonds, while the adequacy of bonds to meet the costs of repairs is more relevant for property owners.

Overall, just over half of respondents (55%) reported that current bonds adequately meet the cost of repairs (Figure 21). Over a quarter (27%) of respondents reported that they'd had a bond withheld unreasonably. One-third of respondents (33%) indicated that it is fair for processing fees or dishonour fees to be applied to rent payment methods.

Figure 21. Looking and Leasing, respondents answering yes to snap poll questions



Source. DHPW Engagement HQ snap poll data.

6 Appendix – postcard survey analysis

To create the postcard survey dataset, ARTD combined parts 1-4 of the Mastersheet received from the Department between December 19 and 28. Only records with a channel value of Postcard Survey were selected. These results were extracted to a new spreadsheet for cleaning. So that the views of all respondents were accounted for in the analysis using Gavagai Explorer, any record with a response in the Comments Summary column were retained.

Another separate sheet was created, where data was restructured from 'long' to 'wide' based on the unique values from the Identifier column. This ensured that each postcard survey response was only counted once during quantitative analyses (one row per response). Records without an identifier value were generated new unique values so that their data was retained. Because responses with no identifier value may have been recorded more than once, this process may have retained a small number of duplicate responses.

The Department received 14,146 postcard surveys by 19 December 2018. After combining Mastersheet parts 1 through 4, there were 15,668 rows of data with a channel value of Postcard Survey. ARTD identified 11,306 unique identifier values, including those responses that were newly assigned a unique identifier (see Table 18).

Table 18. Summary of postcard survey records

Stage	Number of records
Postcards received by DHPW	14,146
All postcard survey rows in Mastersheets 1-4	15,668
Unique records after restructure, including blank identifier values	11,306

Source. DHPW Mastersheets 1-4; DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

6.1 Data tables

Table 19. Satisfaction with renting experience by responder type (Q1)

Respondent type	Tenant	Property owner	Property manager	Total	Not specified
n	10,407	462	46	11,048	-
Satisfied	50%	47%	50%	50%	32
Neither	27%	28%	39%	28%	42
Dissatisfied	22%	25%	11%	22%	59
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	-
No data	160	63	2	166	33

Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Table 20. Perception of the renting rules in Queensland by responder type (Q3)

Respondent type	Tenant	Property owner	Property manager	Total	Not specified
n	10,280	465	48	10,922	-
Favour property owner	51%	27%	17%	49%	51
Favour tenant	4%	33%	40%	6%	15
Balanced	28%	30%	29%	28%	33
Don't know	17%	11%	15%	17%	30
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	-
No data	287	60	0	384	37

Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Table 21. Respondent type (Q About you, recoded)

Respondent type	Number	Percent
Property manager	48	0%
Property owner	525	5%
Tenant	10,567	95%
Total	11,140	100%
No data	166	-

Note. This was a multiple response question where multiple selections were aggregated into one value, e.g. 'Tenant and Property Owner'. This data was recoded to sort values into the three categories above using the following hierarchy—if property owner, then property owner; else, if property manager, then property manager; else, if tenant, then tenant. Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Table 22. Gender/sex (Q6)

Respondent type	Number	Percent
Female	5,994	55%
Male	4,864	45%
Non-binary	21	0%
Total	10,879	100%
No data	427	-

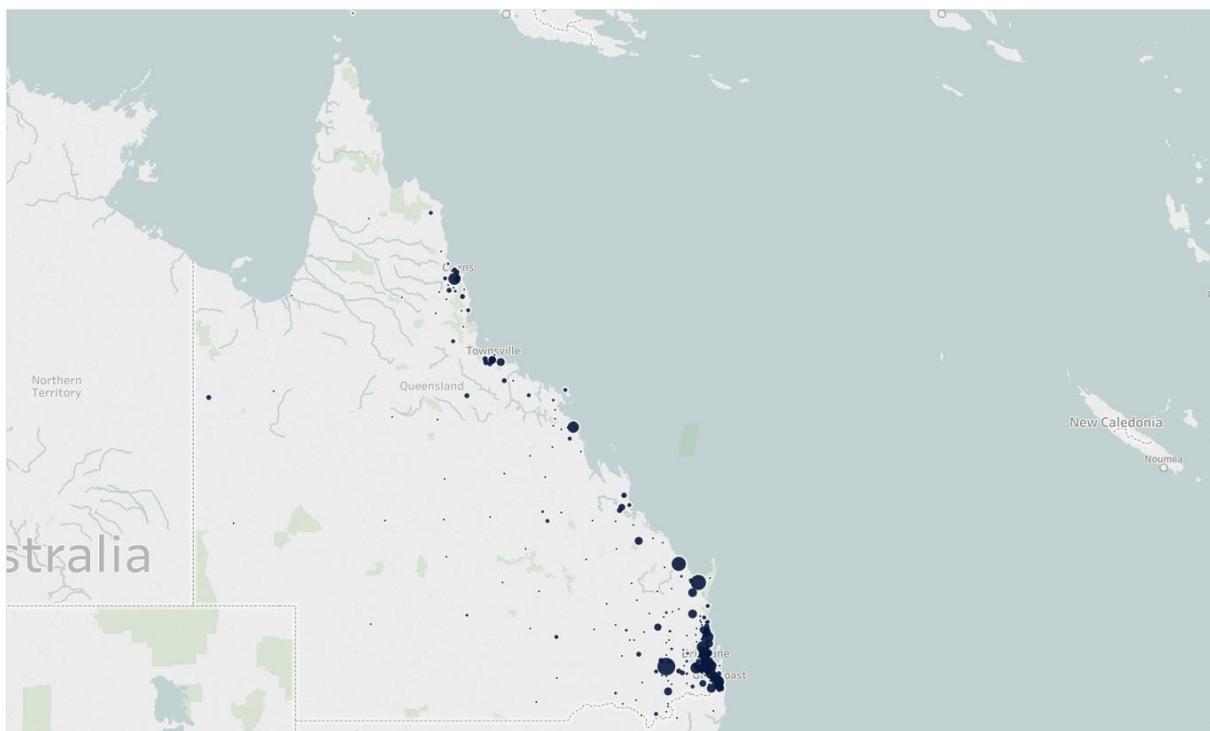
Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Table 23. Age group (Q7)

Respondent type	Number	Percent
18-25	511	5%
26-35	1,313	12%
36-45	1,550	14%
46-55	1,898	17%
56-65	2,121	19%
65+	3,732	34%
Total	11,125	100%
No data	181	-

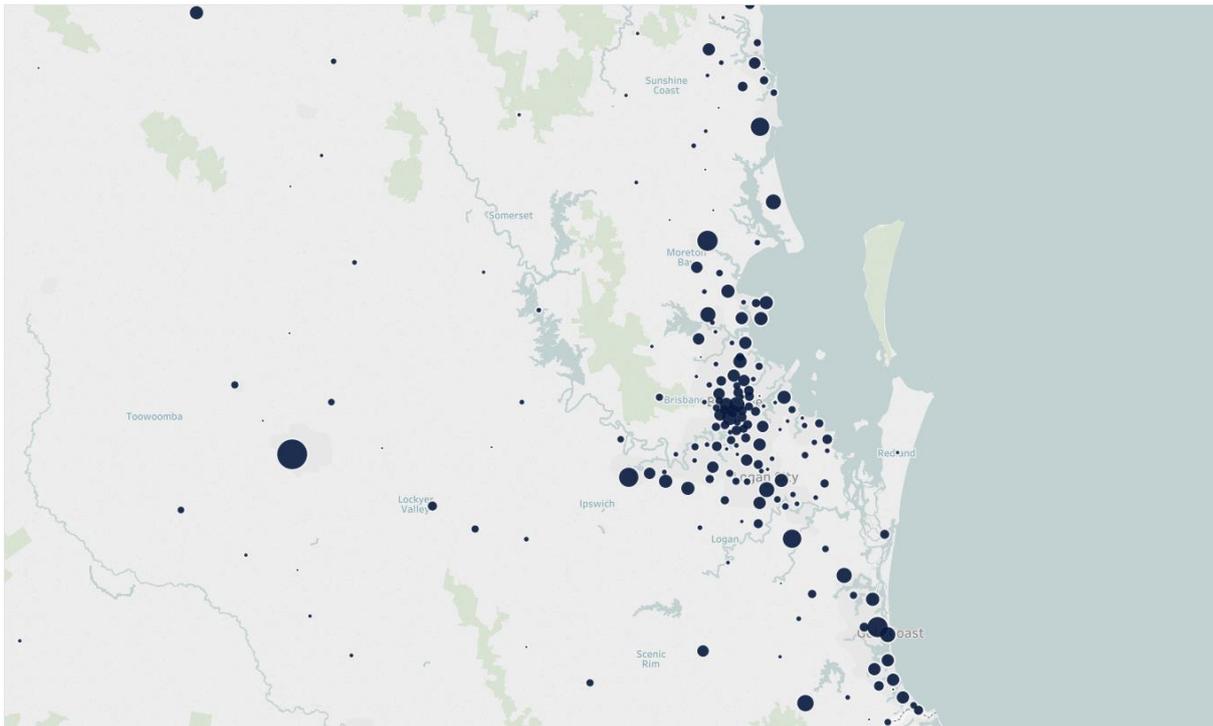
Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Figure 22. Postcode visualisation – Queensland (11)



Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

Figure 23. Postcode visualisation – Brisbane area (11)



Source. DHPW Mastersheet – ARTD Postcard survey dataset.

6.2 Changes to improve renting experience

6.2.1 Rent

There were 2,986 comments that discussed rent. In most of these comments the respondent indicated a negative sentiment towards rent. Concerns included rent affordability and a desire to pay less in rent, that any rental increases be small rather than large, that property managers act responsibly and address concerns and faults in the property when they arise, and that different incentives be provided to those who rent. Respondents provided examples of such incentives, including:

- longer rental agreements
- one week's free rent over Christmas for having had a long tenancy agreement
- rent-to-buy agreement options
- realistic rental assistance from Centrelink to reflect the cost of living in regional areas
- providing mortgage relief instead of rental assistance
- some form of recognition for tenants who pay their rent on time, every time, and
- a rewards program if the tenant properly looks after a property.

“... if rent is to increase, would like to see by small amounts not to increase by a large amount.” [Tenant]

Others were satisfied with their rent prices and their overall renting experience, indicating they were happy with both their rental histories and their current property managers.

“... my renting experience has been very positive over the past five years fortunately.” [Tenant]

6.2.2 Property management

There were 1,403 comments that discussed property management. Concerns raised by respondents included physical problems with a property (such as rusted gutters and doors falling off hinges), a general lack of property maintenance, repairs and upkeep, and tenants not being able to receive bonds back even if the property is left in a clean condition.

“... many problems with the property - gutters blocked and rusted, shower leaks, doors falling off hinges, etc. All brought to the attention of the property managers and ignored.” [Tenant]

Other concerns raised were around the behaviour of property managers and making unreasonable and unprofessional requests. Some respondents claimed property managers were not reporting existing damages or faults at the beginning of a new rental agreement and later claiming it was the tenant's fault. Others felt laws favoured the property managers and owners, and that tenants did not have as many rights. For example, some tenants were disappointed that they had to take their property managers or owners to QCAT to get their bond back even when the property was vacated in a suitable condition. Many respondents simply mentioned they would like to be shown more respect from their property managers and to be able to trust them more than they currently do.

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“Would like more respect and support from property managers. Private rental owners has made her situation stressful due to their arrogance, bullying and personal attacks if concerns are safety or requests for maintenance.” [Tenant]

Some respondents indicated that they had a positive and/or professional relationship with their property manager. Some provided reasons why, including that the tenant felt respected for keeping the property clean and well maintained, or being able to deal personally with the property owner when maintenance discussions or negotiations were required. Others did not indicate why their relationship was positive, simply saying the property manager was ‘great’ or they had a ‘good relationship’.

“... I have been here for years and have a great relationship with the property manager and owner.” [Tenant]

6.2.3 Repairs and maintenance

There were 1,247 comments that discussed repairs and maintenance. The major concern raised by tenants was that property owners and property managers should respond to requests for maintenance faster and should complete them to a higher quality.

“Maintenance should be done faster and to an acceptable standard.” [Tenant]

Other concerns raised included:

- property owners not acting on requests for maintenance
- tenants receiving or being fearful of retaliatory rent increases should maintenance occur or be requested
- maintenance not being done to a sufficient standard, and
- maintenance contractors arriving at the property at inconvenient or unscheduled times.

“Notice from contractors when completing maintenance re: time when coming up to property. They just turn up.” [Tenant]

6.2.4 Property owners

There were 1,164 comments that discussed property owners. Most respondents indicated that they had decent and professional property owners and made generalist comments. Many reported having an honest working relationship with them.

“I am pretty happy where we stay. Owners are really good and I’ve had no problems.” [Tenant]

Concerns raised by respondents included:

- laws favouring property owners and property managers rather than tenants
- the need for tenants to be provided additional protections
- insufficient privacy due to the frequency and nature of property inspections
- tenants wanting to communicate directly to the property owner rather than through a property manager
- property owners not conducting essential repairs when required, and

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- property owners making illegitimate bond claims.

“More protection for tenants from greed[y] landlords and more assistance to help tenant[s] who are being bullied by landlords and being unjust in their actions.” [Tenant]

6.2.5 Pets

There were 921 comments that discussed pets. Respondents indicated that most rental properties do not allow pets. Many respondents commented that they would like pets to be allowed in rental properties, and that the terms and conditions in rental agreements should change to reflect this.

“Greater ability for tenants to be able to keep pets of an appropriate type / size for the properties, it is challenging to find good rentals which allow pets”. [Tenant]

The reasons that respondents supported allowing pets in rental properties included for comfort or companionship as tenants get older, for helping to relieve stress, depression or other mental illnesses, and for couples with no children wanting to have a pet.

