




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (4.07 pm): I rise to give my contribution to the debate on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. While I am pleased that the bill includes some positive changes for renters—in particular, those experiencing domestic and family violence—the changes concerning termination of leases were poorly conceived, not balanced and lacked research on the impact they would have on the rental market if this bill was passed in its original form. While the bill may have some good intentions in its preparation, in reality all that it has done is further damage the already fragile rental market in Queensland.

Everyone would agree that renters deserve fairness and the right to a safe, clean rental property. However, we also have to acknowledge that rental property owners are largely mum-and-dad investors who some speakers have tried to demonise here today. Many of these mum-and-dad investors are working-class people who have spent all their life paying off their home and when they have finished paying off their home they use the money left over to put into housing. Many of them do not put that money into shares; many of them buy another home because that is what they know. Many of them rent out that house so they can send their kids to university. These are the mum-and-dad investors who a few members were criticising here today.

When this bill was first tabled, it was so one-sided that it scared the daylights out of mum-and-dad investors, as I mentioned. I believe this drove many to either sell or place their properties on the Airbnb market, particularly in regional centres. This made the rental situation even worse for renters. Numerous people contacted my office, and I have lost count of the number of times I have been stopped in the streets by concerned residents who have invested in a second home on the rental market or are retirees who live on rental income from their properties.

There was a lot of anger and uncertainty for rental investors about the bill, particularly concerning the changes and limits to the ability for property owners to end lease agreements without-grounds. My point is that the introduction of this bill created a massive uproar in the rental market which has hurt both investors and renters.

Thorough research should have been done on the impacts the bill would have on the rental market before it was tabled. However, I am pleased that the government performed a 180-degree backflip to change this provision back to close to identical to what was already in place prior to the bill's introduction. I know that the Greens are not happy with this and, no doubt, will table amendments slanted heavily in favour of renters by portraying mum-and-dad rental investors as big bad corporations, which is completely untrue and false.

Let us take a moment to look at the reality of what would happen if there were an imbalance between investors and renters. We know that the majority of rental property owners are mum-and-dad investors, retirees and small to medium sized investment groups. They take on the risk of the investment yet were initially told that they could not cease a lease agreement at the completion of a term without a valid reason. It is akin to buying shares and being told that you cannot sell them without a specific reason.

If we pass the original bill with even more amendments that weigh heavily in favour of renters, we would have a more severe lack of affordable rental properties in the state than we experience right now. Instead of poorly thought-out changes to legislation, the government should immediately invest in more affordable accommodation throughout the state to address the shortage and bring down rental property prices.

I give an example which highlights what the government should be doing instead of changing legislation. I have a not-for-profit organisation in my electorate which is very active in the community in raising funds to provide affordable housing to the elderly and at-risk renters. With zero funding from the state and federal governments, the not-for-profit organisation owns 15 units and is constructing additional one- and two-bedroom units. I was approached about securing a small parcel of state land at the current site which would allow the organisation to build an additional three units. Again, it is all affordable housing for elderly and at-risk renters.

Here we have an organisation doing the government's job of building units to offer affordable housing to the community of Malanda with zero state and federal government assistance. When given the chance to waive the cost of the land and contribute to this worthwhile venture, what did the government do? It forced the not-for-profit organisation to try to find \$35,000 to build the housing the government should be building in the first place. If we genuinely want to fix the rental market, we need to support the local charity and housing organisations and build more affordable accommodation.