




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (2.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. As members of the House would be aware, there have been a number of housing related strategies released over the years, more recently the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025. This action plan is backed by a \$2.9 billion investment and is the biggest investment in social housing since World War II.

For over 30 years prior to entering parliament I worked in the provision of housing. I have a good understanding of the requirements of tenants and of landlords, in particular mum-and-dad landlord investors. Any amendments that we make to legislation need to be balanced, in particular for our mum-and-dad landlords who are absolutely essential for the provision of housing. Currently approximately a third of residents in Queensland are living in rental accommodation.

It is important to make sure that we have properties that are safe and secure to live in. I have heard stories over the years where landlords have done very little maintenance and tenants end up living in substandard accommodation. I have heard stories of properties that have rotten floorboards and walls and sewerage systems that back up regularly. Tenants should be able to live in properties that are weatherproof and structurally sound and have fixtures and fittings, such as a stoves and taps, that actually work. This is not about gold-plated fittings. Having minimum standards for rentals is important not only for the tenants but also for landlords.

Many times I have seen long-term tenants in private rentals, in particular our elderly, where the landlord has done very little maintenance on the property and it becomes unsafe, whether it be the steps rotting or the handrails being wobbly, making it much more difficult for our elderly. It is about having what you and I would call standard fittings that are in good working order. From my experience over the years, the more vulnerable a person is, for example, on an irregular, low income or experiencing violence in their home, the less likely they are to contact their landlord regarding maintenance so regular inspections are required. There is a fear of the rent going up or that they will be evicted at the end of a lease because a tenant wants basic maintenance.

The ending of a lease is another area that was raised during consultation, in particular where a landlord has given notice to vacate without-grounds which can also be very unfair on a tenant. When you are on a low to moderate income moving is expensive, not just in dollars but in the emotional cost as well. This legislation broadens the number of areas where a landlord can issue a notice to vacate, whether they are selling the property or it is to undergo a major upgrade. There are also protections on what a tenant should reasonably know—for example, where people have moved into a rental property only to find out that it goes on the market a month or two later and they have to move out with the expense of moving again.

Another area that was raised in consultation was where there is domestic violence and victims need to relocate quickly. Given this situation they should not be penalised if they do have to move on short notice. If people have been forced out of the rental market, particularly in domestic violence situations, they then go through domestic violence shelters and crisis accommodation, which makes it

difficult not only for the person but also the children. The children are moved time and time again. They do not have any structure. They lose contact with friends. It is important that we make sure that we do not have people on a merry-go-round.

This is a good bill. There is a balance of tenants' rights and landlords' rights, in particular for those mum-and-dad landlord investors. I think the committee has done a good job on this bill. It would have been extremely challenging. Anything to do with housing is very difficult because there is so much variation in the needs and expectations of people. I commend the bill to the House.