“Pets should be allowed. When I had my dog, it's hard to look for rental properties that accept pets. Pets are very important in people's lives. They help relieve stress and they are part of the family.” [Tenant]

Concerns raised over the allowance of pets in rental properties included a lack of suitable space, pets causing damage to furniture and property, pets attracting fleas and other pests, noise complaints, and hygiene issues if not properly cared for. Those who supported renting with pets were concerned about the long period for body corporate to process a tenant's pet request, and the affordability of rental properties that allow pets.

“... no dogs allowed in units or duplexes as barking is a big problem.” [Unknown]

Some tenants indicated that having a pet would be nice, but they could understand the reason(s) why they might not be able to do so. Such reasons included living in a confined space and/or near other tenants and neighbours. Pets can be noisy both when tenants are at home and when they are absent and require a backyard or open spaces nearby for exercise.

“I strongly believe that pets are not suited to unit accommodation. Pets need a yard and room to move. Pets can be noisy when tenants are absent, which I feel can be an annoyance for other unit residents who choose to not have pets. I believe that whilst people want the right to own a pet in a unit, there are also people who want the right to live in a pet-free unit complex if they choose. The fact is that in a unit environment, we live so close together that if you grant the right to have a pet, then you are denying the right to live pet free.” [Tenant]

6.2.6 Leases

There were 710 comments that discussed lease agreements. The length of a lease agreement was a concern for many respondents. Many tenants indicated that they wanted longer lease agreements thereby enabling them to feel more secure, while property owners wanted shorter leases to gain the flexibility to address problematic tenants. However, even some tenants indicated that they wanted short and flexible leases to complement the nature of their jobs.

“Would like to feel more secure with lease time - longer lease periods.” [Tenant]

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Property owners indicated that offering longer lease agreements would be problematic as it could be difficult for them to recover unpaid fees from tenants.

“There is a great imbalance as legislation favours the diverse and changing needs of renters at the expense of owner’s needs. The numerous options allowing renters to break leases easily and difficulty of recovering money from a rogue tenant effectively makes long leases binding on owners and not renters.” [Property owner]

The cost of, and protocol for, breaking lease agreements was another concern. Many tenants wanted to be able break lease agreements more easily, particularly when providing a suitable notice period such as 4 weeks. Some suggested that lease agreements should be more easily broken under certain circumstances such as severe illness or family break-ups, and that tenants should not be charged for breaking lease agreements. Some respondents were concerned that owners retained the ability to increase rent prices or sell the property while the lease period was still in effect.

“If you need to break lease for medical reason it should be possible without paying to break [the] lease.” [Tenant]

6.2.7 Inspections

There were 593 comments that discussed inspections of rental properties. Many respondents were critical of inspections, particularly of their frequency. The was especially pertinent for longer-term tenants with up to date rental and security bond payments.

“... not having building inspections every 3 - 4 months when you have your security deposit and rent up to date and no history of damaging properties.” [Tenant]

Some respondents felt that inspectors should be checking for major defects and damage rather than minor cleanliness issues such as clean windows. Other concerns included:

- the invasive nature of inspections
- the attitudes and behaviours of inspectors
- inspections occurring while the tenant was not present
- inspectors taking photos of the tenant’s belongings, and
- short notice period for inspections.

“... quarterly inspections are very invasive [and] photos should not be allowed to be taken of my personal property.” [Tenant]

6.2.8 Minor changes to the property

There were 477 comments that discussed minor changes being made to a rental property. Many respondents wished to be able to hang photos, pictures and/or clocks on the walls of rental properties and make other cosmetic changes without approval from the property owner.

“Landlord flexibility to hang photos, remove dead plants, replace plants in gardens.” [Tenant]

Some indicated that making such changes helped make the property feel more ‘homely’, which would then encourage them to be more conscientious tenants.

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“Difficulty to make a home, e.g. no photos on walls (pictures), no pets etc.” [Tenant]

6.2.9 Bonds

There were 452 comments that discussed bonds. Respondents suggested that the bond was too expensive, and they wanted to change the bond amount. Others wanted less stringent cleaning requirements and costs before having their bond returned.

“... I would like to see cleaning for bond refund more reasonable / realistic.” [Tenant]

Others had issues with property managers and property owners which included:

- being reluctant to return bonds
- threatening not to return bonds
- insisting on hiring professional cleaners despite the property being in good condition, and
- sometimes having close relationships with cleaning companies and services.

Some tenants experienced problems getting their bond back after changing property managers and wanted a better line of communication between themselves and the property manager and/or owner.

“... getting bond back after you clean maybe twice but they get you [to] come back four or five times.” [Tenant]

Some respondents had issue with moving into a property following another tenancy and the bond had not been used to clean the property.

“When the agent says they will do a bond clean they actually do it so you move into a clean house not someone else's filth.” [Tenant]

6.2.10 Social housing

There were only 88 comments which discussed social housing. Often, these comments indicated that the respondent wanted a better chance of gaining access to social housing as it would reduce the burden of paying high private market rents, especially for pensioners. Other respondents called for additional help in gaining access to social housing, for additional investments to be made in social housing, for drug users to be removed from social housing and for rents not to increase for social housing.

“Want to move to housing commission because it is inexpensive.” [Tenant]

6.2.11 Notice to leave without grounds

There were only 67 comments which referred to notices to leave without grounds. Generally, tenants wanted the notice to leave without grounds clause removed, while property owners and managers wanted the clause strengthened. Some comments from property owners or managers appeared to misunderstand the clause.

“...Unfair that renter can end tenancy without grounds but owner cannot. Grounds for ending tenancy due to serious breaches must have a short notice period due to urgency.” [Property owner]

6.2.12 Minimum standards

There were only 16 comments which referred to minimum standards. They crossed over with the above topic, as tenants noted that asking for minimum standards to be met could result in a threat of eviction (without grounds) from the property owner/manager. Both tenants and property owners wanted minimum standards to be introduced so that there was a basic level that a property would have to meet.

“Enforce minimum standards without fear of retribution/eviction.” [Tenant]

7 Appendix – written responses analysis

7.1 Methodology

The analysis of the qualitative community feedback collected through written responses was based on:

- 1,381 written responses' comments as coded manually by the department in the Mastersheet
- 842 responses and 3,984 forum posts and comments by the machine assisted qualitative analysis model
- 2,190 relevant comments and posts from social media (direct replies to questions asked by Housing for Queensland, replies or comments made by other page users, separate posts on the Housing for Queensland Facebook page) analysed using Gavagai Explorer
- a validation sample of manual coded responses
- triangulation of outputs from all methods to form the final analysis.

7.1.1 Machine assisted qualitative analysis

The thematic analysis of written submissions was undertaken through a machine learning technique called 'Topic Modelling'. This is part of a broader data science discipline known as 'Natural Language Processing'. This technique can identify themes organically by analysing text patterns and then presenting the analyst with groups of text from the qualitative responses which can be validated as topics. Once the analyst agrees on the topics, software is used to score all responses as to whether the topic is present. This is then validated by the analyst to check the quality of the program's analysis. Throughout the report, we term this method 'machine assisted qualitative analysis'.

7.1.2 Thematic analysis of all responses and comments

The results of this analysis can be found in Table 24. This table shows the total number of responses on each topic and breaks down where those responses came from (tenants, property owners or property managers).

For each responder type, different discussion topics were a priority as indicated by Table 25.

For tenants the five most popular discussion topics were:

1. property and tenancy managers (15%)
2. minimum housing standards (14%)
3. entry practices and privacy (12%)
4. renting with pets (11%), and
5. dispute resolution (10%).

Property owners prioritised:

1. renting with pets (22%)
2. making changes to property (13%)
3. dispute resolution (13%), and
4. minimum housing standards (12%).

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Whilst property managers focused on:

1. renting with pets (18%)
2. dispute resolution (17%)
3. minimum housing standards (15%), and
4. making changes to the property (11%).

There is clear crossover of pertinent topics between the responder types as renting pets, making changes to the property and dispute resolution were heavily discussed by all responder types. These areas of crossover indicate topics where there may be a strong interest in amending policy.

Table 24. Summary table of thematic analysis of written responses

Consultation theme	Discussion Topic	Total n	% Tenants (n=435)	% Property owners (n=334)	% Property managers (n=48)
A house and a home	Renting with pets	308	35%	58%	7%
A house and a home	Entry practices and privacy	189	61%	33%	6%
A house and a home	Making changes to the property	209	41%	52%	7%
Property condition	Minimum housing standards	251	52%	40%	8%
Flexibility and security	Notices	161	37%	55%	8%
Better protections	Property and tenancy managers	205	71%	25%	4%
Better protections	Dispute resolution	222	42%	49%	9%
Better protections	Vulnerable Queenslanders	96	83%	16%	1%
Looking and leasing	Rent and changes to rent	88	73%	23%	4%
Other	Disparity between rules for tenants and property owners	184	43%	51%	6%
Total		1,913	50%	43%	7%

Note. For clarity, respondents who were not a tenant, property owner or property manager are excluded from this table (n=25). Most responses have been coded multiple times to reflect how each comment in the response was relevant to a topic. Source: Altometer analysis.

Table 25. Summary table of discussion topics for each respondent type

Consultation theme	Discussion Topic	n	% Tenants (n=435)	% Property owners (n=334)	% Property managers (n=48)	% Total
A house and a home	Pets in rental properties	308	11%	22%	18%	16%
A house and a home	Inspections	189	12%	8%	9%	10%
A house and a home	Minor changes to the property by the tenant	209	9%	13%	11%	11%
Property condition	Minimum housing quality, safety standards and timely repairs	251	14%	12%	15%	13%
Flexibility and security	Notice to leave without grounds	161	6%	11%	10%	8%
Better protections	Property managers	205	15%	6%	6%	11%
Better protections	Disputes, RTA, and QCAT	222	10%	13%	17%	12%
Better protections	Elderly renters and renters with disability	96	8%	2%	1%	5%
Looking and leasing	Rent increases and affordability	88	7%	2%	3%	5%
Other	Disparity between rules for property owners and tenants	184	8%	11%	10%	10%
Total		1,913	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. For clarity, respondents who were not a tenant, property owner or property manager are excluded from this table (n=25). Most responses have been coded multiple times to reflect how each comment in the response was relevant to a topic. Source: Altometer analysis.

7.1.3 Coding and analysis of randomly selected responses

The initial qualitative analysis of the written responses gathered from the *Open Doors to Renting Reform* consultation process was conducted by selecting a random sample of responses from the total number of responses received (1,446). The choice of responses was reflective of the breakdown of respondent type across all responses.

7.1.4 Peak body submissions

All peak body submissions were read and analysed manually. Submissions were received from the following peak bodies:

- Property Council of Australia (PCA) Queensland
- Property Owners Association of Queensland (POAQ)
- Queensland Council of Social Service (QCROSS)
- Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)

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- Queensland Youth Housing Coalition (QYHC)
- Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)
- Tenants Queensland (TQ) Inc
- Strata Community Australia (Queensland) (SCAQ)
- Caravan Parks Association of Queensland (CPAQ) Ltd.

All formal suggestions given by the peak bodies have been included within each analysis topic below.

7.2 Analysis

7.2.1 Comparison of the validation sample and machine-based analysis

Machine assisted topic modelling used natural language processing to come up with the ten topics seen in Table 25. Below is a discussion of each identified topic, whether and how the topic is congruent with the results of other analyses conducted by ARTD (Table 26), and the sentiment (positive or negative) of comments from different types of respondents on this theme.

Pets in rental properties

The model identified that 16 per cent of all comments addressed the theme of pets (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby renting with pets was among the most frequently coded topics in comments from the randomly selected responses coded by ARTD (Table 26). Natural language processing identified that tenants were concerned that they would be denied tenancy if they owned a pet, and that this was not only an infringement on their rights but could also impact their wellbeing. The model found that property owners were concerned that pets could possibly result in damages to the property, and they believed they should have the final say whether the tenant could own pets.

Minimum housing quality, safety standards and timely repairs

The model identified that 13 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 18 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topics of minimum standards, maintenance and safety (Table 26, some row totals combined). Natural language processing showed that most tenants wanted minimum housing quality and safety standards due to being dissatisfied with their previous rental experiences and believed rental properties in Queensland should come with air conditioning units. Tenants believed repairs should not be made by the property owner, but by a professional. On the other hand, property owners did not want minimum housing standards introduced, as they believed current legislation and guidelines already covered these requirements. They believed that tenants should be held accountable for any damages they make and be prepared to pay for repairs.

Table 26. Number of comments identified as relating to each consultation theme during manual coding by ARTD

Written response coding themes		Percent
A House and a Home	Renting with pets	9%
A House and a Home	Entry practices and privacy	3%
A House and a Home	Making changes to the property	9%
A House and a Home	Enjoyment	2%
Property Condition	Minimum standards	7%
Property Condition	Maintenance	8%
Property Condition	Minimum living costs	2%
Property Condition	Safety	3%
Flexibility and Security	Notices	4%
Flexibility and Security	Evictions	9%
Flexibility and Security	Flexibility and rental security	5%
Better Protection	Vulnerable Queenslanders	6%
Better Protection	Tenancy databases	1%
Better Protection	Property managers	5%
Better Protection	Dispute resolution	4%
Looking and Leasing	Investment	1%
Looking and Leasing	Application	2%
Looking and Leasing	Rental market	1%
Looking and Leasing	Rent and changes to rent	8%
Looking and Leasing	Payment methods	1%
Looking and Leasing	Bonds	4%
Looking and Leasing	Discrimination	1%
Looking and Leasing	Information	2%
Looking and Leasing	Advertising	0%

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Total	100%
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Note. Most responses have been coded multiple times to reflect how each comment in the response was relevant to a topic. Source. Manual coding of random responses by ARTD.

Disputes, RTA, and QCAT

The model identified that 12 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is not completely congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 4 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of dispute resolution (Table 26). This may be due to the nature of using 'RTA' and 'QCAT' as search terms in the machine-based analysis. During manual coding, responses often mentioned the RTA or QCAT but were not necessarily addressing dispute resolution or were discussing a different theme. Including these search phrases in topic modelling may have overestimated the pervasiveness of dispute and dispute resolution as a discussion topic. In this case it was beneficial to manually code responses alongside machine-based analysis.

Minor changes to the property by the tenants

The model identified that 11 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 9 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of changes to the property (Table 26). Natural language processing identified that tenants wanted to be able to make small personal changes to the property – such as hanging paintings or shelves – without seeking consent from the property owner. Conversely, property owners were concerned that small changes made by tenants could result in damages, and they wanted tenants to ask for permission before doing so.

Property managers

The model identified that 11 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is not completely congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 5 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of property managers (Table 26). However, natural language processing did identify similar general sentiments as the other analyses such as issues with intransigent or disinterested property managers.

Disparity between rules for property owners and tenants

Machine-assisted topic modelling created this theme, which exists outside out the Department's consultation themes. This topic is difficult to track using theme mapping as it covers a range of discussion topics such as evictions and lease lengths. This topic mostly encapsulates respondents' views on the perceived imbalance of power between tenants and property owners.

The model identified that 10 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 9 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of evictions, and 5 per cent addressed flexibility and security (Table 26) – a topic that mainly addressed lease lengths. Natural language processing identified that tenants wanted the choice to sign on to long-term leases and believed property owners should not be allowed to issue eviction notices at the end of the tenant's lease period, nor should they be able to show the property to prospective tenants while the existing tenant is still residing at the property. Conversely, property owners wanted to address the disparity in notices to vacate, often calling for a one-month notice period for each party.

Inspections

The model identified that 10 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is mostly congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 3 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of entry practices and privacy (Table 26), particularly in relation to inspections. Natural language processing identified that tenants believed inspections without notice were an invasion of privacy, and that annual inspections were frequent enough for long-term leases. Conversely, the model identified that property owners felt they had a right to conduct routine inspections to check on the state of their property.

Notice to leave without grounds

The model identified that 8 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 9 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD (Table 26) addressed the topic of notices. Natural language processing identified that tenants felt they should have the right to remain in their home long-term if they wish. Property owners expressed the importance of their right to terminate a tenancy at their discretion, and that the notice period for ending a tenancy where a serious breach of the contract has occurred should be shortened.

Elderly renters and renters with disability

The model identified that 5 per cent of all comments addressed this theme (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 6 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topic of vulnerable Queenslanders (Table 26), which mostly addressed seniors and people with disability. Natural language processing did not identify a pattern in property owners' views. However, the model showed that tenants felt that senior and disabled renters should receive assistance from the government or more reasonable rates.

Rent increases and affordability

The model identified that 5 per cent of all comments addressed rent increases and affordability (see Table 25). The frequency of this theme is congruent with the findings from the thematic analysis, whereby 8 per cent of comments from randomly selected responses coded by ARTD addressed the topics of rent and changes to rent (Table 26). Machine-assisted topic modelling identified that tenants feel rent is high and rent increases should not happen more than once a year, and property owners feel mandating energy and water efficiency will have flow on effects, increasing rent prices.

7.2.2 Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis of all written responses has been grouped by the five themes for discussion presented during the consultation. The views of respondents have been categorised according to the often-competing interests of either a tenant, or those of a property owner or manager. In most instances, the interests of property owners and managers aligned, and where they did not it has been noted.

Within each theme and sub-topic, the analysis captures:

- sentiments for change
- issues for tenants

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- issues for property owners
- ideas for rental reform
- formal suggestions from peak body responses
- quotes from respondents and peak bodies extracted from responses for illustrative and contextual purposes
- tables demonstrating the number of comments within all written responses that addressed each topic by respondent status.

A house and a home

The 'house and a home' consultation theme centred around discussions about how tenants turn a rented house into their own home, and how property owners and managers deal with this. This included issues such as:

- renting with pets
- entry practices and privacy
- making personalised changes to the property
- a tenant's rights to the quiet enjoyment of the property.

Renting with pets

This was the most popular topic of discussion, and comments clustered around the inherent value of pets to tenants and their cost to property owners. Whether property owners may deny a prospective tenant a rental property if they have a pet or pets was the issue discussed frequently.

Of the 308 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed renting with pets, 58 per cent were made by property owners, 35 per cent were made by tenants, and 7 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 27).

Table 27. Number of comments that addressed renting with pets by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	107	35%
Property Owners	178	58%
Property Managers	23	7%
Total	308	100%
Neither/ unknown	10	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for change

Most tenant respondents were supportive of all rental properties being deemed pet friendly. A small proportion of tenant respondents were not supportive of pets being allowed in all rental properties due to hygiene, allergy, noise, smell, and damage concerns. The overwhelming majority of property owner respondents were not supportive of mandatory requirements for pet friendly rental agreements.

“If tenants are going to have the right to have pets they should be responsible for any damage and cleaning caused by the pet - which could be considerable. Therefore, there

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should be a separate and substantial pet bond that will adequately cover all of the above contingencies and there should be a clause in the tenancy agreement clearly outlining the tenant's responsibilities." [Property Owner]

"Allowing people to have pets is important for mental and physical health reasons."
[Tenant]

Issues for tenants

The strongest perspective heard from tenants was that pet friendly properties are crucial as many tenants rely on the company of pets for the companionship, safety, physical and mental health benefits (with the elderly commonly mentioned).

"Some older people have cats or dogs as pets which are classed as part of their families. They are company for the older people and in some cases give them a reason to live."
[Tenant]

"It should be the choice of the tenant if they have pets. It is unfair that a tenant is not able to enjoy the companionship, safety and health benefits of having a pet. Tenants have already provided financial protection, in the form of a bond, for agents and owners. Landlords should not be able to insist on an additional bond to cover animals." [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The strongest viewpoint heard from property owners was that pets should be allowed only at the property owner's discretion, and that there should be no mandatory obligation imposed on property owners. Many argued that not all properties are suitable for pets and the welfare of the animal needs to be considered. Most property owners were concerned with hygiene, allergy, noise, smell, and property damage from pets, and the subsequent costs associated with repairing pet damage. Many expressed that they are often unable to recoup the losses. Several property owners warned that mandatory pet requirements would result in many selling their properties and a subsequent shortage in the rental market. Essentially most argued that the status quo should remain.

"Should keep current provision that landlord and tenant work out an option between them. The suggestion of compulsory agreement to let tenants keep pets is totally one-sided thinking." [Property owner]

"Some pets cause damage to property and leave a distinctive odour and possible flea problems and therefore the landlord should have the right to approve or not." [Property owner]

7.3 Ideas for rental reform

The specific suggestions for how the renting reforms could be redesigned to better protect the interests of both tenants and land owners varied, and often conflicted. However, both parties generally agreed on the suggestion of an additional 'pet bond' to encourage acceptance of pets.

The most common idea for reform put forward by tenants was that rental properties should all be pet friendly. They also suggested the following on this issue:

- It would be acceptable for tenants to pay a specific pet bond
- Pets could be accompanied by conditions around maintaining the standard of the property during inspections with breach notices provided if not met

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- Tenants must provide 'pet references' from previous property owners/ managers.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were that:

- mandatory pet requirements should not be imposed, but pet friendly rental properties should require tenants to pay a specific pet bond
- it is the property owner's right to refuse pets and the current provisions of the legislation should remain
- tenants should expect to pay a higher rent for properties that allow pets
- property owners should be able to gain access to information about animals that are declared dangerous or have had any complaints against them made to council
- there should be obligations placed on tenants to disclose the presence of pets to ensure the safety of those inspecting properties
- a property owner should be able to request a copy of pet requisition or licencing as part of the pet application process, to ensure animals being kept at a property are safe and 'legal'.

Table 28. Peak body recommendations about pets

Peak bodies specifically suggested:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets • The rental reform should allow tenants to have pets in rental properties. Tenants should have the right to keep their pets, unless the landlord demonstrates a good reason why they should not be permitted.
Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Inc (QTHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets • Keep people together with their pets in their rental homes.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms restricting pets • TQ recommends that the assumption in tenancy agreements should be that renters are able to keep pets as long as they are not in breach of any law or by-law. • TQ recommends that no additional bond should be required (or allowed) to keep a pet.
Property Owners Association of QLD (POAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of pets in rental properties • Before any changes are made, discussions should take place with the Insurance Council of Australia to ascertain their position on this. Property owners who already have paid for current insurance could face a problem if after allowing an animal could find their insurance null and void.
Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets • REIQ supports changes to the Act that would allow a lessor to permit pets subject to a pet bond or other mitigant and result in clear guidelines. The REIQ does not support changes that would

Peak Body	Recommendation
	remove a lessor’s entitlement to withhold consent from the tenant in the absence of reasonable grounds.
Strata Community Association (Queensland) (SCAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets and body corporates • It appears there is a big interest in the keeping of pets but SCA (Qld) wonders if the review team realises that approval from your landlord does not equal body corporate approval? In the context of community titles schemes, body corporate approval remains a necessary part of any discussion in the pet space.
Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLCQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets • It’s not fair to deny tenants’ rights that others take for granted. Like home owners, tenants have to comply with local government regulations about the keeping of pets, and they are required to repairs any damage at the end of their tenancy. To Make Renting Fair, people who rent should be able to keep their pets in their rental homes.

“Will the new Act allow for professional carpet cleaning, repolishing of timber floors and profession pest control if pets are allowed? ...Will the tenant be responsible for the cost involved?” [The Property Owners’ Association of Queensland]

“Keeping pets should be a matter of personal choice and personal responsibility. Adults should not be required to seek permission to keep a pet whether a person rents or owns their home. A plethora of research outlines the health and social benefits of having pets and people who rent should not be excluded from this choice.” [Tenants Queensland Inc]

“The Animal Welfare League says about 25% of animals surrendered to them last year was because of inability to find pet friendly homes.” [Queensland Council of Social Service]

“The majority of rental stock in Queensland is owned by 'mum and dad' investors, who are ultimately responsible for the maintenance, management and insurance of rental accommodation. With security of tenure and quality of accommodation already an issue, forcing them to take on further requirements- such as mandating that pets are permitted- threatens to further increase costs and erode the quality of accommodation. It also poses a further risk to security of tenure, as some landlords may be less inclined to continue a lease to those with pets.” [Property Council of Australia (PCA)]

Entry practices and privacy

Much of the commentary about entry practices and privacy was around whether owners and property managers must abide by the rules of entry when, and if, they want to enter a property while it is being rented. If they give the right notice, for the right reason, they can enter even if the tenant is not home. However, this needs to be balanced against the tenant’s right to privacy.

Of the 189 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed entry practices and privacy, 61 per cent were made by tenants, 33 per cent were made by property owners, and 6 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 29).

Table 29. Number of comments that addressed entry practices and privacy by respondent status

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Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	115	61%
Property Owners	63	33%
Property Managers	11	6%
Total	189	100%
Neither/ unknown	4	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

The entry requirements of property owners and managers were often compared directly against the privacy rights of tenants. That being, to permit entry for reasonable circumstances, against the right of tenants to enjoy the quiet peace and enjoyment of the property.

The overwhelming majority of tenants that commented on entry practices and privacy were dissatisfied with how rights of entry are balanced against their rights to privacy in Queensland rental properties. However, the perspectives heard from property owners were more mixed with some believing the current rights of entry are reasonable and some wanting additional rights to enter a property.

“There is a need to consider extra rights of entry under section 192, which include allowing building and pest inspections and pre-settlement when purchased inspections. The absence of these provisions places the lessor in a difficult position if the tenant does not allow entry under the as agreed provision’, which is not a fair way for the situation to be.” [Property owner]

“Quarterly inspections are an invasion of tenants’ privacy and should be limited to annual inspections or if reasonable cause exists e.g. neighbour complaints / overgrown garden / maintenance required. A tenant who has been in a property more than 6 months and maintained it in a clean and acceptable condition should not be subjected to regular inspections.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

The most repeated entry requirements and privacy issues for tenants were:

- Quarterly inspections: Many felt that quarterly inspections are too frequent and requested more flexibility and less frequent inspections for those with good rental records. Six-monthly inspections were a common suggestion. Some also noted that inspections that must take place on weekdays put tenants in a difficult position as they feel they must neglect work to be present.
- Photographs: Many felt that property managers or owners taking photos of the property and the tenant’s personal belongings is an invasion of privacy, dignity and sense of safety. While some understood the need for photographs if there is an issue, they questioned their use when there was not.
- Sale of property during tenancy: A few comments from tenants specifically called for a limit on the frequency of open inspections or viewings when a property is up for sale and they are still renting the property.

“We have more privacy rights in a public toilet than we do in a rental property, when a landlord issues us with a form 9.” [Tenant]

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“My current landlord uses the umbrella term ‘maintenance’ whenever she wants to enter the property. My landlord has previously breached tenancy laws by turning up at the property unannounced and demanding entry to perform her own inspections (3 weeks after a formal inspection by real estate).” [Tenant]

“It is quite common for agents and property owners to conduct inspections or show properties to prospective buyers without providing sufficient written notice.” [Tenants]

Issues for property owners

Most property owners expressed that frequent inspections are crucial to effectively manage their property and ensure it is kept at a standard that allows capital growth.

Many property owners expressed the importance of inspections, naming reasons such as:

- identifying and reporting damage and safety issues
- ensuring the standard of cleaning
- reviewing maintenance and property upkeep
- accessing to read a meter
- conducting a valuation
- conducting a building inspection
- conducting a pest and pool safety inspection
- conducting a pre-settlement inspection
- conducting a fire inspection.

