




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (4.34 pm): I am pleased to rise in support of this important piece of legislation. I strongly support the vital amendments which will allow for changes to residential tenancy databases to help ensure that information is dealt with fairly and that vulnerable people are not further marginalised by not being able to rent a property. I know from talking to people in my electorate who rely on rented housing of the huge problems that can come from having a negative listing on that database. Having a home is a vital part of being connected to your community and, of course, a place to raise your children. The evidence is clear that a stable home life is vital to raising capable, confident children.

There are certainly unintended consequences for women experiencing domestic and family violence as a result of database listings, and it is vital that we tackle this problem. The Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House in its submission to this bill told some moving and frightening stories about how people who had been unfairly listed on tenancy databases were excluded from the rental market as a result—like Ruby, whose violent partner damaged her rental property and who then fell into arrears. She slept in her car for eight months and had to give her children to relatives to care for them. She then secured a studio with a landlord which did not require a tenancy check—so she stayed there with her four children. It turned out that Ruby's listing was unlawful and thankfully her story did end happily.

In my portfolio of domestic and family violence prevention, I regularly hear about issues with women being trapped into staying with violent partners because they have nowhere to go. The Public Interest Law Clearing House's submission reflects this, telling of a woman who stayed with a violent partner as she considers her listing on the TICA database would lock her out of any other mainstream housing options. Sadly, this is a familiar story. It is horrific to think that not only are women being physically or emotionally abused by partners but that damage to their homes which they have had no part in can then contribute to a negative listing and mean that they cannot secure a new home for themselves and their children.

We must do everything we can to break down any barriers which might lead to a woman thinking that she cannot leave a violent partner. It is right that such listings exist, but we must be aware that they are a powerful tool and that the information requires careful management to ensure that vulnerable people are not denied the opportunity to secure housing. It is essential that women are not unfairly stigmatised or blamed for damage to rental properties which was, in reality, caused by the actions of a violent partner. Queensland has long recognised the negative impact that such listings can have, and these amendments will help to ensure that listings do not unfairly lead to homelessness. I commend this bill to the House.