




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2021

HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (6.34 pm): I promise to behave myself, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill. I am proud to speak in favour of this bill because it makes renting fairer in Queensland. In 2017 the Palaszczuk government released our Queensland Housing Strategy and accompanying action plan to ensure confidence in the housing and rental markets and to set out a plan to reform and modernise the existing legislative frameworks. We have consulted extensively with renters, the real estate industry and property owners to ensure that the reforms strike the right balance.

Stage 1 of our renting reforms include: ending without-grounds evictions; making it easier for renters to have a pet; ensuring renters have confidence that their rental property is safe, secure and functional; and ensuring renters experiencing domestic and family violence have options to end a tenancy. These changes are an important step in making renting fairer in our state and only a Labor government would do this. I empathise very strongly because, as someone who has rented most of my life—not now—it is something that I am very familiar with.

We know that the housing sector is under pressure and with Queensland's population growing thanks to interstate migration that pressure will increase. We also know that renting is important with approximately one-third of Queenslanders currently renting. The reforms in this bill will work alongside the Palaszczuk government's almost \$3 billion investment in the sector to boost supply and provide safer and more accessible housing. Unfortunately, the federal Morrison-Joyce LNP government continues to underfund housing at a national level, leaving states like Queensland to pick up the slack.

This legislation delivers key housing strategy objectives, including to ensure vulnerable community members are supported to sustain tenancies to facilitate their social, economic and cultural participation and to support a fair and responsive housing system that enhances the safety and dignity of all Queenslanders. In a tight rental and housing market it is important that we ensure any changes are balanced and do not have unintended consequences that would potentially reduce supply. The rights and obligations of renters and landlords are being carefully considered in the bill to ensure the best outcomes.

This legislation will remove without-grounds evictions, giving renters more certainty and security that they will not lose their home. We are also protecting renters against retaliatory evictions and actions, giving them the confidence they need to be able to enforce their rights without fear of retribution. These are important protections for renters who all too often feel they need to choose between not raising concerns with property owners and having to move out of their home.

We know that many renters want to keep a pet so that their house feels more like a home because obviously pets provide companionship, safety and physical and mental health benefits. For many people, of course, they are part of the family. This legislation makes it easier to keep a pet in a rental property by removing blanket pet bans and requiring that property owners can only refuse a request because of a prescribed reason. The bill also bans rent increases and pet bonds, meaning that renters can have confidence that they will not be financially penalised for keeping a pet.

By introducing minimum housing standards we are ensuring that renters have safe, secure and functional housing when they move in. We are introducing additional grants for renters to end an agreement in some circumstances if the property does not comply with the minimum housing standards. These changes will support renters and ensure that properties are fit for purpose.

The legislation makes it easier for people fleeing family and domestic violence to end their rental agreement, which is the last problem they need when they are dealing with something so significant. These changes will commence immediately on assent. Renters who have to leave their homes because of family and domestic violence will be able to leave immediately and access their portion of the rental bond funds held for the tenancy through the Residential Tenancies Authority. This legislation provides a number of other protections for people experiencing family and domestic violence, including the ability to change locks without prior lessor consent. The legislation strikes a balance between the rights and obligations of renters and landlords and it provides a framework that addresses the historical power imbalance between the groups.

I would like to respond to a couple of things that have been said in this debate which I think need to be noted and responded to, and they were in the contribution from the member for South Brisbane. The member for South Brisbane moved a motion to ensure that people who are landlords should not be able to vote on this legislation. This is in clear contradiction to the advice given by the Deputy Clerk, who advised MPs—

Investors and renters are a broad class and thus there is no compulsion on members to declare in their speeches or when voting in line with previous Speaker's rulings. However, if members wish to declare in their speeches, they can, but there is no requirement to do so.

I do not hold any investment properties, but other people do and they are entitled to do that. To say that MPs should not exercise their democratic right in this chamber to vote on legislation which they are mandated to do by their constituents is Stalinist; it is disgraceful. For the Greens MP to come in here and tell other people to not represent their constituents on legislation is anti-democratic, and it has to be called out. How dare they! I know it is a social media stunt, but it is also anti-democratic and it is a disgrace. I would feel that I am not doing my job if I did not point that out.

The other thing about the Greens party MPs' contributions here about allegedly caring for renters is that I would feel a little bit more comfortable if their record actually backed it up, but they have a long record of opposing new housing. I have a pile of printouts right here—I will not table them all—but there are so many applications they have opposed in their own electorates. These are often housing proposals that are close to busway stations, close to a train station, close to the CBD and workplaces—in the high density zone. One of them is covered in plants. It looks like a very green proposal. They always find an excuse. The Greens spin excuse to oppose development. They characterise it in ways that are politically spun but basically are blocking housing being built during a housing crisis. It is the greatest hypocrisy and it has to be called out. It is lacking integrity, it is lacking in ethics, it is the worst bit of political spin and it needs to be identified.

The kind of excuse the Greens party MPs pull out against new housing is, 'Oh, it is luxury.' Apparently if it is high density, it must be luxury. 'Oh, no, it should be a park'—other people should buy it and turn it into a park. It is privatisation. Roma Street Parklands was doubled in size by the Beattie government 20 years ago. It was always envisaged that high-density towers would screen the parkland from the rail line. The member for South Brisbane came out opposing more housing only months ago during a housing crisis saying this was privatisation. Are you kidding me? Are we going to stop housing on privately owned land being developed by the private sector? It is absurd.

If the Greens really believed in the housing crisis, they would support building new houses. However, they have a long record. They call it gentrification; they call it privatisation—'It should be a park.' There is always an excuse.

If you want integrity in this place, then maybe you should be consistent; that is what I say. This government is consistent because this legislation strikes that kind of balance. Probably one of the greatest mysteries was a contribution from the Greens candidate for Griffith, Max Chandler-Mather, who basically—

Ms Boyd: Oh, man!

Mr BAILEY: Yes, I will take that interjection. In opposing one of these housing developments, he tried to depict Labor and the LNP as being similar, a common Greens' spin tactic. In this case, he basically alleged that property developers are somehow in the pockets of the Labor Party and the LNP, totally failing to acknowledge and mention that it was this Labor government that stopped political donations from property developers. We stopped it! Here we have the Greens' spin out there trying to undermine that progressive reform by drawing us and the conservatives together. They say they are different, but the spin from the Greens party on issues like this is that they pretend to be on the side of

the battler but they block new housing being built in their own electorates because it wins them votes. Let's be clear: they rally people, they get them inflamed, they rev them up—'It's outrageous', blah, blah, blah—and it is all about their own political future. It is not about integrity, not about ethics and not about progressive values, because they are not progressive.

I congratulate the minister and the committee. This is important legislation. I have rented for the majority of my life. I know what it is like to be in good and bad housing in terms of landlords. This will give renters a lot more rights and a lot more certainty going forward. I commend the bill to the House.