




Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. A third of Queenslanders rent, and Labor fundamentally believes that those Queenslanders deserve a safe, secure and healthy place to call home. That is why our Palaszczuk Labor government is bringing landmark reforms to tenancy laws in Queensland following a robust consultation process involving many thousands of pieces of feedback. These changes will help bring dignity and security to the lives and homes of Queenslanders who rent.

Labor is making sure Queenslanders who rent can have a safe, secure and functional roof over their heads by prescribing minimum housing standards. This is so important. Anyone who has rented has experienced housing that has had problems—whether that is mould, a vermin outbreak, issues with cooktops or issues with hot water. Looking back at my years in shared housing, I can say that all of those things were a factor at one time or another. Labor is also ending without-grounds evictions. Many renters have said that the risk of without-grounds lease termination put them off enforcing their rights—for example, by asking for repairs. Retaliatory evictions are a real problem that renters need to be protected from, and this bill supports them in that.

Labor recognises that renting is a long-term housing option for many Queenslanders, and that is why we are creating a clear pathway for renters and property owners to agree about allowing pets in rental properties. As the member for Mansfield said, every Queenslanders deserves the chance to enjoy the health and happiness benefits of having a pet. Importantly, we are creating real protections for people who rent and may find themselves facing domestic and family violence. Nobody should have to remain in a rental property for fear of adverse outcomes if they left that violent domestic relationship.

In good news for the Pebble Beach Retirement Community in my electorate of Pumicestone, this bill also establishes a framework for exempting resident operated retirement villages from provisions of the Retirement Villages Act 1999 that require village operators to buy back unsold freehold units after 18 months. For the Pebble Beach community, that means that once this bill passes the department will provide them with help to make the process of getting an exemption as simple, accessible and supported as possible. I know this will be very welcome news for that community.

Now is not an easy time for renters. Our Palaszczuk government is making these reforms in the context of unprecedented rental demand. This is something that every single member of this House across both sides of the chamber will have experienced in our communities and electorate offices. While I understand that people want to move north to enjoy the endless freedom days and the glorious climate that Queensland offers, Australia's embrace of the Sunshine State has absolutely created issues for renters but those issues are not exclusive to Queensland. I note the comments of the member for Mansfield in her foreword to the Community Support and Services Committee report that record price growth and yield is also occurring in parts of the US, New Zealand and Europe.

I will take a moment to respond to LNP members who have spoken about what I am sure are genuine concerns about the housing crisis they are seeing in their electorates. In my electorate of Pumicestone, we have around 150 properties coming off the NRAS scheme right now. That is 150

families or singles—and many of them are older women—who will no longer be able to afford their rental properties because the Morrison government has withdrawn support for that key scheme that has been available over the last 10 years. These are people whose rent is about to go up between 20 and 25 per cent. They are living in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged areas of many of our electorates. I urge LNP members to reach out to their federal colleagues and ask for support for the continuation of NRAS or an equivalent scheme. While our Palaszczuk government is doing so much heavy lifting in the housing space, we cannot do this alone. It is incumbent on the Morrison government to not withdraw this support in this sudden and, I would say, remarkably heartless way from vulnerable communities right across Queensland.

It is a very complex environment, and it is in this complex environment that our Palaszczuk government has stepped up to make renting fairer, safer and more secure. It is only a Labor government that can do this. What a contrast with the contributions that we have seen from the Greens political party. They have been nothing short of a bin fire, I would say. One of our first responsibilities is always to make sure that the ideas we put forward in this place do not have adverse consequences for the people who most need our support. We heard from the member for South Brisbane at length about the squeeze on the housing market, but she fails to recognise that if her cheap shot housing policies were ever implemented under some remarkable twist of fate they would only serve to make the housing shortage we all face worse. This is not about big business. It is not about the real estate lobby. This is because, with more Queenslanders renting and renting for longer, the proposals by the Greens party would make it more likely that owners would decide not to rent their properties or to stop renting them.

I note the member for Maiwar's comment that it is okay if properties are withdrawn from the market because it all comes to one because they will just be sold and they will become the homes of somebody else. I wonder if the member for Maiwar has stopped for one moment to consider the situation we have seen in Tasmania and specifically Hobart. So many rental properties there have been withdrawn from the rental market and the permanent housing market and handed over to short-term holiday accommodation. In my electorate of Pumicestone this is a very real risk. If property owners, mum-and-dad investors, decide not to continue to offer their one or two houses that they have put aside as their superannuation into the permanent rental market, they are likely to put them into the short-term holiday accommodation market. That provides no support for the families and people in my community, some of whom have viewed up to 50 rental properties without being able to achieve a rental home of their own.

If Greens party members want to talk about people doing it tough, they should head to places like Pumicestone and explain to people in Caboolture how their thought-bubble politics will lead to thousands of rental properties being taken off the market. This includes people like Helen who, as I said, has viewed 50 properties and still cannot find a rental. The last thing Helen needs is fewer rentals in the market, but that is what the member for South Brisbane would do with her undercooked proposals. These are not people who own multiple properties; they are retired couples or young families who work hard to pay off the mortgage of a single investment property. This is why the Greens will never, ever be a party of government.

We have heard endless grizzling from the Greens political party about these reforms and you have to wonder why. My only conclusion is that they just cannot stand Labor delivering strong rental reforms. They are truly the party for double standards. The member for South Brisbane is unique because she manages to demand more social and affordable housing while simultaneously campaigning against social and affordable housing. She says she wants more affordable housing but then she calls for protesters to show up and block the driveway of a new housing development that she does not like because it offers too much density. If you are a Greens party politician, nothing says standing up for marginalised Queenslanders like stopping them getting to work to earn a fair day's pay.

The member says she wants more affordable housing then complains about affordable housing that was planned for the Roma Street precinct. It sounded perfect—close to services, close to public transport, set amidst new green space—but it is not good enough for the member for South Brisbane. Does the Greens party think that only Tesla-driving hipster architects should live in the inner city amidst beautiful parklands? Greens party politicians cannot help themselves. They want affordable housing in theory but, time and again, they attack it in practice, just like they do our robust renting reforms in this bill.

Finally, the member for South Brisbane likes to say ad nauseam that Queensland is a wealthy state. We have seen self-indulgent 'greenstanding' from the members for South Brisbane and Maiwar about their status as wealthy lifestyle renters. With so many people in Pumicestone and right across Queensland genuinely suffering rental stress, this poverty cosplay is deeply offensive to people in my community and other marginalised communities across Queensland. I call on those members to apologise for this offensive behaviour.

Labor's reforms will make a real difference to marginalised vulnerable and everyday people right across Queensland who rent. I am enormously proud that these reforms are being delivered hand in hand with our \$2.9 billion social and affordable housing reform package. Housing is a complex space. We will continue to back rental laws that maximise dignity and support for the 1.8 million Queenslanders who rent. I commend this bill to the House.