




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (12.47 pm): I rise to speak on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. In doing so I would like to acknowledge the Minister for Housing, the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, for her hard work and commitment to making housing fairer to protect the rights and liberty of all Queenslanders and in particular those who are most vulnerable.

The Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and referred to the Community Support and Services Committee on 18 June 2021 for examination of the bill. Between 18 June and 20 July this year, the committee received a written briefing on the bill, written advice from the department in response to matters raised in submissions, held a public hearing and received a public briefing on the bill from the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy. I note that a transcript of the proceedings is published on the committee's website.

On 25 July 2021, the committee invited stakeholders and subscribers to make written submissions on the bill with almost 900 submissions received. The committee conducted a number of public hearings and consulted a wide range of submitters from renters, lessors and property managers who shared their experiences of the rental sector in Queensland. A number of common themes were shared with the committee including calls for accessible, sustainable and affordable housing and certainty in tenure, the ability to rent with pets and better housing standards. Many submitters expressed their wishes to make minor modifications to their homes and better support the most vulnerable groups in society. Submissions also talked about the actions of property managers and landlords' management practices, including entry and privacy issues, notices and evictions and dispute resolution processes.

The bill's objective is to deliver key elements of the government's Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027. The bill aims to do this by amending the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 to: support tenants and residents to enforce their existing rights by removing the ability for lessors and providers to end tenancies without-grounds; provide an expanded suite of additional approved reasons for lessors/providers and tenants/residents to end a tenancy; ensure all Queensland rental properties are safe, secure and functional by prescribing minimum housing standards and introducing compliance mechanisms to strengthen the ability to enforce these standards; strengthen rental law protections for people experiencing domestic and family violence; and support parties to residential leases reach agreement about renting with pets.

The bill also amends the Retirement Villages Act 1999 to: provide certainty, security and peace of mind to residents of freehold resident operated retirement villages; implement the intent of recommendations made during an independent review of time frames for payment of exit entitlements in Queensland retirement villages; and create a framework to exempt freehold resident operated retirement villages from the 18-month mandatory buyback requirements under the Retirement Villages Act 1999.

Everyone deserves a safe and secure place to call home. The government's objectives for minimum housing standards will ensure that renters are supported to enforce their existing tenancy rights to repairs and maintenance, including to ensure the property is clean, in good repair and fit for habitation; that rental accommodation is safe, secure and functional; that livability of rental accommodation is improved; and that rental laws protect vulnerable people in the rental market. The minimum housing standards are categorised under safety, security and reasonable functionality and apply to all tenancy arrangements and housing types.

This bill will ensure that safety and security are met so that premises are weatherproof and structurally sound, fixtures and fittings must be in good repair and not likely to cause injuries to a person, there are locks on windows and doors, the property is free of vermin, damp and mould and includes privacy coverings. Reasonable functionality will ensure that properties have adequate plumbing and drainage, bathrooms and toilets are functioning, connected and private, if a kitchen is supplied then a functioning cooktop must be provided and if a laundry is included it should have fixtures necessary for a functional laundry other than whitegoods.

These standards will be supported by several amendments to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 to encourage compliance, clarify repair and maintenance obligations and support enforcement. These include: extending the time the renter has to return the entry condition report from three days to seven days to allow them sufficient time to inspect the premises; requiring the property owner to provide details about nominated repairers for emergency repairs; increasing the cost that can be authorised by the renter for emergency repairs from the equivalent of two weeks rent to the equivalent of four weeks rent; allowing property managers to arrange emergency repairs to the amount allowed for renters to arrange emergency repairs; introducing tribunal repair orders with a continuing penalty offence for contravening a repair order, which will be provided to the RTA for enforcement; introducing additional grounds for renters to end an agreement in some circumstances if a property does not comply with minimum housing standards or the owner has not complied with the tribunal repair order; and allowing property owners to apply to the tribunal for an extension of time to comply with the repair order.

The minimum housing standards will be phased in to allow property owners sufficient time to meet their obligations applying to new tenancies entered into from 1 September 2023 and to all tenancies from 1 September 2024. These reforms will achieve a good balance between property owners and renters and give renters and property owners the confidence that their rental properties meet basic safety, security and functionality standards.

In closing, I thank my committee for their hard work in the examination of the bill. I thank committee chair, Corrine McMillan, the member for Mansfield, other committee members, the committee secretariat, Hansard and all involved in bringing this bill together. I commend this bill to the House.