




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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## **PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.01 pm): A constituent rang my office when I was in this place, and when I returned to my office my staff member insisted I go out and see him. He—and I will not use his real name for privacy purposes—was a young father of three who called my office to say that he was about to be turfed out of his home. He explained that his landlord—and this was fair enough—wanted to proceed with selling the house and wanted to sell it vacant, thus requiring him to leave. Normally, this would be a bit of a hassle for a young, single parent but they could presumably move on. However, for this young father, the burden was much higher. He was on the tenancy database as a result of three-year-old debts incurred at the time of a difficult break-up of a relationship with a previous partner.

I visited his very humble house. He sat in a bare house with no furniture, his youngest son on his lap. He was so worried about being evicted that he had moved all of his furniture out of the house and had just the very bare minimum. He used the internet on his phone to try to get a house from Gumtree, but his presence on the database meant that he was effectively shut out of the private rental market. I know that for his young children the memory of bailiffs and police evicting their little family out onto the street would be traumatic, and I promised myself that in this case I simply would not let that happen. Those three little boys would not have that memory; they would not stand out on the busy street with their limited possessions stacked around them.

This story ended happily, but for many a mistake in their past or a debt incurred by others but on their lease leaves a lasting legacy that makes obtaining the necessity of a roof over their heads very difficult. If I could see this one family, who was paying their way in the private rental market but trapped from moving, and say that they would not be ejected onto the street—not on my watch—then we in this place can do the same for so many other struggling families in Logan, Ipswich, Manly, Rockhampton, west Cairns, Southport, anywhere in this state where striving families might have made a mistake but battle to once again right themselves.

We heard from submissions given to the committee that 71 per cent of homeless people are similarly trapped on the rental tenancy databases. We need to have a fair path out of homelessness. For this and other reasons I will outline, I urge members to support the Plumbing and Drainage and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill seeks to: implement uniform national law provisions regarding the tenancy database; allow approved housing providers to give tenancy guarantees to private lessors; and introduce a provision which deems that any development work carried out for public housing to be lawfully carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation applying at the time. Further, the bill also seeks to establish a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body, to be called the Service Trades Council, within the QBCC to ensure that the specialist needs, standards and accreditation for the plumbing trade and industry are maintained and enhanced.

Many who have not examined the issue carefully might ask why we need these standards for specialist trades. Of course for the most part, plumbing is hidden from the consumer and the standards of work will not be clear. However, the consequences of lesser standards can be catastrophic for the home owner. Water leakages can cause enormous damage and home owners expect that this government will maintain high standards for all trades, including the plumbing trade.

Members can imagine the expense of retrofitting plumbing in a suburban house, but even more costly is the attempt to retrofit plumbing or air conditioning in a high-rise building. The cost of faulty and not-to-standard air conditioning is not just the price of fixing it; the danger of legionnaire's disease is something we need strong standards to guard against. We have seen that legislation has been introduced about legionnaire's disease and our public hospitals, but I will not anticipate that debate.

Instead, we can look to a tragic relatively recent case in Melbourne in the newly built aquarium where 35 people were infected and two died after contracting the disease from water droplets coming from faulty air conditioners. LNP members here may be aware of the case because a Liberal Party function was held at the aquarium at the time and some members of the Liberal Party contracted the disease from this unfortunate incident. At the time, there were concerns for John Howard, who had attended the function, and the then Liberal leader in Victoria. Participants at the function were concerned by the outbreak because they know that with good plumbing standards and maintenance the disease is entirely preventable. I know that this incident was a sharp wake-up call for any who thought that high standards were not required in the plumbing industry. This bill does not directly address the issues regarding standards to prevent legionnaire's disease, but it does ensure that the Service Trades Council can maintain high standards of work by plumbers and it can advise the minister on any issues connected with legionnaire's disease.

The Service Trades Council will have responsibilities to report to the minister on issues that occur and are related to the plumbing and drainage trade so that as this industry develops the minister is apprised of any of the challenges that might undermine the high standards that we seek to maintain. Further, the minister can refer issues to the council where the minister seeks its expert industry advice. This ensures that the government is well connected to the industry and it is reflective of the Palaszczuk government's desire to keep actively listening to Queenslanders on the issues that matter to them.

I have heard concerns from the other side about the costs associated with these changes. For the benefit of other members who have perhaps not been following the submissions, I can tell them that this is made clear on page 6 of the explanatory notes, where it says that the costs will be met from within the existing QBCC budget as the council replaces, in a new, industry focused format, the regulation the QBCC was attempting to provide. I also note—and I am disappointed that this was not listened to—that the Master Plumbers' Association in their submission noted this issue and stated that the approach in the bill for licensing 'will provide efficiency savings for government'. It seems unfortunate that the LNP cannot listen to the advice the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland made on this issue. However, it is not a surprise—they did not listen in the last term of government either.

I also note that, as usual, the LNP members maintain their obsession with the role of trade unions in our state. Let us be clear—licensed plumbers value this change, whether they are a member of a union or they choose not to be. Union members and the elected members of their union value and respect the standards of the trade and the high level of skills required. I know that the other side of the House will continue pathological attacks against union members who seek to maintain standards of work and the right to have a safe and fairly paid workplace; however, this does nothing to improve this state. Instead, the LNP should listen to trade unions and the union members and work with them collaboratively to improve outcomes. They should have done this when they abolished the specialist plumbing board in the previous government. I am pleased that the support for the current bill is a recognition that the previous government, by not listening to industry—the union, contractors and employers—got it wrong.

I note that before I was made a member of the committee it held hearings and took submissions from stakeholders. I wish to make the House aware of some of these submissions. The Air Conditioning & Mechanical Contractors' Association supported the Service Trades Council and stated—

... we look forward to undertaking an active role in working with other members to achieve optimal outcomes.

It continues—

We consider that a dedicated body within the QBCC is the right model to achieve specific outcomes ...

Further, they went on to stress that they supported the current membership structure within the bill. The peak employers association, the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland, wrote to say—

The MPAQ congratulates and supports the Government's election commitment to re-establish a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body under the ... (QBCC), called the Services Trades Council.

It seems that the union of employers in the plumbing industry care just as much as, if not more than, the union of employees. The Master Plumbers' Association goes on to say—

We would like to thank the Government for the consultation they have undertaken on this matter to date.

In their submission, the Plumbers Union of Queensland supported the creation of the Service Trades Council. In the union's submission they emphasised the specific knowledge that the Service Trades Council would have to provide advice and to recognise overseas skills, to inform national policy, to inform the minister and the policy process and to make recommendations to the QBCC when it does investigations, audits and compliance to maintain the standards of the industry.

It seems that this bill is one of unity with so many submitters supporting the Service Trades Council. In fact, there is only one point that unites them more and that is the condemnation of the process of the last LNP government and their support for the listening and positive negotiation process that the Palaszczuk government has undertaken throughout this process.

I would like to speak more about the role of helping tenants who have made a mistake at some point in their lives in the past and also the role we are taking in providing national uniformity in the tenants database. However, I will leave this for other speakers. I simply say that I endorse the minister's comments on these issues. I commend the bill to the House.