




Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.30 pm): I rise in support of the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which delivers key objectives from our 10-year Housing Strategy framework. This bill is the latest action of the Palaszczuk Labor government to ensure Queenslanders have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. It is about protecting consumers while reforming and modernising Queensland's housing legislative framework. It means people living in and investing in the Queensland rental market will have better protections and certainty in their tenancy arrangements through legislative reforms. Consumers will be protected and empowered. The retirement village industry will be supported to supply quality services with confidence.

The bill delivers modern rental laws that better protect tenants and lessors and improves housing stability in the rental market. A key part of this is removing without-grounds evictions, providing renters with increased housing security. We are also ensuring vulnerable Queenslanders are supported to sustain tenancies in appropriate and secure housing that facilitates social, economic and cultural participation. We are supporting a fair and responsive housing system through reforms that enhance the safety and dignity of all Queenslanders and promote the provision of a range of housing options.

Important changes will also better support people experiencing the scourge of domestic and family violence. The domestic and family violence provisions will commence immediately on assent to continue temporary protections under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020. The move means renters with evidence of experiencing domestic and family violence can exit a tenancy with seven days notice and can leave immediately after providing that notice. I believe there are additional amendments that have been circulated by the minister. To make it less onerous for renters and to ensure they can leave as quickly as possible, the supporting evidence required can be authorised by a range of professionals like social workers, refuge or crisis workers et cetera.

Renters will also be able to improve security at their rental property by changing locks without the owner's consent. These reforms will align our domestic and family violence protections in Queensland with those in Victoria and Western Australia and will contribute to the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026 and to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

Another important area of reform will support those renting with pets—the most discussed topic in the Open Doors to Renting Reform consultation and the stage 1 consultation regulatory impact statement. Feedback received during this process indicated Queensland's rental laws could do more to support tenants and lessors in reaching an agreement on renting with pets. Under our reforms, renters can request permission to have a pet. If the property owner does not respond within 14 days, the renter is deemed to have permission. The property owner can only refuse pets for prescribed reasons, and their approval can be subject to reasonable conditions other than additional bond or increased rent. Owners and renters will be encouraged to negotiate about proposed pets and should

discuss this during the application process. Owners will be encouraged to include any restrictions about pets at the time of advertising. A blanket 'no pets' clause is not an acceptable reason for refusal. Queensland renters with pets told us they want more support, and that is exactly what we are delivering.

Over one-third of the 1.65 million households in Queensland rent, and the impacts of COVID and increased interstate migration are adding more pressure to our local rental market. With more Queenslanders renting, and renting longer, we need laws that support them, and we need a government to support them. I am very proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government that continues to deliver more safe, secure and affordable housing. This bill is supported by our record \$2.9 billion social housing investment across Queensland. This includes \$1.9 billion over four years to increase social housing stock and get more vulnerable Queenslanders into homes quicker.

In our local community of Bundamba that means the recent delivery of four new social housing complexes—three in Redbank and one in Bellbird Park—offering 56 homes at a total investment of \$19 million. This year's budget includes a further \$52 million for social housing in Ipswich. We are also establishing the new \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund, the returns from which will drive new supply to support current and future housing needs.

Under our action plan we will fast-track projects and initiatives that will increase the supply of social housing, seek proposals to develop under-utilised state land and deliver mixed-use developments. That means we are increasing the supply of social and affordable housing by almost 10,000 dwellings over the life of our Housing Strategy, including 7,400 new builds over the next four years under the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative.

The Palaszczuk government is delivering a fairer and more contemporary housing sector for Queenslanders. This could not stand in greater contrast to the federal Morrison government, which is turning its back on those in our community who are vulnerable and need support by continuing to wind down the National Rental Affordability Scheme. Tens of thousands of Queenslanders rely on the NRAS, including a total of around 1,066 households in the federal electorates of Oxley and Blair that span our local community of Bundamba. The Morrison LNP's federal package provides no new funding for social housing and no support for rental affordability.

In the current housing market, we are seeing more Queenslanders in need of rental accommodation and an increase in demand. We are currently experiencing the worst housing affordability crisis in Australian history, and scrapping this essential scheme is simply shameful. NRAS has been supporting low-income Queenslanders since 2008. There are up to 384 people accessing NRAS in Bundamba. The Morrison government has turned its back on vulnerable people who cannot afford to buy a house and are struggling just to pay the rent.

Where is the Queensland LNP? Are they standing up for Queenslanders and asking the Prime Minister to continue providing this essential funding? No. They sit there mute and absurd, condemned by their silence. Rather than pick up the phone to their mates in Canberra, they are happy to sit there silent while vulnerable Queenslanders who need housing support are savaged by Morrison's cuts to social housing. On this bill, one after the other, LNP MPs have been standing up and going through the pantomime of pretending to raise grave concerns with particular elements, but, of course, at the end of the day, I am confident they will all vote for it. They will do that because it is good reform. They know it is good for Queensland. They know that the Palaszczuk Labor government has got it right.

I now turn to the Greens political party contributions on this bill. In her contribution, the liberal Greens member for South Brisbane accused members of this place who have investment properties of having a conflict of interest given the bill relates to rental laws, despite clear advice from the Clerk that this is not the case. This bill benefits renters. The liberal Greens member for South Brisbane is a renter. By her own logic, she should have recused herself. Yet, without a hint of irony or self-awareness, it would seem, the liberal Greens member for South Brisbane attempted to move a motion that would, by its own logic, conflict her in this debate. What total nonsense. What hypocrisy.

In fact, when you look at the federal register of interests of the Greens senator from New South Wales, Senator Mehreen Faruqi, who I believe is the Greens national spokesperson on housing—

A government member: On housing?

Mr McCALLUM: Yes, on housing—it reveals that the senator has not one but two investment properties. That is the Greens spokesperson on housing. It is unbelievable. It is utter hypocrisy. There is one rule for the liberal Greens and another for everyone else: do as I say, not as I do.

Indeed, there are further amendments than have been circulated by the liberal Greens member for South Brisbane that seem to be an attempt to circumvent or pre-empt the Speaker's same question ruling in relation to this bill by introducing what is effectively the Greens private member's bill as an amendment. The Greens' proposals offend both Queensland's Human Rights Act and basic contract

law—breaches of the Human Rights Act from a party that like to pretend they are committed to social justice and equality! As someone who has rented for the vast majority of my life, I commend this bill to the House.

(Time expired)