




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.42 pm): Once again, we have seen what can only be described as an amateurish performance from the member for South Brisbane. I would say that it is only a short walk from the member's office to the Clerk's office to seek some advice in relation to conflicts of interest. If the member took the opportunity to do that—every member of parliament can avail themselves of that, and I certainly have on occasion—she would learn that somebody simply having an interest in common with a range of other people does not render them in conflict and unable to vote on a bill. The motion that was moved was completely ridiculous.

I was part of the Ethics Committee that recommended that minor parties and crossbenchers be given resources so they could better contribute to parliament. Clearly, the Greens are not using their resources very effectively. Without the benefit of those resources, I was able to wander downstairs to the Clerk's office and have a very similar conversation about a very similar issue and find that just because I own an investment property does not render me incapable of participating in this debate.

The amateurship of this parliament is staggering. If you analyse the policies the Greens took to the last election in my area you will see that the sum total impact on the issue of housing would be to simply drive up the cost of housing for young people who are trying to buy a house. They claim to be the party that is out there championing people getting into a house!

This bill is about balancing the rights of landlords and tenants. There is a whole range of other work that needs to be done to address housing affordability and access and social housing. I am proud to say that I am part of a government that is actually doing that work. In fact, if the Greens were serious about housing affordability they would not show up, every time someone proposed to increase density in an area, with their placards and signs and try to stop that going ahead. In this they are on a unity ticket with the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast LNP members, who now also seem to be amazingly opposed to high-density development. It is incredible.

I want to focus on the provisions in the bill that require landlords to maintain minimum housing standards. I have been living away from my parents' house for over three decades now. Even though I own an investment property, a third of that time was spent living as a renter. While the member for South Brisbane might determine that I have no right to participate in this debate, I experienced all the highs and lows you can experience as a renter. I had good landlords and I had very poor landlords during that time.

I am really proud to be part of the party of Wayne Goss, who brought in the RTA. When I first started renting, for the first four or five years, working-class people on low incomes, like myself and the people I generally shared my accommodation with, pretty much knew we would just lose our bonds. No matter what you did in that property and no matter how hard you tried, you knew that you were going to kiss that bond goodbye. That was hard when you were on pretty low incomes. Enter the RTA and that stopped happening overnight. It changed the way we treated properties. It was common that people who felt they were going to lose their bond took no care of the property, because they knew they were not going to get the bond back. It was a vicious and ridiculous cycle. Fast-forward to a system that

ensured fairness for people, and suddenly people knew that if they did the right thing they would get their bond back. That was a great Labor reform, and these are great Labor reforms we are dealing with here.

Requiring landlords to ensure that people have a minimum standard of housing is an important step forward. As I said, the Greens would have you believe that someone like me who owns an investment property cannot have a view on this without being conflicted. I have made no secret of the fact—in fact, it is in my register of interests, as it is required to be—that I spent a decade or more in rental properties, and I come from a culture where many of my family and friends were or still are in rental properties. My nephews, nieces and friends' kids are in rental properties, and it is probably very highly likely that my own kids will end up in rental properties at some point.

Yes, I am a landlord and I have one house, and I want to tell members why I am a landlord. After working for 25 years—longer for my wife—my wife and I had a conversation with our financial adviser about how best to prepare for retirement, and the suggestion was made that we consider an investment property. After several years of saving and forgoing many things, we were able to do that.

Recently I was at a community event about housing affordability and someone suggested that people who own investment properties do not care about people or society. I think that is ridiculous. We do care. Firstly, my wife and I care about each other and about providing for each other in retirement. We also care about our kids and want to use this to try to help them get a good start in life. We also feel that if we can take care of ourselves in our retirement we do not need to be drawing on the social welfare benefits of this country and we can leave that for other people. Finally, we actually do care about our tenants, and we have endeavoured to be good landlords. We make all the repairs when they are requested or required, and we have employed a professional management agent to make sure that we comply with everything we are to comply with. We upgrade our property. We also offer two-year rental agreements. Amazingly, we can never find anybody who actually wants to sign those.

I know that not all landlords are good. This bill is about trying to strike the balance that we need. Not all tenants are good, either. We have had the experience of having over \$20,000 damage done to our property. That was tough. The reality is that this bill strikes a really good balance between the rights of property owners, which are important, and the rights of tenants, which are also important. It is what we face in considering many of the bills that are brought before this parliament: striking a balance between competing interests. I have experienced this issue from both perspectives, and I believe that this bill improves the rights of tenants and strikes a good balance.

When the Greens political party say they are on the side of renters, I think people should take that with a grain of salt. Labor has delivered for renters and continues to deliver for renters. We also respect and support landlords. We are not like the Greens: we do not seek to divide our community. We saw that today. They want to come in here and divide this parliament. It is a politics of envy and division that they are so good at.

Labor keeps an eye on the main game, and what does that mean for us? How do we make things fair and safe for people who rent? How do we support people who do the renting? How do we support people who, if they choose to, can become property owners? How do we even support those people if they choose to become investors? How do we help people to have a dignified retirement? Those are all of the questions that Labor is trying to answer and we try to answer those in a way that brings our society together, not drives it apart. These are the things that Labor focuses on. This bill helps to deliver this, and I commend it to the House.