




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (5.27 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Plumbing and Drainage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to thank the committee for their work on this bill. I congratulate the Minister for Housing and Public Works on his hard work and the hard work of the Department of Housing and Public Works in preparing this bill. As I said when I introduced the bill to the House in December last year, I am honoured, as is the current Minister for Housing and Public Works, to be part of a government which is returning certainty and fairness to Queenslanders. Delivering on another Palaszczuk government election commitment, this bill will re-establish a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body within the Queensland Building and Construction Commission.

Those opposite were part of an LNP government which systematically dismantled key bodies whose purpose it was to ensure that the best interests of Queenslanders were maintained. An example of this deliberate erosion was the abolition of the Plumbing Industry Council. Against the wishes of the plumbing industry, the former LNP government dismantled the Plumbing Industry Council. This not only weakened the voice of the plumbing industry but also threatened the industry's ability to maintain high standards of service. These high standards are not there simply to tick a box; they are needed to ensure that the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and their environment is not compromised.

During my time as the housing and public works minister, it was a great privilege to speak to a range of hardworking stakeholders across the plumbing industry. I cannot mention all of them, but in particular I would like to acknowledge a handful of people for their input and advice: executive director of the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland, Penny Cornah; executive director of the National Fire Industry Association Queensland, Wayne Smith; executive director, Queensland, of the Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association, Graham Mackrill; QBCC acting commissioner Kellie Lowe; Plumbers Union Queensland state secretary Gary O'Halloran; and Service Trades Queensland's Glen Chatterton.

The message I received very clearly from them and from everyone I spoke to was that Queensland needs a regulatory body to keep the plumbing industry strong. The submissions received during the five-week consultation period before the introduction of this bill backed this message, with all of them supporting the re-establishment of a plumbing industry regulatory body.

I am proud to say that we have acted on this community consultation—an approach far removed from that of the former LNP government—and with this bill will establish the Service Trades Council within the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. The establishment of the Service Trades Council will strengthen the plumbing industry through improved licensing and regulation whilst also providing the industry in Queensland with a national voice on regulatory issues.

By establishing the Service Trades Council we will be delivering these benefits whilst also maintaining the improved service outcomes that are being delivered by the commission. The council will establish a panel of industry and training experts to ensure the highest possible standards are maintained for the licensing of plumbers and drainers. The council will also ensure that complaints received are reviewed and appropriate advice provided to the commissioner for potential disciplinary action where necessary.

The Palaszczuk government understands the benefits of a strong plumbing industry with the best possible standards. What this government also understands is the need to protect the rights of tenants right across the state. This bill delivers on our government's commitment to fairness for Queenslanders, no matter where they are. Currently, many people who are engaged in the rental market are at risk of being unable to secure accommodation as a result of outdated or inaccurate information. These issues can have significant impacts on our community's most vulnerable members, putting them at an increased risk of homelessness. That is why this bill seeks to introduce the national uniform law on residential tenancy databases, to provide extra protection for tenants. By ensuring information in tenancy databases is accurate, we can minimise the potential for unfair disadvantage to Queenslanders whilst also ensuring personal information can be safeguarded. Further, the bill will also allow landlords and agents to use the database to appropriately screen potential tenants but ensures this is done in a fair and accurate way. This is just another way the Palaszczuk government is helping to restore fairness to all Queenslanders involved in the rental market.

Last year the Palaszczuk government delivered on yet another election commitment by reinstating the Statewide Tenants' Advice and Referral Service. Again, unlike those opposite, we recognise that all Queenslanders deserve protection and peace of mind when it comes to a roof over their heads. The former LNP government axed the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service, leaving up to 70,000 Queenslanders without an advocate in disputes with landlords or agents. Without access to independent advice, many tenants, particularly the state's most vulnerable, were left stranded without access to information about their rights—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! The member for Lockyer will return to his seat if he wants to interject.

Ms ENOCH:—and understand their responsibilities under Queensland law. That is why we took restoring these services to the election. That is also why we acted immediately to re-establish an interim telephone service.

It is Labor that is committed to ensuring Queenslanders get a fair go and have the opportunity to get ahead. This bill is about restoring a plumbing regulatory body as well as protecting tenants' rights. The tenancy changes in particular are designed to ensure our state's most vulnerable do not fall into homelessness, because we understand that in order to achieve good employment, health and education outcomes we must first ensure good housing outcomes. Within this, it is also about providing certainty for investors through providing them with accurate information to make informed decisions on letting their properties.

This bill is also about respecting the voice of the plumbing industry and ensuring plumbers in this state are operating at the highest possible standards. This is important to protect both the health of Queenslanders and our environment.

I take this opportunity to respond to some of the comments by the member for Southport and other members opposite who have spoken about the deeming provision to the Housing Act 2003, especially with regard to the Logan Renewal Initiative. The Logan Renewal Initiative is a long-term project and is the largest of its type nationally. When I was appointed housing and public works minister in 2015, the Logan Renewal Initiative was one of the first projects brought to my attention and it is one that the current Minister for Housing and Public Works has a strong interest in. What we discovered when we looked into the project was that the former LNP government had failed to properly engage with the local community with regard to the impact the initiative would have on existing residents. Despite the enormity of this project, residents received just one letter outlining the impact of the project. This letter was only provided in English—into a community where English is a second language for a large number of residents. As we know, the previous government had a great aversion to community consultation, but even this level of engagement was nothing short of disgraceful. Given the circumstances, it was only right and fair for the Department of Housing and Public Works to conduct an extensive consultation program to fully inform tenants and other stakeholders about the initiative and how clients may be impacted.

Those opposite should explain why the former LNP government believed it was okay to ride roughshod over the interests of people living in social housing rather than complain about the work the Palaszczuk government has had to do to clean up the mess left by the former minister for housing and public works. The benefits of this bill are clearly demonstrated. It has taken a Labor government to once again restore fairness and certainty to the Queensland public. I commend the bill to the House.