While some property owners expressed that the current entry requirements are reasonable and did not call for change, others did call for specific legislative reform and the need for increased inspection frequency. Many called for flexibility so that entry requirements could suit their particular property needs.

The most reoccurring issue for property owners was that the 24-hour notice period was limiting in some situations. For example, pre-settlement inspections were mentioned repeatedly.

It is noted that many respondents stated that they believed the notice period should be left at 24 hours.

Several property owners also mentioned that they had issue with tenants preventing photos or videos being taken for inspections. The legislation outlines that property managers 'may' now do so. Some property owners wanted photos to check on condition during tenancy.

“An agent should have the ability to inspect a property within 24 hours under any circumstance. Often rental properties are an investment and there should be reasonable access permitted so that the agent can check that all is ok.” [Property owner]

“Making access to a property more difficult will impact on a Landlord’s ability to conduct repairs and maintenance on a timely basis as well as potentially restrict the ability to find a new tenant when required as well. The notice period should be left at 24 hours as per current legislation.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

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The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were to:

- decrease quarterly inspections
- provide flexibility and less frequent inspections for those with a good long-term rental history
- limit photograph use to circumstances where there is an issue
- limit the frequency of open inspections or viewings when a property is up for sale
- ensure the inspection reasoning of 'maintenance' by property owners is not abused.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were to:

- review entry rights of Section 192, including allowing building and pest inspections and pre-settlement inspections. Time frames should be set to 24 hours' notice as per other entry time frames in Sections 192(1)(b) to (i)
- review entry rights of Section 192, including allowing sales appraisals to be carried out;
- overhaul Form 9, which dictates that entry for maintenance 'as agreed' must be done so with a minimum of 24 hours
- include a direct provision to cover reasonable belief that property has been used for an illegal activity as stated in s 290A (3)
- include an additional ground for entry to be established to allow the lessor access for the purpose of sale contract related inspections (current provisions could also be extended to allow for valuation or appraisal of the property to allow for a property manager to provide market appraisals of the property for rental market, sale market, taxation and investment purposes)
- introduce a third-party inspector particularly for those property owners who do not engage the services of a property manager. However, some criticised the associated costs that this would attract and believed it would dilute rental returns.

Table 30. Peak body recommendations on entry requirements

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Property Owners Association of QLD (POAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Right to inspect past property-related reports• Another area of concern is the suggestion by the Coroner at the inquest into the death of the baby in Rockhampton in 2008, and the recommendation that the tenant or the prospective tenant be given the right to inspect any building, pest or termite report or any other report pertaining to the property. The POAQ believes that this is an invasion of privacy.
Real Estate Institute Queensland (REIQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photography• Property owners and managers should have the right to take photos of the property and the Act should be amended with guidelines around taking photos to ensure that a tenant's privacy is respected while also allowing for the management of the tenancy.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entry condition reports• TQ recommends extending the time for a tenant to return the entry condition report to one week.

Peak Body	Recommendation
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry • TQ recommends that the minimum entry notice period is 48 hours. • TQ recommends that the four-hour window for entry be removed or reduced to half an hour. • TQ recommends strengthening the intent of protections for open houses and auctions to be held onsite without the tenants' written consent.

Making changes to the property

Much of the discussion around changes to the property was about tenants wanting to hang paintings or shelves or create garden beds. Currently, fixtures or structural changes can only be made to a property with written permission from the owner or property manager, otherwise tenants risk breaching their tenancy agreement.

Of the 209 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed making changes to the property, 52 per cent were made by property owners, 41 per cent were made by tenants, and 7 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 31).

Table 31. Number of comments that addressed making changes to the property by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	87	41%
Property Owners	108	52%
Property Managers	14	7%
Total	209	100%
Neither/ unknown	6	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for change

Most tenants expressed that they felt they should be able to make minor amendments to the property without seeking permission. The most common example of a 'minor' adjustment was hanging pictures on a wall. The overwhelming majority of property owners were not supportive of tenants being able to remove, replace or alter any part of the property without the explicit written permission from the property owner or manager.

"I wish to register my objection to mooted changes to the QLD RTRA Act which would result in tenants being able to make changes (however minor) to my property without my permission e.g. put holes in walls to hang pictures, and to keep pets without my approval. This would remove a fundamental right of a property owner and landlord to specify how their property is used and their right to protect their property from damage. These changes if passed, would enshrine in law the potential to cause much damage to rental properties by unscrupulous tenants." [Property owner]

"We believe that owners should allow hooks in the walls for tenants to hang their photos/pictures etc, and hooks etc to be allowed to remain at end of lease. Being allowed

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to personalize a property with your personal memories makes a property more homely and thus more pride is taken in it and it is looked after better by the tenant.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

The strongest perspective heard was that tenants should be able to make minor amendments to a home without seeking permission. Most expressed the opinion that a tenant should be able to put hooks in walls and hang picture frames as this is a crucial element of being able to ‘make a house a home’.

“We feel that in all the properties we have rented that we have not been able to make our rental feel homely. The walls are always bare as we find we can only use the sticky picture hooks that fail to hold up the pictures and have taken the paint off the walls when removing.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The overwhelming majority of property owners feel that tenants should not be allowed to alter, remove or replace any part of the property without permission from the property owner or manager, even if relatively minor. Property owners are asking for no changes to the renting legislation here. That is, that the provisions of the RTRA Act that specify that the tenant must request permission in writing to make changes to the property is reasonable and sufficient.

The biggest issue for property owners in allowing tenants to make even minor changes to the property is that this can often create major damage to the property. The most common example cited was wall hangings, and structural changes to the property. Many property owners noted that the tenant does not know the building materials used in the home, which can result in issues around liability for damage caused. For example, many cited that the tenant would not know the composition of the walls to hang a picture frame, and it is dangerous for them to make non-compliant building modifications.

Many respondents expressed that if tenants were able to make alterations without the consent of the property owner this could lead to issues around:

- damage to the property
- insurance and Public Liability
- safety
- exposing the tenant to serious risk of injury or death
- costly reinstatement work
- substantial loss of income
- exposure to potential litigation
- voiding the property owner’s insurance
- affecting the value of the property.

“Minor changes such as installing picture hangers should not be an issue though there may be consequences if the wall needs to be repaired/repainted after the tenant vacates to restore it back to a presentable condition. All changes should be negotiated with the owner and only instigated if approval in writing is given and the tenant accepts reasonable responsibility if restoration is required at a later date.” [Property owner]

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“As the premises is the property of the landlord and is in essence at times still the property of a lending institution until paid for, the tenant should not have the right to alter/paint/replace or remove any part of the property without authorization from the Landlord or the Agent.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common idea for reform put forward by tenants was to allow tenants to make minor amendments to the property without seeking permission.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were:

- There should be no reform, as property owners should continue to have the right of refusal on all modifications made by tenants.
- Keep current requirements covered by term 27 of the general tenancy agreement for tenants who wish to make any changes to the property
- Amend the Act to allow for breaches to be issued when the property is damaged
- Keep sections 217 and 219 of the Act, as they allow the tenant to take reasonable steps to make a request in writing.

Table 32. Peak body recommendations on making changes to a rental property

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Property Owners Association of QLD (POAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wall fittings• This would create a nightmare in a rental property, and it is advised against. Would tenants have the knowledge to be aware of the make-up of the actual wall – is it plaster – is it asbestos as in some older homes? If asbestos is in good condition, painted and not disturbed there is not a problem. If disturbed by the hanging of pictures or other items, then it would create a health problem to the tenant.
Queensland Council of Social Services (QCROSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modifications• Tenants should be permitted to make minor modifications, which they either return to condition at the end of the lease or leave (in negotiation with the landlord) because it is an improvement.

“The REIQ agrees that minor improvements, such as hanging pictures, creates a sense of home and often results in longer tenancies. On most occasions, property managers encourage lessors to permit minor changes provided the tenant is agreeable to reinstating the premises to the same condition it was had that change not occurred. It would be unfair to a lessor to make changes to the Act that would permit a tenant to make unilateral changes to a property without first obtaining consent from the lessor.” [Real Estate Institute of Queensland]

“Another problem with allowing paintings/pictures to be hung. It is going to be expected/required that proper wall hangings are to be used. They are more expensive than an ordinary nail or screw so would tenants pay the extra costs involved to hang their pictures or other requirements on the wall. If health issues arise would the Government be responsible for allowing the hanging of the pictures/items. If allowed and many pictures

are hung then lessors would require the property to be reinstated at the end of the tenancy.” [Property Owners’ Association of Queensland]

Property condition

The ‘property condition’ consultation theme incorporated topics that focus on the safety, quality and overall liveability of a rental property. This included topics such as:

- minimum housing standards
- repairs and maintenance
- sustainability and minimising living costs.

Minimum housing standards

This theme of discussion was about minimum standards, and how they will aim to help clarify any disputes and guide tenants, property owners and property managers about the basic requirements of cleanliness, good repair, safety and liveability in meeting their residential tenancy obligations.

Of the 251 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed minimum housing standards, 52 per cent were made by tenants, 40 per cent were made by property owners, and 8 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 33).

Table 33. Number of comments that addressed minimum housing standards for rental properties by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	131	52%
Property Owners	101	40%
Property Managers	19	8%
Total	251	100%
Neither/ unknown	10	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Most tenants that commented on minimum housing standards were dissatisfied, and feel they are living in poorly maintained properties. Most property owners did not want minimum housing standards to be introduced, believing that important standards are already covered in existing legislation.

“The minimum standards should not be introduced. Important standards already covered in other legislation (fire safety, building codes). Adding the suggested minimum housing standards to the RTRA will add significant cost pressure on owners and these will be passed on to renters in higher rents.” [Property owner]

“Also we feel that there should be a governing body that checks rental properties before they are allowed to be put on the rental market so that they reach an acceptable condition that people can live in. When we have been looking for a rental we have seen a lot of disgraceful places that are on the market. Some we have just walked out of because they are that bad. When we have questioned the landlords about the condition and cost they have had the attitude that if we do not like it someone else who is desperate will take it.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

There were several specific unrelated issues that tenants mentioned when calling for stronger guidelines on minimum housing standards, including but not limited to:

- air conditioning and/or fans should be mandatory
- security standards for properties should be strengthened (security screens, lighting, locking doors, bars on windows)
- safety standards
- ventilation in property
- basic cleanliness standards
- insulation
- water temperatures
- mailboxes to be in good condition
- quality of repairs to be monitored
- electricity and safety switches
- TV aerial issues
- toilet issues
- sink taps
- power outlets
- curtain rods
- mould and asbestos concerns.

The most commonly mentioned issues were complaints about air-conditioning and fans in rental properties not being mandatory.

“Compulsory order for all rental properties to be fitted with Air Con the same as other states it is inhuman and a health risk to expect renters to cope with Qld summers! Landlords must be ordered to fit properties with AC immediately!” [Tenant]

“There should be safety standards met in rental properties just as there are for cars on our roads as many rental properties I have seen do not meet safety standards, but are rented out by real estate agencies regardless. These properties are considered safe and liveable according to their criteria, which may actually not be safe.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Many property owners took issue with minimum housing standards being introduced, with the most commonly stated reasons being that:

- important standards are already covered in other legislation (for example, in fire safety and building codes)
- the standards will add significant cost pressure on owners, which will be passed on to tenants through higher rents

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- currently older and heritage homes are a good source of affordable rentals, but it will no longer be viable for owners to make these homes available to the rental market.

Property owners also raised concerns about how the standards would be monitored and enforced.

Many argued that the housing standard is apparent at inspection before the tenancy, and that tenants can consider the standard when choosing the property and seek alternatives if they are not satisfied.

“Although the concept of a minimum housing standards has merit, in practice rental accommodation comes in all shapes and sizes so applying universal standards to both new and pre-existing dwellings may be problematic. Any minimum housing standards imposed on rental accommodation should be limited to addressing the following: structural condition; and repair and sanitation; and cleanliness and freedom from pest.” [Property owner]

7.3.1 Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were:

- making air conditioning and/or fans mandatory
- specifying better health and safety standards of rental properties
- mandating the quality of repairs.

The most common idea for reform put forward by property owners was that no new minimum standards should be introduced, as current building codes and legislation already cover the most pertinent safety issues.

