




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (12.36 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 [\[3393\]](#).

Tabled paper: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes [\[3394\]](#).

Many would consider that the reforms contained in this bill are long overdue. The Newman government is a government committed to fairness, and the reforms contained in this bill are all about advancing the cause of fairness, albeit in three distinct areas—housing, building and disabilities. One of the key objectives of this government's Housing 2020 strategy is to transfer 90 per cent of the tenancy management of social housing over to the community housing sector because it can do it more efficiently than government.

The main purpose of this legislation is to ensure that this process does not result in any discrepancies between the levels of service tenants receive. The proposed amendments will enable a community housing provider to capture Commonwealth Rent Assistance, levy a bond or service charges and will require tenants whose tenancies are transferred to provide relevant information to them. These reforms are about ensuring tenants receive the same level of service, regardless of whether they are in government managed housing or non-government managed housing, and will mean that in cases where a tenancy is transferred the process will not require tenants to enter into new tenancy agreements or deal with unnecessary paperwork. In fact, the majority of tenants will notice no difference, which is just the way it should be.

As community housing organisations already have the ability to levy bonds and service charges, the amendments also allow the government to apply a bond or service charges to existing public housing tenants to ensure consistency across the social housing sector. This is about bringing the experience of renting from the government more closely in line with the experience of renting in the private market, albeit still at a very heavily subsidised rate. Under our Housing 2020 policy, wherever possible we want to see social housing provided to tenants for the duration of their need. Obviously there are those who will always require our support. However, there are others whose barriers to the private market could be overcome with the right help.

Facilitating the transition to an independent future for those people will require normalising the renting experience as much as possible. For example, in private rentals, tenants who use excess water are liable for a service charge. There is no reason the same should not apply to social housing

tenancies. As the social housing landlord, taxpayers already pay for tenants' water bills. It is entirely reasonable that, where tenants have used excess water, they pay a premium.

The bill will also strengthen the recently announced antisocial behaviour policy for social housing tenants. As we know, the majority of social housing tenants do the right thing, respect their properties and give us no trouble whatsoever. There is, however, an antisocial minority who feel comfortable treating the taxpayers, and their neighbours, with complete contempt. The amendments in this bill will make it easier to act on alleged illegal activity and antisocial behaviour and will allow the department, and community housing providers, to respond more swiftly when serious and/or persistent antisocial behaviour occurs in public and community housing. This is about giving our existing policy some extra grunt and reinforcing the message that poor behaviour at the taxpayers' expense will no longer be tolerated.

This bill also makes some amendments to the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991, the QBSA Act, to facilitate commercial development and major government projects as well as to promote the quicker resolution of building disputes. On 29 August 2013 the governor's assent was given to the Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Act 2013, which implements the first stage of the government's response to the report by the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee on its inquiry into the operation and performance of the Queensland Building Services Authority. While the majority of issues identified in the government's response to the committee's report are being considered by the implementation committee, some issues need to be progressed as soon as possible.

Accordingly, the bill amends the licensing requirements of section 42 of the QBSA Act to facilitate commercial development and public-private partnerships by allowing a business or individual who is not a licensed building contractor to engage a licensed contractor who will then undertake the commercial building work. The bill also amends section 67K to remove restrictions regarding retention money and security applying to special purpose vehicles involved in PPPs. Also, the bill amends section 83 of the QBSA Act to enable the building regulator to apply to QCAT for an order to allow it to continue to act in a building dispute while QCAT proceedings are on foot. That it cannot currently do so is counterproductive, illogical and the cause of a great deal of frustration within the industry. This is a common-sense change that I expect to result in faster resolution of disputes referred to QCAT.

The bill also amends the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 to support the rights of people with a disability to access accommodation without discrimination. In particular, the amendments make it an offence for a person in control of accommodation to refuse accommodation because a person is accompanied by their guide, hearing or assistance dog. These amendments begin to fix the deficiencies in the act left by the former Labor government. I am aware that the member for Woodridge introduced similar amendments recently. However, if the member had engaged with Minister Davis on this issue, it would have been apparent that work was already well underway to make these important amendments.

While these amendments have a similar effect to those introduced by the member for Woodridge, we have made a simpler set of amendments that more closely reflect existing obligations in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 and are more workable in practice. While the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 prohibits a person refusing to rent accommodation to another person because the other person has an impairment and relies on a guide, hearing or assistance dog, the complainant is required to pursue the complaint themselves through the Anti-Discrimination Commission. This can be a stressful and time-consuming process. The proposed new offence provides another remedy that is likely to be less time consuming and costly for a complainant, given the government, and not the complainant, investigates and prosecutes the offence. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. TL MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (12.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ruthenberg): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee.