




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

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HOUSING LEGISLATION (BUILDING BETTER FUTURES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (4.12 pm): I proudly rise today to make a contribution to this debate on the Housing Legislation (Building Better Futures) Amendment Bill 2017. This bill seeks to create a fairer system for those who live in retirement villages and relocatable home parks. This bill, if passed, will change lives for the better. The seniors who are the residents of retirement villages and relocatable home parks in my area have been screaming for this for a long time and hopefully today we can give them some comfort.

We had a residents forum in Burpengary a few months back to listen to residents' concerns. In attendance were Minister de Brenni, Minister Miles, Minister Ryan, my colleague the member for Murrumba and me. Judging by the reactions from the large audience in attendance, this issue did need addressing. We heard many stories about unfair rental increases coupled with market reviews so that some residents had more than one increase a year, some only months apart. We heard a lot about residents not having enough protection around resales and exit entitlements. Anyone who saw the *Four Corners* report recently on this topic would have heard similar horror stories about the inequity and imbalance that occurs in some of these facilities.

We on this side of the House fundamentally believe that everybody has a right to a safe, affordable and secure place to live and that they should be able to live without being financially exploited. Our seniors have worked and paid taxes their whole lives and in their retirement they should be able to kick back and enjoy what they have instead of feeling constant pressure.

The former government in which Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, was the treasurer and 'cuts man' conducted a review in 2012. The LNP accepted only half of the recommendations and did not implement them anyway. After they sat on their hands for three years they are accusing us of rushing these reforms. We have consulted widely over the past 18 months and, as we have found not only from our community forums but also from our public hearings, our communities' expectations are not being upheld in these places.

This bill also seeks to adopt minimum standards for rental accommodation. In their statement of reservation, the opposition says that having minimum standards will drive up rental prices. As I said earlier, I think every person has a right to live in accommodation with locks on the doors that work, floorboards that are not rotten and some minimum hygiene standards. If those opposite are happy for Queenslanders to live in squalor and not do anything about it, let it be on their head. When we sell a car, we are required to have it checked to make sure it meets minimum standards before sale. A qualified mechanic must do this work. Our housing should be given some minimum standards as well. After all, most of us spend more time in our homes than we do in our cars. Real estate agents will tell honourable members that, due to a lack of enforceable minimum standards, their professional indemnity insurance costs are going up. This change is not only good for renters; it also helps business.

Local governments support minimum standards. Just recently the LGAQ passed a motion to lobby the Queensland government to grant regulatory powers to enforce building maintenance on residential properties to an acceptable standard. As I mentioned previously, our Public Works and

Utilities Committee held public hearings with stakeholders on this bill in locations where the majority of stakeholder concerns were located. We had one in the Logan area in Bethania, one central in this place and we also held one in my electorate of Kallangur. We listened to the concerns of the stakeholders and came up with a number of recommendations. I am pleased to see that the minister has adopted most of these, and I will go through a few of them.

The first was that the bill be passed—a good one. We also recommended that the minister consider amending clause 32 to clarify the intent of which costs the seller would be liable to pay. This was in response to concerns that a buyer could pull out of a sale and the buyers' costs would have to be picked up by the seller. We heard a hypothetical example of the cost of a buyer's interstate flights having to be paid for by the seller. I am glad that the minister has agreed to clarify this and that the seller will be required to refund only any amount paid to the seller and not expenses.

We also recommended that the processes applicable to increasing site rent ensure the transparency of the rent review calculations in relocatable home parks. That was in answer to the many concerns we heard from stakeholders about unfair and inequitable rent increases. We heard from stakeholders like Barb Bowtell, the secretary of the Burpengary Pine Village Home Owners Committee. A few in this place know Barb well. She is a tireless campaigner for change. Barb said—

We all bought into these parks with the expectation of enjoying our retirement years without intimidation or interruption of a quiet peaceful life. It just does not happen. The biggest concern for home owners is site fee increases, especially the farce of the market review. We are in fact being priced out of our own homes. The majority of park operators work in conjunction with each other. They all use the same valuers to conduct market reviews and the same law firm when cases go to QCAT. In this way, one park—let us call them park A—conducts a market review and increases their site fees. Then another park—park B—compares their park to park A and increases their site fees. This is like a dog chasing its own tail. It goes on and on, year after year, and is never ending.

Park operators deliberately inflate the market review increases, knowing that home owners can only claim that the increase is excessive. The act in its present form does nothing to address how these market reviews are conducted or require the park operator to prove that the parks are comparable. Amenities and services differ considerably between all parks. The last amendments to the act were introduced back in 2010 and very little has changed. Not many of us have another seven years to wait.

Our recommendation on that situation has been answered and supported. The government's response is that the bill contains a number of provisions that work to ensure the transparency of the calculation of site rent increases. I am sure Barb will be happy with that. This includes a requirement that the owner ensure that the site agreement states the basis for working out the amount of an increase in site rent and that site rent increases under a site rent agreement may only be calculated using one basis at a time. They cannot use CPI and market review together; they can only use one at a time. In addition, the government will develop communications material to support and assist residents in understanding the process for site rent increases.

Another recommendation was to address concerns about park owners not passing on pensioner rebates to residents. The residents will be happy that this recommendation was also accepted.

I would like to finish by thanking the members of the Public Works and Utilities Committee as we have had a pretty heavy workload—thank you, Minister de Brenni and Minister Bailey—over recent months and have put in a lot of time. We have dealt with tow trucks, solar rebates, this bill and the subcontractors bill. I would like to thank the members for Murrumba, Lytton, Redlands, Southport and Whitsunday for the largely collegial way we have worked through these bills.

I cannot thank the committee without mentioning the hard work that the secretariat staff put in. Thank you Kate, Rachelle, Lyn and Michelle for your tireless efforts. Thanks to Greg for coming on board to help out with this particular bill. This is a bill that shows what our government is about and how we listen and act to help those in the community who need it most. I proudly commend the bill to the House.