“A landlord does not force any tenant to live in a hovel. Tenant knowing inspects property & lease agreements PRIOR to their committing to the lease agreement.” [Property owner]

Table 34. Peak body recommendations on minimum standards

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum standard for ceiling insulation• Implement prescribed minimum standards for ceiling insulation which target older rental properties or properties with a low home energy rating to bring them into line with contemporary building requirements. Although it may not be relevant to unit dwellers (other than those in top floor apartments), it is a measure that applies across all climate zones and lack of insulation commonly contributes to low energy efficiency.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum standard for LED light fittings• Implement prescribed LED lightbulb ready fittings so that all light fittings can accommodate generally available LED lights. While replacing lights is typically the responsibility of the tenant, tenants are unable to fit LED light bulbs where fittings need to be changed or where it is difficult to gain access to light fittings (for example, raised ceilings). The case for immediate replacement of all

Peak Body	Suggestions
	<p>fluorescent and incandescent lights is strong—these changes could save tenants up to \$280 per year.</p>
<p>Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum housing standards • The REIQ supports minimum housing standards that address health and safety matters pertaining to structural condition, repair and sanitation, and cleanliness and freedom from pests provided that such standards are appropriately applied and take into account other relevant factors such as age, location and the market for the dwelling.
<p>Strata Community Association Queensland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum standards • The Strata Community Association supports minimum standards being increased and notes that in the context of renting a strata unit, items which would be affected by minimum standards do not always fall into the responsibility or the decision making of landlords. Many of the pipes, walls, floors, and ceilings are directly adjacent to or fall into body corporate common property. If there is damage to them or an upgrade needed it will require approval of the collective of owners. In most circumstances where substantial work in walls has to be undertaken, there is quite a large investment required, which often reaches the spending limits for a committee and may in fact impose some limitations on the ability of a body corporate committee to be able to repair or replace things.
<p>Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry condition reports • TQ recommends extending the time for a tenant to return the entry condition report to one week.
<p>Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of 'Reasonably Clean' • TQ recommends the removal and replacement of the tenant's responsibility to keep the premises 'reasonably clean' (s188[2]). This should be replaced with a responsibility that the tenant keeps the premises in a manner having regard to issues of health and safety and the condition of the premises at the start of the tenancy.
<p>Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Housing Standards in Rental Properties • TQ recommends that the minimum standards in rental properties regime encompass the following principles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear: clearly articulated standards ○ Enforceable: the establishment/appointment of a body which is empowered to inspect and investigate as well as receive complaints; includes powers to deal with non-compliance, issue penalties and protect the interest of sitting tenants ○ Accessible: complaints may be made by third parties, not just current tenants; a biennial or triennial letter to inform residents of minimum standards requirements (modelled on the Gold Coast City Council process) ○ Transparent: a public register of notifiable issues/registrable complaints held by the regulator, as well as periodic building inspection and a repairs log

Peak Body

Suggestions

kept by the lessor/agent and made available to tenants and prospective tenants

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum Housing Standards in Rental Properties• TQ recommends that the South Australian housing standards (Part 3 of the Housing Improvement Regulations 2013) be considered as the minimum standards for Queensland rental housing. Additionally, the Queensland standards should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ basic privacy (that is, coverings for windows which face outside)○ clear standards for ventilation○ requirement for deadlocks on egress doors and windows○ safety restrictors on windows over prescribed heights;○ cooling for temperature to be maintained below prescribed levels.• TQ endorsed the QCOSS submission on energy efficiency requirements. |
|-----------------------------|--|

“Poor housing conditions have a measurable and significant impact on mental, physical and general health. Those living in substandard housing are most likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged and have long-standing illness. In addition, vulnerable groups who are among those most likely to live in poor housing also tend to spend large amounts of time in their homes exposed to potentially hazardous environments. The lack of minimum health, safety and energy efficiency standards for rented housing has the unfortunate consequence of creating additional burden for disadvantaged households who are already struggling financially.” [Queensland Council of Social Service]

Maintenance and repairs

This theme of discussion was about tenants, owners and property managers each having a role in the upkeep of a rental property. Currently, tenants must inform the property owner or manager if repairs or maintenance are needed. Property managers and owners should also use inspections to proactively identify the need for work.

Machine assisted qualitative analysis did not identify maintenance and repairs as a separate topic but coded it within minimum housing standards. Nonetheless, maintenance and repairs was a topic of much discussion in the forums and warrants a separate analysis.

Sentiment for Change

The overwhelming majority of tenants expressed that they were dissatisfied with how property owners maintain their rental properties. The responses of property owners were more mixed, with no clear theme or perspective emerging.

“Renters think they can move into a house, trash it and move out without having to do anything and the RTA/QCAT are powerless to stop this degradation.” [Property owner]

“His property is in a poor state of repair and requests for maintenance aren’t addressed. When he has asked for repairs to be done, his agent has told him “We can always get another tenant”.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

Many tenants requested that the regular maintenance of rental properties should be mandated, as they feel that their maintenance issues are not prioritised after experiencing long delays and at times, safety issues. Many tenants specifically requested that repairs to properties should be performed by qualified professionals, not the property owners themselves. Tenants also expressed that they feared retaliatory action by property owners if they requested maintenance be done on the property.

“Too many ongoing maintenance issues.” [Tenant]

“Most tenants worry that if they request basic essential repairs, their landlord will be more likely to increase the rent or kick them out. Landlords should be required to undertake essential repairs in a timely fashion. Tenants have a right to expect that: external doors and windows will lock and close safely; rotten or unsafe stairs, floorboards and railings will be replaced or repaired; leaking or faulty pipes and taps will be repaired; faulty or unsafe light switches and electrical sockets will be repaired; mould and pest infestations will be addressed promptly; roofs, windows and doors are waterproof and do not leak; installed services and appliances are maintained in a working condition (dishwashers, ovens, hot water systems, etc.).” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Many property owners felt that damage caused to the property by the tenant should be covered by the tenants, and that some responsibility must fall on the tenant to look after their own safety. However, most accepted that it is the responsibility of the property owner to repair and maintain properties as needed.

“In general, owners will repair and maintain properties as needed, both as part of their obligation and also because renters will be satisfied and remain longer at the property and to maintain their asset in condition that it retains rather than loses value.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common idea for reform put forward by tenants was that property owners should be required to undertake essential repairs in a timely fashion.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were that:

- tenants should be required to compensate property owners for any damage they cause to the property
- tenants should commit to maintaining the rental property for their own safety.

Table 35. Peak body recommendations on rental property repairs

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional cleaning of carpet and inclusions, and pest control • REIQ proposes that the Act be amended to permit a property manager or lessor to require a tenant, at the end of tenancy, to have carpets and inclusions professionally cleaned, or treated for pests by a qualified professional, if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the lessor caused this to occur prior to the start of the tenancy and appropriate evidence is provided to the tenant of this occurring ○ the tenant agrees to this prior to starting the tenancy.
Tenants Queensland (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair Register • The introduction of a maintenance and repair register to record requests by a tenant or agent during a tenancy and the lessor’s instructions in respect of each item.

Sustainability and minimising the cost of living

This theme of discussion was about the cost of living, involving more than just the amount of rent paid. Tenants often do not have access to energy saving features in rental properties, such as water saving devices, insulation and adequate window furnishings.

This topic was not frequently mentioned in the written submissions and as such did not make it into the topics identified using machine assisted qualitative analysis. However, manual analysis of the written responses identified some themes.

Sentiment for change

A small number of tenant respondents expressed that they would like better opportunities to take advantage of energy conservation. There were very few property owners who responded on sustainability issues.

“Renters do not have opportunity to access solar power market and reduce electricity bill. Tenant put solar panels on a house and when she moved landlord would not buy out panels.” [Tenant]

“Mandating energy and water efficiency, particularly on older homes, will add cost pressures on owners leading to higher rents. In many cases the savings achieved do not cover the cost in installation. Owners are already encouraged to offer energy and water efficient homes as this is a feature attracts better renters and higher rents.” [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

Of the few tenants that commented on sustainability, most felt that they do not have the opportunity to access the solar power market and reduce electricity bills.

“Support and subsidised opportunities for tenants to take advantage of environmentally friendly schemes such as shared solar power and EV charging points.” [Tenant]

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“My idea to reduce costs to renters is that all rental homes/ investment properties should be fitted with solar power to reduce energy bills for renters, I believe it’s a minimal cost for investment buyers to fork out on their properties whilst the tenants are paying a huge chunk of their mortgage.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Of the few property owners who commented on sustainability issues, most called for energy and water efficiency to be encouraged by offering government incentives and subsidies. A few comments were also made in relation to water and sewerage fixed access charges that are levied by the council.

“No changes to the RTRA. Energy and water efficiency can be encouraged by offering incentives or subsidies.” [Property owner]

“All electricity companies charge the tenants a supply charge with their electricity or gas account. Water and sewerage fixed access charges are levied by Councils to treat the tenant’s sewerage waste and to treat the water that Council supplies to the tenant. The Council charges a sewerage levy of 90% of water used on the property. Why should the landlord be responsible for the water and sewerage fixed access charges when they are levied by Council and used by the tenant.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common idea for reform put forward by both tenants and property owners was that there needs to be better subsidised opportunities and incentives for both tenants and property owners to take advantage of sustainability schemes, such as solar power.

Table 36. Peak body recommendations on sustainability

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliance framework• QCOSS recommends that the Queensland Government develops a compliance framework that requires mandatory disclosure based on a third-party assessment of the energy efficiency rating of the home. Property owners should be given a reasonable amount of time to comply with the new home energy rating scheme. This will strike the right balance between compliance costs on owners and industry can respond to the demand for energy efficiency improvements and the benefits to tenants.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum standard for the energy efficiency of rental properties (Home energy rating scheme)• QCOSS recommends the Queensland Government introduce a minimum standard for the energy efficiency of rental homes through the introduction of a Household Energy Rating Scheme. This scheme would set a minimum home energy rating that rental property owners can achieve through any number of energy efficiency options.

“The lack of minimum health, safety and energy efficiency standards for rented housing has the unfortunate consequence of creating additional burden for disadvantaged households who are already struggling financially.” [Tenants Queensland Inc]

“Living in these homes, dealing with high electricity bills, and going without the energy we need for the essentials, can lead to financial stress, poor health and make it harder to work, to get an education, or to be a part of the community. People on low incomes and/or who rent, are most vulnerable and have little choice or control over the efficiency performance of their home and major energy-using fixed appliances. Improving the energy performance of Australian homes is an important and necessary reform that will benefit people and the community through: lower energy bills; improved health and well-being; a more reliable and affordable electricity system; emissions reductions; and economic benefits.” [Queensland Council of Social Service]

“This [energy efficiency] would be in the hands of the tenant. They have control of the amount of electricity used. Not all property owners have solar panels installed in their own homes so why should they be expected to outlay for solar panels in a rental property. The cost to install out ways [sic] the benefits to the property owner.” [Property Owners’ Association Queensland]

Flexibility and security

The ‘flexibility and security’ consultation theme focused on areas of rental law or procedures that could be more flexible for tenants and/or property owners or encourage security of tenancy (for example, longer-term leases). This included topics centred around:

- notices
- evictions
- flexibility and security concerns.

Notices and evictions

This theme of discussion was about the formal notices that must be issued to tenants if a property owner or manager wishes to gain entry to the tenanted property as well as notices which inform tenants that they need to vacate the property. Notice periods to end a tenancy without grounds are different for tenants (two weeks) and property owners/managers (two months). The differing impact on the two parties was considered.

Of the 161 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed formal notices, 55 per cent were made by property owners, 37 per cent were made by tenants, and 8 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 37).

Table 37. Number of comments that addressed notices and evictions by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	59	37%
Property Owners	89	55%
Property Managers	13	8%
Total	161	100%
Neither/ unknown	1	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Of the tenants who commented on notices and evictions, most expressed that they were dissatisfied with the administrative procedure of notices and wanted the ‘without grounds’ evictions abolished. Property owners were also overwhelmingly dissatisfied about the ‘without grounds’ evictions, but for opposing reasons—most opposed the removal of the notice to leave without grounds. There were instances where both tenants and property owners expressed that the notice period should be the same for both groups. However, even when there was agreement that the periods should be equal there was a disparity between the two groups about what that period should be (tenants wanted a longer period, property owners would like a shorter period).

“The only major change needed is to balance the notice required to leave. Why do tenants only have to give 2 weeks and we as landlords have to give 2 months. Please just make it 2-3 weeks both ways.” [Property owner]

“A tenant who has been given 2 months notice to vacate should not be liable for rental for the whole period if they move out sooner because they have found another place to live.” [Tenant]

“Removing an owner’s right to control who resides in their property would be detrimental to both owners and tenants. From what I understand, most owners are happy to keep good tenants in place, however, both owners and tenant’s needs and or expectations can change overtime. At the end of the day, it is the owner who has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars and is taking the financial risk and as such I should have the right to decide who lives in my property and to what standards are upheld in relation to the property.” [Property owner]

“Landlords who evict tenants on the excuse that major renovations are needed or the property is being sold, but who are merely looking to re-let at an increased rental, should be required to compensate the inconvenienced.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

Tenants called for the notice period to be equal for both tenants and property owners. Many tenants expressed that ‘without grounds’ evictions need to be eradicated and that tenants should have the right to remain in their home long-term if they wish. Homelessness concerns for tenants were frequently raised. Tenants were also confused or annoyed about the administrative procedure of notices, with several noting that they felt the application forms are too complicated and called for more information on the Residential Tenancies Authority website about vacating a property and breaking a lease.

“Prevent unfair evictions and make sure there is a good reason in law before a person can be asked to leave –i.e. remove the ability to evict tenants without grounds.” [Tenant]

“Landlords must be required to guarantee a property will not be sold during the lease period when accepting and entering into the lease agreement. I have had 2 properties sell when I was not even informed the property was on the market. The first, sold 6 weeks after I moved in, I had to move 2 weeks before Christmas. If a property is to be sold during an active lease the tenant should be entitled to compensation to the value of the rent payments for the remainder of the lease period.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Property owners expressed that they should be able to terminate tenancies at will. The most frequently expressed opinion was that the notice period for ending a tenancy where a serious breach of the contract has occurred, such as failure to meet rent, should be reduced and the process expedited. Property owners also wanted to balance and equalise the notice periods for tenants and owners.

“But as a landlord we need to be mindful that we continue to have rights. We own the building, pay the mortgage, rates and insurances and provide the maintenance needed to give our tenants a nice home to live in. We need the ability to evict tenants that don't pay there [sic] rent regularly and cause unnecessary damage to the property.” [Property owner]

“Balancing the notice period, same timeframes whether notice is issued by owner or renter.” [Property owner]

“We need improved provisions to expedite the process of evicting renters for serious breaches and non-payment of rent. The owners ability to end a tenancy without grounds must remain. I strongly oppose any change that would remove an owner’s ability to lawfully end a tenancy without grounds.” [Property owner]

7.3.2 Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by both tenants and property owners were that:

- the notice periods to end a tenancy should be equal and balanced for tenants and property owners
- the notice period for both tenants and property owners should be changed to one month
- the application forms for notices should be simplified, and information made more readily available.

