




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Renting Reform

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.13 pm): The Greens welcome the government's consultation on making renting fair in Queensland. It is long overdue and was a key tenet of our election platform last year. Housing is a basic human right and all levels of government have a responsibility to ensure everyone has access to safe and secure housing, but in Queensland in recent decades, the provision of this basic human right has increasingly been outsourced to the private sector. Australia's current housing system was created in the days when there was a large public housing safety net and where the risk of monopolies and exploitation was moderated by access to government owned public housing for everyone. That safety net no longer exists.

At the same time, home ownership is increasingly out of reach for millions of Queenslanders. The tax system encourages property investment as a form of wealth creation, driving up prices and forcing first home buyers to take on massive, crippling mortgages. Meanwhile, the Australian Homelessness Monitor 2018 report shows that homelessness in Brisbane has increased by 32 per cent since 2011. Lack of lease security for tenants means more people sleeping on the street.

Landlords and real estate agents have an immense amount of power over tenants' lives—the power to make someone homeless. That power can be exercised arbitrarily and at relatively short notice. Apart from your landlord, no one else in your life can make you homeless if you have a disagreement. No matter what our income or circumstances, we renters deserve to have the security of knowing that our kids can stay at their school and that we can stay in the place where we have put down roots.

The Greens will be pushing for a right to remain, which means a ban on 'no grounds' evictions. A landlord should only be able to end a lease or fail to renew a lease on very narrow grounds. The only circumstances where turfing someone out of their own home should be acceptable are where a tenant fails to pay rent or trashes the place, where the landlord or their immediate family need to live in the house or for very significant renovations. We will also be pushing for limits on how often rents can rise. Landlords should not be able to increase the rent more than once every two years. By itself, that change will encourage longer leases and more security.

Crucially, we will also be pushing for caps on how much rent can rise by. We believe that a one-per-cent-per-year increase is a reasonable target to make sure rents do not outstrip income rises for low-income Queenslanders, some of whom are seeing no wage growth at all. Without rent caps, the right to remain becomes meaningless and landlords can simply jack up the rent to evict tenants by proxy.

Less than 10 per cent of Australians are landlords and even fewer own more than one investment property, but if you are a landlord who objects to improving renters' rights on the basis that it will be less profitable for you the conclusion is simple: do not be a landlord. If you cannot manage your rental

property without respecting your tenants' basic human rights to stable, secure housing, I would suggest that you should not be a landlord in the first place. Sell the property and let a young first home buyer have it instead. Housing is a human right, not a speculative commodity for making profits. The Greens are working to tip the balance back in favour of ordinary Queenslanders.