




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (6.14 pm): I rise to support the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. A large percentage of households are in rental properties in this state and the bulk of those—about 27,000—are in my electorate of McConnel. I think my electorate is the only electorate in this House where there is a whole suburb—the suburb of Newstead—that is basically all apartments. It is important to make renting fair and responsive while also getting that balance right, and I commend the minister in getting what I believe is a balanced outcome.

These new laws will ensure all Queensland rental properties meet minimum quality standards, and that is a good balance. It gives the ability for renters to make emergency repairs valued at up to four times the weekly rent of that premises if it is urgent and is required to be done, because minimum standards are very important.

The bill provides clarity about the end of a tenancy. There are provisions in the legislation regarding how end of tenancies can be terminated and the reasons for that. In this regard the bill gives clear direction. We hear from those opposite, 'Give us a clear direction. Give us clarity for business.' This legislation gives clarity in relation to the ending of a tenancy.

The bill will also make it easier for renters to have a pet. During the election campaign last year when the electorate overwhelmingly voted for a Palaszczuk Labor government, walking around my electorate I can honestly say that I do not know too many in my electorate who do not own a pet. It is remarkable. I think every breed of dog is in my electorate, many of which live in apartments. Their owners would definitely welcome the ability to make it easier for renters to have a pet in my electorate. They are beautiful animals in our dog parks, but it is extraordinary. It got to the point where we were taking photos with these pets and I was having to write their names down so I could remember them so that when I would see them out and about on the hustings I could say, 'There's Rosie, the greyhound. There's Watson, the bulldog' et cetera. These are great amendments for my electorate.

The bill also delivers key Housing Strategy objectives, and they include modernising the rental laws. We often do that, and as a Labor government I think we do that very well. We ensure that vulnerable community members are supported to sustain tenancy, and that is very important. We do have tenancy shortages issues at the moment because everybody wants to come to Queensland, and why wouldn't you? People want to come here because of our extraordinary effort during COVID and the manner in which we have kept Queenslanders safe. You cannot go anywhere throughout Queensland without people thanking us for the role that we have played, and that is the reality.

No matter how much those opposite yell and no matter how much they whinge about how we have handled COVID, they cannot escape the fact that we get many thankyou's. I have been with the Premier when she has been absolutely swarmed. In Hervey Bay there was not one person in the restaurant who did not come up to her when we were having dinner to thank her and the government for the role that we have played in keeping Queenslanders safe. The member for Hervey Bay agrees with me in that it was extraordinary, even to the point that when we were sitting with the Premier a family

who was a bit embarrassed to come up to her wrote a thankyou message on a beer coaster—an extraordinary event and beautifully handwritten from this family thanking the Premier and this government for what they have done to keep Queenslanders safe.

All we hear from those opposite is whinging and whining and playing politics, and that is exactly what is happening with this debate as well. There is a little bit of politics. The member for Everton got up and claimed a conspiracy theory with regard to preferences between Labor and the Greens, forgetting the fact that the LNP preferred the Greens at the last election in every single seat. He then rattled off the number of seats that were won because of Greens preferences. He said that he stopped at C because he ran out of time. I know why he stopped at C: because if he got to E with Everton, he would have realised that he actually won his seat with Greens preferences! He did not get the 52.2 per cent margin that he has. Rather, he did not secure the seat until the Greens preferences were distributed.

The member for Everton comes in here and talks about how we all won our seats with Greens preferences yet he won with Greens preferences as well. Honestly, you could not write this stuff. It falls into your lap. I sit here dreaming about those opposite saying something that I can use in this House and the member for Everton just keeps delivering. It is absolutely amazing. There is a caveat on this, but my understanding of the figures from the QEC is that the member for Everton did not reach the 50 per cent mark until the Greens preferences were distributed. If I am wrong I am happy to take it back, but I am pretty sure I am right. No wonder he stopped at C.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask that you rule on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that when I am taking advice it is not an opportunity to continue the debate across the chamber. There is no point of order. The member is responding to matters that were raised. She is rebutting comments that were made. I would ask members to come back to the long title of the bill.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. My comments are just as relevant as the comments from the member for Everton. The housing bill supports a fair and responsive housing system that enhances the safety and dignity of all Queenslanders. We have carried out extensive consultation in relation to this bill. I commend the former minister, the member for Springwood, and the current minister for getting the balance right. It is not easy balancing the interests of home owners and renters. It is a difficult task because both have different interests, but I believe that the bill before the House gets that balance right. It looks after those who are vulnerable, those in domestic and family violence situations, enabling them to end a tenancy with limited liability for end-of-lease costs and that is a fantastic step in the right direction.

Unlike the consultation that we on this side of the House undertook in relation to this bill, the Greens members want to make amendments without any consultation whatsoever. They come into this House and say because you have declared something on your register of interests you cannot speak on the bill. I point to my declaration. Apparently it was on Facebook. It is there for everybody to see and I draw everyone's attention to that. It would be like saying that the Greens national spokesperson on housing is also an investment property owner and so that person cannot not speak on housing. It is really quite amazing to hear that.

I am elected by the constituents of McConnel to represent them. I speak to my constituents very often. I represent a large number of renters and a large number of people who are home investors in the private market. I take umbrage at the assertion that I cannot speak in this House because of what is in my register of interests. I am glad that we all locked in together in this House and voted that down. Wanting to stop people speaking because of a perceived conflict of interest shows a lack of experience. I am glad that this House rejected it outright. I stand here proudly representing the renters and property owners in my electorate.

I think that this bill strikes a perfect balance. This bill provides minimum standards. It has provision for renters taking control when they see an emergency. It looks at grounds for evictions. I love the domestic violence proposals, as I mentioned. I think that is a step in the right direction. Once we have moved this bill, I look forward to informing my constituency about its contents.

In relation to not speaking on this because of a declaration of interest, I note that both the Greens members in this House have not declared any real estate or any mortgages. I do not know whether that means that they are renters. Even if they were renters I would never deny them speaking on a bill to do with renting. It does not add up. Having said that, I commend the bill to the House.