Table 38. Peak body recommendations on ending tenancy agreements

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestion
Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending a tenancy without grounds • REIQ does not support any proposal to remove or limit a lessor’s entitlement to lawfully end a tenancy agreement without grounds.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termination of tenancies • TQ recommends that at all times, tenancies should only be terminated against the renter’s wishes where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are grounds as prescribed by residential tenancies legislation; ○ When appropriate notice is given; and ○ In the case of a dispute, a Tribunal or Court determines that in all the circumstances of the case it is appropriate to end the tenancy. It should not fall to the tenant to apply to the Tribunal to stop a termination from proceeding.

Peak Body	Suggestion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The notice period for termination of tenancies should be congruent with the urgency (or otherwise) of the related ground for termination.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing unfair evictions TQ recommends that the ability for lessors to provide without ground notices to leave (s291 of the <i>Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008</i> [the Act]) be removed and be replaced by the following with ground notices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lessor requires the property for their own use, or for the use of a member of their immediate family, as a principle place of residence for a minimum of 12 months; Significant renovations/maintenance are to be performed in respect of the premises, such that continued occupation of the premises cannot be accommodated for a period of four weeks or longer; Another purpose for which the premises cannot continue to be used as residential premises for a minimum of six months; and These grounds should provide for three months' notice of termination.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evictions for rent arrears TQ recommends that enforcement of a Warrant of Possession issued for rent arrears should be prevented where the tenant has since rectified the amount in full before the warrant is enforced.
Property Owners Association of QLD (POAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The debate regarding the timeframe for giving notice 2 months for lessors and only 14 days for tenants. The same time frame for both parties should apply. When tenants are given 2 months' notice to leave the property, they stop payment of rent. The POAQ feel that if both time frames were equal it would go a long way to achieving a better relationship. We suggest 1 month for both parties.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry condition reports TQ recommends extending the time for a tenant to return the entry condition report to one week.

“The without grounds eviction provisions are unjust and often lead to evictions being made in retaliation (for a renter standing up for their rights) or for reasons of discrimination because there is no obligation to give a valid reason.” [Tenants Queensland Inc]

“The power imbalance in the rental market that favours landlords, can prevent tenants from asking for what they need because of fear of excessive rent increases or being evicted without grounds. Stable rental housing benefits all participants including landlords, property managers and tenants.” [Queensland Council for Social Services]

“Tenants leave properties without giving reasons – so why should lessors have to give grounds. If a lessor has good tenants they are respected, so why would they request that they leave the property. If a tenant is given notice to leave the property it usually is for a

good reason – non payment of rent or damage.” [Property Owners’ Association Queensland]

Flexibility and security

This theme of discussion was about the industry practice of tenancies in Queensland, where most tenancies are back-to-back fixed term agreements of six or twelve months. There are no legislative barriers to longer term tenancies, but rental laws may not encourage parties to enter into them. Rental laws protect parties during the tenancy agreement but may need to be more flexible in recognising long term occupancy across multiple tenancy agreements or for longer term tenancies.

This topic was not frequently mentioned in the written submissions and as such did not make it into the topics identified using machine assisted qualitative analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Tenant respondents were overwhelmingly dissatisfied and worried about the security of tenure and short leases. While the responses of property owners were more varied, many did similarly call for greater flexibility to negotiate tenancy terms that are better suited to meet the individual needs of the owner.

Interestingly, both tenants and property owners were asking for greater flexibility in tenancy agreement terms specifically so that they would be able to create leases longer than twelve months.

“Because renting for life is very much a thing now- we need long term rental agreements that give certainty to tenants and landlords.” [Property owner]

“We have been told we are fantastic tenants but 12 months is too short. We would ask if landlords could be forced to offer much longer leases to good tenants say 5 year leases. This is common overseas and gives much greater security and peace of mind.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

The issues for tenants were predominantly around security of tenure. Many tenants feel that six- or twelve-month leases provide no security for tenants, who are subjected to repeated moving costs or rate rises. Many mentioned that being able to secure a lease for upwards of twelve months would provide more security and alleviate the fears of homelessness or repeated removals that many tenants have.

A few comments were made around more flexibility around negotiating shorter leases.

“I am concerned that renters do not have enough stability or security.” [Tenant]

“As long as landlords have the power to end tenancies for no reason, or drastically increase the rent every six months, tenants will be too scared to insist on their basic rights. Tenants should have a right to remain in their home long-term if they wish. Tenants who have complied with the conditions of their lease should be entitled to have their lease renewed unless the property owner, or a spouse, parent, or child of the property owner, wishes to move into the home, or the owner requires the home to be vacant in order to undertake major renovations. If a tenant is asked to move out to allow for major renovations, they should be offered the chance to move back into the home afterwards. This change would mean that if tenants have been taking care of their home and paying

their rent on time, landlords can't end the tenancy unless they have a legitimate reason to do so." [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Many property owners also expressed that they want greater flexibility to negotiate longer tenancy agreements and terms to better suit their individual needs. Many stated that a property owner will often be hoping to secure the tenancy of 'a good renter' for the longest period possible.

However, some did point to the importance of the shorter six and twelve month tenancy terms in providing a reasonable time frame for owners to sell their property when they need or wish to. A few respondents also mentioned that they felt it was not the tenant's right to know when a property was being sold.

"There is a great imbalance as legislation favours the diverse and changing needs of renters at the expense of owner's needs. The numerous options allowing renters to break leases easily and difficulty of recovering money from a rogue tenant effectively makes long leased binding on owners and not renters. So there are no benefit such as security for owners to offer long leases, other than the possibility to attract a better tenant or higher rent." [Property owner]

"Relaxing restrictions in the Act to provide landlords and property managers the option of greater flexibility to negotiate tenancy terms will lead to an improved renting experience for all." [Property owner]

7.3.3 Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by both tenants and property owners were that:

- Tenancy Agreements should be able to be made for longer than twelve months
- there should be more flexibility around negotiating the term of a lease.

The most common idea for reform put forward by property owners was that property owners intending to sell their property should have no obligation to inform the tenant.

Table 39. Peak body recommendations on tenancy flexibility and security

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make rental properties a home• Make rental properties a home by improving privacy (longer notice times), more secure tenure, (preventing evictions without reasonable grounds), minimum property standards (including energy efficiency and accessibility) and permitting pets and minor tenant modifications.
Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater Flexibility• It is the REIQ's position that the Act should allow a property manager or lessor to negotiate terms with a tenant that meet individual needs of all parties.• It is acknowledged that some disadvantaged groups could be at risk of unfair tenancy terms if current restrictions in the Act are

Peak Body	Recommendation
	relaxed. Accordingly, if changes are made that result in greater flexibility, the REIQ would also support appropriate inclusions in the Act to protect these groups.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early termination without compensation to lessor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TQ recommends the extension of grounds for a tenant to end a fixed term tenancy agreement early, with notice, when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tenant has been offered and accepted accommodation in social or affordable housing; • The tenant has accepted a place in an aged care facility or requires care in such a facility; • The lessor has notified the tenant of their intention to sell the residential premises and this was not disclosed prior to the agreement being signed; • The tenant is admitted to long term medical care (such as a mental health facility); and • When the tenant has a 'relevant' domestic violence order and needs to leave the premises for their safety.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premises go on the market TQ recommends that tenants be able to end a fixed term agreement with the prescribed notice of two weeks' if the premises are put on the market or entry is made to show prospective purchasers during a fixed term agreement.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing unreasonable restrictions in tenancy agreements TQ recommends that tenancy agreements should not be able to unreasonably limit the number of people who can occupy premises.

“Relaxing restrictions to provide lessors and property managers with greater flexibility to negotiate appropriate tenancy terms will lead to an improved renting experience for all.”
[Real Estate Institute of Queensland]

Better protections

The 'better protections' consultation theme focused on how certain parties could be better protected. Discussion topics included:

- vulnerable Queenslanders, such as those experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), seniors and people with disabilities
- tenancy databases
- property and tenancy managers
- dispute resolution.

Vulnerable Queenslanders

This theme of discussion was about tenants who may be considered vulnerable on several grounds, including financial instability, age, disability, discrimination, domestic and family violence

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(DFV), or risk of homelessness. Tenancy laws do not usually distinguish between tenants based on individual factors or circumstances.

Of the 96 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed vulnerable Queenslanders, 83 per cent were made by tenants, and 16 per cent were made by property owners, and 1 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 40). Machine assisted qualitative analysis did not identify DFV specifically as a major topic of discussion, which is congruent with the findings from manual coding.

Table 40. Number of comments that addressed vulnerable tenants by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	80	83%
Property Owners	15	16%
Property Managers	1	1%
Total	96	100%
Neither/ unknown	2	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

The tenants who made comments about better protections for vulnerable Queenslanders were often speaking from their own personal experiences of vulnerability. Most were dissatisfied with how their personal circumstance or disability was being acknowledged and accommodated in the rental market. Property owners, on the other hand, had more of a mix of responses. The first, and strongest, perspective was that property owners should not be financially disadvantaged for supporting tenants experiencing DFV.

“Owners should not have to foot the cost as DV is a social problem which not the fault of owners. Renters shall compensate owners or, if they do not have the means, a government fund to pay costs as awarded by the tribunal.” [Property owner]

“I also feel more should be done to house single people, most rental properties are 4 bedroomed homes that are too big and expensive for one person. The amount of single older people is growing quickly but suitable accommodation is thin on the ground.” [Tenant]

Issues for tenants

There were several, often unrelated, comments and concerns from different groups of vulnerable tenants, including:

- seniors
- pensioners
- women
- single persons
- people experiencing DFV.

The issues that these vulnerable persons have in paying rent were mentioned many times, as was the lack of housing availability.

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For people experiencing DFV, sometimes they may want to stay in the rental property or need to leave quickly and ensure their obligations for the tenancy end when they leave. Most comments from tenants experiencing DFV were around the need for better protection and government funding which should be provided to assist in paying rent or leaving a situation.

For elderly renters or people with a disability, there were comments about the difficulty of meeting renting obligations and many believe they should have access to more reasonable rental rates.

“The definition of excessive hardship needs to be broadened to include other hardships other than financial such as social isolation, physiological hardship, crucial need for health care not available in the area, etc.” [Tenant]

“The housing crisis is not being addressed accordingly. As an ex DV victim, I can assure you that single mothers with children are unable to afford private rentals. Real Estates will not approve applications unless your weekly income is 3 x the weekly rent.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The strongest perspective heard was that property owners should not be financially disadvantaged and burdened to protect vulnerable tenants. Rather, the protection of vulnerable tenants should be the responsibility of the government. Several property owners mentioned that terminations and variations to a tenancy agreement are already covered by excessive hardship and replacement of tenant under legislation.

- People experiencing DFV: While most comments from property owners about DFV certainly did recognise the issue and showed sympathy, they did not feel they should be financially disadvantaged to protect such vulnerable persons. Calls for a fund to be created to assist survivors of DFV were repeatedly made.
- Seniors and people with a disability: Interestingly, several property owners specifically mentioned that seniors and people with disabilities can be the best tenants.

“QCAT to hear cases relating to specific DV provisions. Fund to pay costs where renters do not have the means Terminations and variations due to DV is already covered by excessive hardship (section 310) and tenant replacement (sections 243-246).” [Property owner]

“Seniors and disabled people often are the best renters for a variety of reasons. Where feasible, modifications including installation of accessibility features such as grab rails, ramps and lifts will attract and keep better renters.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were:

- ensuring lower rental prices for vulnerable persons
- urgently addressing the lack of housing availability, with a focus on the homeless population.

The most common idea for reform put forward by property owners was that a government fund should be established to help tenants experiencing DFV to pay rent and be adequately housed.

Table 41. Peak body recommendations on better protections

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reform homelessness programs</i> Properly fund homelessness services, transition to ‘Housing First’ rapid re-housing in long term housing with wraparound support services to sustain tenancies.
Tenants Queensland (TQ) Inc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic and Family Violence • If a tenant has been issued with a ‘relevant’ domestic violence protection order and believes that for their safety they need to move from the premises, the Act should allow for the early termination of an agreement by the service of a notice.

Social housing

Another issue that repeatedly arose under this theme for discussion was how rental reform for vulnerable Queenslanders involved changing and increasing the current social housing model. The main idea was to redress the current social housing model to increase the number of available social housing properties and utilise current government resources to ensure the successful management of rates of housing affordability.

Table 42. Peak body recommendations on social housing

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the SEQ Housing Supply Expert Panel We need to develop an understanding of the demand for social and affordable housing, as well as where and how that demand is being addressed. Achievement of sustainable change requires cross sectoral collaboration and a consistent central point of reference for data collection, research and monitoring of the housing market. • The Queensland Government's move to establish the South East Queensland (SEQ) Housing Supply Expert Panel is strongly supported. However, monitoring and reporting on housing supply across the continuum is needed throughout Queensland and therefore the panel should be expanded. Furthermore, it is important that the panel is independent and brings together private, public

Peak Body	Recommendation
	<p>and non-government sectors to provide solutions to current and future housing needs.</p>
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting a target QCOSS and the Property Council recommend that the Queensland Government, through the expanded Housing Supply Expert Panel, set and monitor targets for affordable and social housing in regions across Queensland. Until such time as the Housing Supply Expert Panel establishes tangible targets, we recommend that the Government set a minimum target of 38,000 affordable dwellings, and 15,000 social housing dwellings over for the next 10 years.
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Better Use of Government Resources — Unlocking Government land As the largest landholder in Queensland, the State Government has the capacity to swiftly increase both social and affordable housing stock across the state by releasing government land with incentives and/or requirements. This would not require a commitment of large amounts of capital expenditure and would see effective utilisation of public assets. The <i>Advancing Our Cities and Regions Strategy</i> provides a framework for this to occur.
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Better Use of Government Resources — Utilising infrastructure reserves In addition to surplus land, the Queensland Government holds land acquired in anticipation of future infrastructure requirements. Other jurisdictions have successfully adopted measures to make use of this land for crisis and temporary accommodation, an approach that should be explored here in Queensland.
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make better use of Government Resources— Social housing renewal Existing social housing stock, especially aged and underutilised assets, should be transferred to non-government organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to increase the availability of quality, fit-for-purpose social housing, Alternatively, long-term leases would provide NGO's with the ability to Leverage and borrow funds to invest in affordable housing. NGOs should also be

Peak Body	Recommendation
	<p>supported through access to state-based capital and growth funds—similar to the Federal Government’s National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation—to enable their ongoing viability and expansion.</p>
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make better use of Government Resources— Better management of housing services Social housing providers have the capacity to provide innovative and flexible service delivery and asset management but are constrained by a range of policies and regulations. Supporting non-government management of social housing by providing certainty, developing effective partnerships, facilitating transfer of assets and/or management rights, and offering tax incentives along with the access to capital and growth funds, will provide a platform for the sector to grow.
<p>Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform and invest in social/ affordable housing Adequately fund social and affordable housing. Relaunch an improved affordable housing investment subsidy to focus on new dwellings. Support community housing financial and social sustainability, investigate stock transfers, simplified administration, subsidies and diverse tenant allocations. Implement targeted shared equity schemes.
<p>Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and affordable housing TQ recommends that social and affordable housing providers be required to give their tenants grounds for all evictions. TQ recommends that the administrative appeals process is extended to apply to community housing tenants. TQ recommends that the termination clauses targeting social and affordable housing tenants, and inserted into RTRAA in 2013, be removed as they are onerous for vulnerable tenants as well as unnecessary.
<p>Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement inclusive design and supply Implement secure, indexed funding for disability housing, remote housing, DFV shelters, mental health and other supported and emergency accommodation. Improve

Peak Body

Recommendation

indigenous housing outcomes by addressing discrimination, overcrowding, and culturally inappropriate design. Support accessible housing through universal design, independence and fit out. Implement inclusive housing solutions for seniors, youth, migrants and refugees. Reform regulation to facilitate diverse, alternative, community-based housing solutions.

Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)

- Ensure agents use appropriate interpreter services
- Ensure that real estate agents use appropriate translating and interpreting services to facilitate access and minimise discrimination.

7.1.2 Tenancy databases

This theme of discussion was about tenancy databases, which are registers run by privately owned companies as a way for property owners and managers to protect their property investment by anticipating risk. The databases record information about tenants who have had their tenancies ended for specific reasons or owe money above the rental bond amount. Being listed on a tenancy database can significantly affect a tenant's ability to access housing for years. Listings can only be made for approved reasons, after the tenancy has ended, and only for tenants named on the agreement. Listings must now be removed after three years.

This topic was not frequently mentioned in the written submissions and as such did not make it into the topics identified using machine assisted qualitative analysis. In the manual analysis of responses there were some comments on this topic from tenants and property owners.

Sentiment for Change

Of the very few tenants who commented on tenancy databases, all were concerned with the ability of disgruntled property managers to list tenants on a database and lock them out of the rental market and questioned why there is not a similar property manager database. More property owners commented on the importance of tenancy databases, and that access to the information is crucial to protect them from risk. Interestingly, both mentioned that good tenants and behaviour should be rewarded and recognised in a similar database.

“Tenancy databases – change to a positive system, that is reward good behaviour.”
[Property owner]

“The RTA site supplies 3 database sources of errant tenants but none listing bad lessors.”
[Tenant]

Issues for tenants

Tenants expressed that they feel nervous that disgruntled property managers can 'blacklist' them on the databases and questioned why property managers are not subjected to the same accountability standards.

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“There should be significant penalties to owners if they subscribe to unauthorised blacklists that contain tenant information. I value my privacy. Dodgy blacklists create significant risk to tenants making them susceptible to identity fraud. This practice occurs and is in breach of State and Federal Privacy laws—in particular if the data is compromised. That would be a significant violation of the Notifiable Data Breaches scheme of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).” [Tenant]

“There needs to be a tenant file history which needs to be similar to a credit file history. That way property owners will be more informed if new tenants who apply for a property have a history of non-payments, number of evictions and number of broken leases. May be even a criminal history e.g. drug convictions.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The strongest perspective heard was how crucial the transparency, timeliness and ease of access to the information on the tenancy databases are for protecting the financial interests of property owners. Many called for the time in which the listings remain on the database to be increased from three to seven years.

“As a member of TICA I would complete checks on prospective tenants and on 4 occasions I signed a lease with a new tenant only to find out afterwards that they had outstanding breaches. This information needs to be made available before tenants vacate their current premises and not be limited to after they have vacated.” [Property owner]

“It would be good if tenants could individually be given an official rating score so that good tenants are in some way sought after and rewarded and bad ones officially identified.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were to:

- create a property owner/ manager database to record information about their past tenancies and relationships
- reward, recognise and note good tenants on the databases.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were that:

- the time tenants remain on databases should be increased to 7 years, as tenancy databases encourage tenants to meet their obligations
- transparency of databases is crucial and TICA registration should be compulsory for breached tenants
- listings need to be made quickly to be effective.

Table 43. Peak body recommendations on tenancy databases

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Databases Private tenancy databases should be banned and rental databases (for tenants or landlords) should be only administered by a government agency, if at all.

“Tenancy ‘blacklist’ databases infringe on tenants’ right to privacy and can discriminate against tenants applying for private rental properties. In some cases, tenants have no knowledge of how they ended up on a database. These are not balanced by any equivalent landlord database. Despite reforms to regulate databases, such as a three-year limit, these databases are still operated by the private real estate sector. This is a conflict of interest.” [Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS)]

7.1.3 Property and tenancy managers

This theme of discussion was about properties that are managed by property managers. It is the role of the property manager to act on behalf of the property owner in discussions with the tenants.

Of the 205 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed the theme of better protections for property managers, 71 per cent were made by tenants, 25 per cent were made by property owners and 4 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 44).

Table 44. Number of comments that addressed property managers by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	145	71%
Property Owners	52	25%
Property Managers	8	4%
Total	205	100%
Neither/ unknown	4	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Most tenants who commented on their experience with property managers from real estate agencies felt displeased with the way that they act toward them. Property owners also generally expressed that they were displeased with property managers.

“Complaints to the real estate have fallen on deaf ears.” [Tenant]

“Having an agent is also no guarantee that the rules will be adhered to. Many are only interested in your property until it’s rented.” [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

The biggest issue for tenants commenting on their relationship and dealings with property managers was the perceived power imbalance between the parties. Many tenants complained of poor behaviour from property managers, with some noting that they were afraid of making complaints as they are concerned this may result in eviction. This ultimately came down to a conflict of interest in the relationship, in that the property manager is representing the property owner and will always have the vested interest of maintaining the business.

“I feel I cannot complain about legitimate concerns without risking trouble with my neighbours and a retaliatory eviction.” [Tenant]

“Inspections should be carried out by a neutral third party. Agents are not neutral. Agents will almost always side with and carry out operations on behalf of the landlord.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The strongest perspective heard from property owners were complaints that the property manager had allowed ‘bad tenants’ into the property. Property manager failings that were mentioned included:

- failure to register tenant on TICA tenancy database
- false references
- incomplete checks
- false misrepresentations in applications
- using dated inspection reports and photos
- poor communication skills
- a general lack of trust.

Some property owners mentioned that because of such issues they had decided to self-manage their properties.

“Estate agents do not check references for their tenants properly, so they aren’t aware of what these ‘tenants’ have done in other properties. That sense of responsibility for other people’s property doesn’t seem to exist with many people, like a lot of things these days.” [Property owner]

“Change of property manager is constantly used as an excuse for not knowing the condition of the property when they take it over. There is the RTA for disputes between tenants and landlords but nothing to protect Landlords from incompetent property managers other than engaging extensive legal representation.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common idea for reform put forward by tenants was that neutral third parties should carry out inspections and that a code of conduct be introduced for property managers.

The most common idea for reform put forward by property owners was that there should be repercussions for property managers who do not manage a property in a transparent, fair and just manner.

Table 45. Peak body recommendations on property management

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of material facts about tenancies TQ recommends that lessors or agents should be required to disclose certain material facts to a tenant before entering into a residential tenancy agreement.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct of Agents TQ recommends that a code of conduct and pathways for dispute resolution for issues between tenants and property managers be re-instituted.

“Significant numbers of tenants feel they are bullied by property managers. There are limited available responses for renters to [sic] these issues. It would be valuable to reintroduce a code of conduct or service standards for agents with a direct pathway to dispute resolution when there is non-compliance. This has the potential to improve standards of behaviour and create greater balance between the interests of tenants and agents.” [Tenants Queensland Inc]

7.1.4 Dispute resolution

This theme of discussion was about the dispute resolution process that tenants and property owners/ managers can engage in to resolve breaches of contract, disagreements or rental arrears between the parties.

Of the 34 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed dispute resolution, 49 per cent were made by property owners, 42 per cent were made by tenants, and 9 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 46).

Table 46. Number of comments that addressed dispute resolution by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	93	42%
Property Owners	108	49%
Property Managers	21	9%
Total	222	100%
Neither/ unknown	11	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Of the few tenants who commented on dispute resolution, the majority felt dissatisfied with the wait times and over-complicated process for reporting breaches by property managers and owners. Property owners also overwhelmingly felt dissatisfied and that QCAT is biased against them.

“I also acknowledge that avenues for dispute resolution exist; but these only work with willing and amicable participants. And I also believe that all sides of the rental market have come to “know the system” somewhat, and therefore they can/do exploit it to their advantage.” [Tenant]

“If a tenant has been asked to leave due to rent arrears and everything goes smoothly usually there is no problems. However if a tenant does not move out by the set time, the time it takes to apply to Qcat to have them removed takes too long. Even after an order has been served I have had tenants still refuse to move and then I have to go back to Qcat to get an order given to Police to remove them. Once this process took nearly two months due to the tenant stating “I know how the system works and I will use it.” [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

Of the few tenants that commented on the dispute resolution process at QCAT, the major issues expressed were around long delays and over-complication of the process.

“Let’s not bog up QCAT with frivolous claims. Costs to attend QCAT should be at the owner’s expense if it is deemed they have lacked in their duty of care to their tenant.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Property owners also similarly expressed concern about the delays and expenses involved in the dispute resolution procedures at QCAT. Property owners commented that tenants often do not comply with QCAT orders and there is no reasonable recourse for property managers without engaging expensive legal representation.

“When I contacted the rental tribunal of QLD to get compensation from the tenants, I was first asked where they were now. When I said they had returned to Sydney they told me it was a waste of time going to the tribunal as it was only a state entity and had no jurisdiction in NSW.” [Property owner]

“There have been occasions where breaches were not remedied so that we had to go to court only to have the judge finding in favour of the tenants. The problem with the process of issuing a remedy to breach especially in the case of unpaid rent means that by the time you have followed due process and ended up in court, the rent owed has been more than the bond.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were to:

- reduce the wait time for QCAT to hear urgent matters
- simplify the process for reporting breaches by property managers.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were to:

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- ensure dispute resolution processes through QCAT are more timely and efficient
- better enforce QCAT orders and ensure property owners receive proper recourse.

Table 47.

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Suggestions
Property Owners Association of QLD (POAQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time frames for hearings on residential matters We realise that this is under a different Act but surely with collaboration this could be improved. The current waiting time for residential problems are far too long. The new 'lemon laws' being introduced into State Parliament will put more pressure on QCAT.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve tenancy processes and transparency• Tenants should have access to an improved tenancy dispute process which ensures that landlords act in a fair and reasonable way. Place a duty on the landlord to disclose information that might affect a tenancy before entering into agreement, to minimise the need to access dispute resolution. This would include additional provisions which allow tenants to terminate or renegotiate rent in cases of material misrepresentation. The Tribunal must have faster response times.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information to help people comply Publish clear and independent information so all parties (renters, lessors, property agents and third-party exempt sellers) clearly understand the features of the regime, their rights and obligations and what to do if there is a dispute.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unfair, harsh and unconscionable terms in tenancy contract TQ recommends that 'unfair contract term' and 'harsh and unconscionable' clauses be inserted into the legislation allowing a party to make an application for determination by QCAT (residential tenancy) regarding whether a term is unfair, harsh or unconscionable.
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tribunal Processes

- TQ recommends that applications made under section 239 become urgent applications.
 - TQ recommends that the tribunal is empowered to determine whether the costs of the tenant's request to transfer or sub-let are reasonable or not (as per section 240) under an application under this section.
-

Tenants Queensland Inc
(TQ)

- RTA Compliance and Complaints
 - TQ recommends the RTA's compliance powers include the ability to investigate representative complaints.
-

Tenants Queensland Inc
(TQ)

- **Rooming accommodation**
TQ recommends that the provisions for immediate eviction and self-eviction are removed, and that all disputed evictions take place only when the Tribunal has heard the matter and issued a termination order.
-

“Australian Consumer Law prohibits misleading or deceptive behaviour but avenues for resolving tenancy disputes are not readily accessible to tenants. Tenants cannot always rely on full disclosure of clear, honest and understandable information that might affect a tenancy.” [Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)]

7.2 Looking and leasing

7.2.1 Rental market

This theme of discussion was about the rental market and the fluctuations in the market that owners and tenants are subject to. It also included comments about investment and how the rental market relies on people investing in it to increase housing supply and improve affordability.

This topic was not frequently mentioned in the written submissions and as such did not make it into the topics identified using machine assisted qualitative analysis. However, a significant number of forum posts mentioned 'issues affecting financial pressures on property owners' and frequently these comments included statements from property owners regarding issues affecting their return on investment (or lack thereof).

Sentiment for Change

Most tenants expressed that they wished there was more assistance and help available to assist them in entering the rental and/or home ownership property market and that currently they feel disenchanting. Conversely, of the property owners who commented on the rental market, many threatened to leave the market if the current tenancy legislation does not better recognise the rights of owners.

"Finding it hard to save and live because the rent is no longer affordable for anyone it doesn't matter what age we are we still get treated as second class citizens." [Tenant]

"The confidence for myself, friends and family and other landlords to stay in the private rental market is in your hands. Significant changes to be 'pro tenant' in this legislation will remove mine and their confidences and put a significant strain on your public housing wait list and put people on the street." [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

The strongest issue heard from tenants was that renting benefits the property owner, not the tenant. A few calls were made for the tenant to be treated more like a client, with less focus to be on the property as an investment.

"Treat the Tenants as the clients." [Tenant]

"A system that panders to owners and agents while offering tenants nothing but convoluted and protracted, ineffectual, avenues of redress and benign, token, platitudes while government, property owners and agents continue to gain off the income derived from their constituents and customers." [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The most repeated issue expressed by property owners was that many feel that investment involves risk and that property owners should have control of their property. Many threatened to exit the rental property market if they are unable to control how they manage their property and/or if the rights of tenants are prioritised. Several also mentioned that many tenants have too strong a sense of entitlement.

"My situation is that the tenant pays the rent then I withdraw it and buy groceries. It is a considerable responsibility and effort to prepare and maintain a rental property and if my

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ability to choose how to manage my property is taken away, I will look at alternate investments.” [Property owner]

“I would also strongly recommend against investing in rental property if anyone asked advice as the Residential Tenancy Act does not provide enough protection for property owners, further government regulations also act against the interests of property owners such as the limitations placed on Tenancy databases.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were:

- that renting should move away from ‘investment’ focus, which exists to solely benefit the property owner
- introduce incentives to help low income earners and households enter the rental and/or home ownership housing market.

The most common idea for reform put forward by property owners was that property owners must be able to control the way in which they manage their investment properties.

Table 48. Peak body recommendations on affordable housing

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incentivise the delivery of affordable housing — shared equity scheme• Queensland, like several other states, has a program providing shared equity affordable housing for people on low to moderate incomes. The Queensland program, however, is limited to eligible buyers who are currently a tenant in Government-owned housing. The Queensland program should be expanded to accommodate social housing eligible applicants, as well as examined for opportunities for further expansion, to mirror the successful Keystart program in Western Australia.
Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incentivise the delivery of affordable housing — Decreasing taxes, fees and charges• Government taxes, charges and regulatory costs can add approximately 22% to the cost of new housing. There are myriad opportunities for Government to reduce this cost impost, with the most effective target being the progressive removal of stamp duty- which is not only a barrier to entry to the market, it is also a barrier to mobility. In the interim, stamp duty for seniors should be removed to encourage downsizing, and stamp duty

Peak Body	Recommendation
	<p>thresholds should be reviewed to minimise the barrier to entry the duty creates for purchasers.</p>
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivise the delivery of affordable housing — local Government incentives. • Provision of housing is not just the responsibility of the State Government. Local governments have a significant role to play, through planning, taxes, fees and charges, along with the many policy levers at their disposal. Some local Governments have already introduced incentives for desirable development types - such as student accommodation- through <i>interventions</i> including planning concessions, faster planning approvals and infrastructure charges discounts. Local Government is encouraged to explore similar incentive packages to promote the delivery of social, affordable and accessible housing.
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more choice for renters – establishing Build-to-Rent There is a recognised need and willingness for institutional investors to invest in rental housing. The Federal Government's decision to allow affordable rental housing within a Managed Investment Trust (MIT) is welcomed, however, more needs to be done to establish the Build-to-Rent sector in Australia. This includes ensuring that the Federal Government does not preclude MIT's from investing in market-led Build-to-Rent property. These properties are designed specifically for renters and there are several advantages for tenants, including onsite maintenance services, long leases and predictable rent increases.
<p>Property Council of Australia QLD (in conjunction with Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more choice for renters – sub-market and affordable rental Sub-market rentals offer properties for rent at below market rates to low income earners. Subsidies for investors, such as NRAS- which delivered approximately 38,000 new dwellings nationwide, rented at 80% of median area rent price- are demonstrated to add considerably to available stock, and the adoption of a similar program at a state-level is recommended.

Peak Body	Recommendation
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make renting fair Improve legal protections, including fairer tenancy agreements and fairer processes (for example, improving urgency and response times by the Tribunal).

7.2.2 Rent and changes to rent

The theme of this topic centred mostly on the tenancy laws, which do not specify a minimum or maximum amount allowed when increasing the rent. Rent can be increased every six months if the correct process has been followed, but increases are not capped. Rent can be decreased in certain circumstances.

Of the 88 comments in the machine-coded written submissions that addressed the rent and changes to rent, 73 per cent were made by tenants, 23 per cent were made by property owners, and 4 per cent were made by property managers (see Table 49).

Table 49. Number of comments that addressed rent and changes to rent by respondent status

Respondent status	Number	Percent
Tenants	64	73%
Property Owners	20	23%
Property Managers	4	4%
Total	88	100%
Neither/ unknown	9	-

Source: Altometer analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Tenants feel overwhelmingly dissatisfied and stressed about paying rent that they believe is too high. Tenants also expressed that they live in a constant state of fear about rent increases, and many expressed the crippling effects of repeated and unsustainable rent increases. Several property owners, on the other hand, recognised the need to be able to increase rents.

“Excessive rent increases – sometimes we have had our rent increased even when the rental market has had many vacancies. We have had to put up with the increase and can’t complain for fear of eviction as we could not afford the cost of moving.” [Tenant]

“Keep rents fair by limiting rent increases to no more than one per year and limiting increases to no more than CPI +20%. I am in support of only allowing one rent increase per annum.” [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

The strongest perspective heard from tenants here was the belief that rent is too high, and many low-income earners struggle to afford to survive on the income left over.

“Real Estate Agencies, Rental Management Companies and Property Managers continue to work on a basis of only 1/3rd of the total household income can [be] acceptable for renting purposes. I know that many low income earners have no choice but to lie about their income to keep a roof over their heads. If they did not, then the Gold Coast and a majority of low income Queenslanders would be living on the streets and causing more problems than you could imagine.” [Tenant]

“It is difficulty enough to find affordable housing, but it is now necessary to predict future rent increases to ensure that I will be able to afford to continue to rent the property. I have been a long term tenant and been priced out of properties due to repeated and unsustainable rent increases.” [Tenant]

Tenants expressed that increases in rent have led to issues including:

- a constant state of anxiety around further increases
- the inability of tenants to meet financial demands
- increased rates of movement between properties for tenants and associated costs.

“The problem with renting through real estates and not privately is that agencies continue to push up the rent at the signing of every new lease. Many real estates are being payed by a percentage of the rent collected and push the rent up continually to make more profit. Most people will stay in properties for up to 4 to 6 years then move back to a cheaper property and start all over again.” [Tenant]

“I have been renting for almost 18 years on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. The rentals goes up ridiculously every year.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

Property owners feel they should be able to increase rent prices to mirror market rent each year. If they were unable to do this, mortgage repayments and costs associated with upkeeping the property would become difficult.

“It’s hard to justify the price of some rents... but if governments/councils had any morals they must know that not everyone’s wages or incomes increase with CPI. that doesn’t seem to stop evaluations increasing/land tax pricing is a joke/and councils and utilities increasing there [sic] charges with the justification of CPI.” [Property owner]

“Renters have not paid stamp duty. They do not pay rates. They do not pay land tax. They do not pay body corporate fees. They do not pay property maintenance costs.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were that:

- assistance to meet high rent for low-income earners should be subsidised
- there should be regulatory control over rent increases

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- rent increases should be capped.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were that:

- property owners should be permitted to increase rent one time per year
- property owners should be permitted to increase rents for long term tenants to mirror market rent.

Table 50. Peak body recommendations on rent and rent changes

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fairer rent and rent increase provisions<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ TQ recommends that rent increases be limited to once per year▪ TQ recommends that if a rent increase is greater than 20% above the CPI that the lessor is required to successfully argue why a larger increase is not excessive.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make renting affordable Make renting affordable by capping rental increases, promptly returning bonds (unless there is a substantiated claim) and enforcing timely and consistent passing on of water bills.
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enforce rent controls• Protection from unreasonable rent increases is needed to ensure they are not used as a mechanism to unreasonably end tenancies (in the environment where eviction without grounds is unlawful), and to avoid exploitative price gouging. Rent increases should be limited to once annually; and any increases of more than 20% above CPI must be justified by the landlord in the Tribunal.

“Without greater protection, some renters will continue to face opportunistic rent increases or those which are a de facto method of ending the agreement unreasonably (e.g. retaliatory or discriminatory reasons) and against the tenant’s will.” [Tenants Queensland Inc]

“Unreasonable rent increases can force tenants to vacate without grounds. Rents can currently be increased every six months. If a tenant believes that the increase is unreasonable, they must research market data to dispute the increase, information that is

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not as readily accessible to tenants as it is to landlords and property managers.”
[Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS)]

“The amount of rent requested is usually suitable to the standard of the property and market conditions.” [Property Owners’ Association of Queensland]

7.2.3 Bonds

This theme of discussion was about rental bonds paid as a security deposit at the start of the tenancy, which is used as a form of financial protection for the property owner against any breach during the tenancy (i.e. rent arrears, damage to the property). The maximum bond allowed depends on whether it is a general tenancy, rooming accommodation or moveable dwelling.

This topic was not frequently mentioned in the written submissions and as such did not make it into the topics identified using machine assisted qualitative analysis.

Sentiment for Change

Most tenants that commented on bonds were dissatisfied and made complaints about issues around the bond and exit process. Property owners were also dissatisfied but for opposing reasons. Tenants believe the bond amount is too much, whereas property owners believe it is not enough. Tenants feel the current bond system disadvantages them, whereas property owners feel it disadvantages them.

“In the name of housing affordability and equality, consider reducing the required bond to be not more than 50% of the total cost of rent or something to this extent. For many, having to front the four weeks of rent plus four weeks of rent for bond can be quite a significant cost.” [Tenant]

“You also need adequate funds to deal with tenants who don’t pay, tenants who wreck things and tenants who leave a place filthy and I can assure you the bond is not anywhere near sufficient to cover these expenses.” [Property owner]

Issues for tenants

The biggest issues for tenants were around:

- Property managers making unreasonable claims about the bond
- Property managers taking bonds for unjustified cleaning purposes
- The belief that the bond amount is too high
- Bond loans becoming problematic for tenants who are forced to move regularly.

“That the process for tenants claiming a bond be simplified and expedited.” [Tenant]

“The tenant should ensure the property is not damaged beyond normal wear and tear but that is not the case in Queensland, the tenant is in effect, responsible for all the damage, including normal wear and tear and that is appalling.” [Tenant]

Issues for property owners

The first and strongest perspective heard from property owners is that the bond does not cover loss of rent, cleaning costs, and damage often caused to the property by tenants. Respondents felt that the bond amount is inadequate for covering damages, particularly when considering the time it

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takes to evict a tenant not paying their rent. Owners warned against automatically returning the bond to tenants. Additional concerns were also raised by property owners that bonds were returned to tenants by property managers regardless of the condition the rental property at the end of tenancy.

“The bond is never enough to cover damage to a house when the tenant vacates. It is also problematic trying to use the bond through the RTA and these issues will only increase the chances of having to use the bond.” [Property owner]

“The agent claimed that the property was returned in the condition received, fair wear and tear excepted. This was easily proved not to be the case with the entry report and photos that the agent’s employee had prepared. Said employee was no longer with this agency... The full bond was returned to the tenant.” [Property owner]

Ideas for rental reform

The most common ideas for reform put forward by tenants were:

- reduce the bond amount
- better supported resolution avenues for disputed bond claims
- create a system that prohibits property managers from unjustifiably keeping a bond for cleaning purposes
- bond loans need to accommodate tenants who may not have fully repaid a current bond loan but are required to move.

The most common ideas for reform put forward by property owners were:

- The current bond amount of four weeks rent must be increased
- Do not automatically return the bond to the tenant.

Table 51. Peak body recommendations on bonds

Peak bodies specifically recommended:

Peak Body	Recommendation
Tenants Queensland Inc (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fairer bond management• TQ recommends that bond top-ups be prohibited when rent increases.• TQ recommends that applications to QCAT to resolve bond disputes should always be made by the lessor or agent.• TQ recommends the introduction of bond certificates to allow a provisional transfer of bonds to a new property before a bond is release at the end of a tenancy.

Tenants Queensland Inc
(TQ)

- **Private sector bond surety products**
TQ recommends that bonds remain as a cash costs upfront, paid by contributors, rather than a private sector bond surety products. These products should remain unlawful.
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Queensland Council of
Social Service (QCOSS)

- Prompt return of bonds
 - Ensure a presumption of 'no fault', where tenants' bond money is automatically returned to them (or their next property), unless there is a substantiated claim. If a bond claim ends up in the Tribunal, the onus should be on the agent or landlord to provide evidence to make a claim against it.
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Queensland Youth
Housing Coalition
(QYHC)

- Exiting and bonds
 - Renters should be provided with much more information about the lessor's expectation re: cleaning of the property e.g. cleaning under the fridge or stove, curtain tracks and rails.
 - Any claim on the bond should have a presumption of innocence and the lessor needs to be able to demonstrate/evidence that the current tenant is liable before making a claim for the bond.
 - There should not be a requirement for special bond clean by a cleaning company if the state of the property is commensurate with when the tenant moving in taking into account wear and tear.
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"Given that the bond is the tenant's money, held in trust, the lessor should not be able to increase the amount of bond held simply because the tenant has been required to pay a higher rent. The continuation of a tenancy is itself an indication that the tenant has proven him or herself, and additional bond money should not therefore be necessary." [Tenants Queensland Inc]