




Speech By  
**Amy MacMahon**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2023

### **HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (12.33 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This month we learned that around 300,000 Queenslanders are homeless or in housing stress. Home ownership continues to fall and people are increasingly reliant on a largely unregulated private rental market where rents are skyrocketing and vacancy rates are at historic lows.

Working people who tried to escape the rental crisis and took out a mortgage on the promise that interest rates would not rise are now spending more and more of their income on repayments, pushing homeowners into severe housing stress. Far more money is being lent to investors than first homebuyers and unfair tax systems like negative gearing are accelerating inflation.

There are clear solutions in the Better Together report and the Pawson report released by QCOS this month. The solutions have been presented to this government time and time again by experts and pushed by the Greens: build public housing, control rents, increase renters' rights and tax vacant homes. Stop incentivising a profit-driven housing system that treats housing like a commodity rather than a home.

Instead of any of these solutions, we have this bill. This is not the action on housing that Queenslanders need—not even close. Besides some long overdue changes to residential villages' financial reporting, all this bill does is allow a charity to put an administrative note on the title of a person's property. That note simply reminds the property owner that they promise to donate some money to the charity when they sell that home that they might use to build affordable housing. This is what the government calls action on the housing crisis.

The bill will allow just one charity to receive these funds—Homes for Homes. Homes for Homes asks individuals and developers to commit to donating 0.1 per cent of a property sale to their social and affordable housing fund. To be clear, this charitable scheme is already fully compliant with our existing laws in Queensland.

Homes for Homes has been operating since 2015. Since then, just 1,870 homes have been registered with the charity, but they say that they expect within the coming years they will have 18,000 homes registered. Putting aside the government's seed funding that is going towards this—a poppy seed of seed funding, if you will—0.1 per cent of the sale value of 18,000 properties would be equivalent to a grand total of 18 homes. I do not mean 18 homes for Queensland. That figure is for the entire country. Charitable donations are obviously welcome, but let us be clear: this will not even come close to touching the sides of the housing crisis that Labor and the LNP have created.

From the title of the bill we would think this bill did something a little more than legislate the bureaucratic equivalent of a Facebook poke. It is indeed embarrassing. Having said that, even 18 more homes would be an enormous boost when this government's track record on building new social and public housing is so appalling. The government has built just 4,000 units of social housing since 2014.

In the same time, they have sold more than 2,000 public housing properties into the private rental market. Because of this government, there is a shortfall of 31,000 social homes in Queensland. To clarify again, based on—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Members, there are too many interjections. I remind those members who should know they are on a warning that I will not tolerate any interjections from them.

**Dr MacMAHON:** To clarify again: based on Homes for Homes' own projections, the changes that this bill will facilitate will build just 18 homes. On the government's watch the social housing waiting list has almost doubled since 2018. Some 46,000 people are on the social housing waiting list—a waitlist that is years long and includes single parents and their children, people with disabilities and domestic violence victims. All of them are waiting for housing while languishing in insecure housing or in homelessness.

What is more, this government has deliberately obscured the real size of the crisis by tightening the social housing eligibility criteria and only approving high-needs applicants. They did not like how the housing numbers were looking so instead of addressing the crisis they started to fudge the numbers.

If people want to donate money to help those who have been left behind by this government we welcome that, but the government cannot use these crumbs as a distraction from their failures while record numbers of people suffer. Clearly this government does not understand what 0.1 per cent means if they think Homes for Homes will be anything more than a drop in the ocean. This bill is not even 0.1 per cent of proper housing policy.

Data this week showed that 831 adults and 359 children—107 of whom are under the age of five—sought help from Micah projects last month. That is 831 adults and 359 children who will all be clamouring to get into Homes for Homes 18 dwellings.

It must be incredibly appealing to this Labor government to think that a few wealthy investors and developers could fix Labor's housing crisis with a 0.1 per cent donation. After all, that is who they are listening to when they are writing housing policy. This government does not represent renters, people who are sleeping rough and people who are struggling to pay their mortgage; it represents landlords and developers. Many of the landlords sitting in this House today are profiting off the housing crisis and soaring rents, siphoning off working people's wages to put money in their pockets.

Right now countless former MPs from both the Labor Party and the LNP sit on the boards of banks and real estate corporations, and they are the same ones who are paying to have fancy lunches with politicians. Anna Bligh, former leader of the Queensland Labor Party, is now the chief—

**Ms ENOCH:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask you to rule on that.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for South Brisbane, I have allowed a little bit of latitude, as we have for other members, but I would draw you back to the long title of the bill. This bill is about two things specifically, so I would appreciate it if you would talk to those.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Going back to the long title, the government would like ordinary Queenslanders to believe that this bill, which encourages voluntary donations to a charity, could solve the housing crisis because they do not want Queenslanders to consider that the problem really lies with Labor and the LNP and the property portfolios of wealthy investors and their mates in corporate boardrooms. The government has no desire to genuinely fix a broken system by putting renters and first home buyers first. There is no interest in fixing the broken system they have created, acting in their own interests and the interests of their corporate mates.

The more this government can distract with summits and round tables and nearly useless bills like this, the less time we have to spend looking at the actual causes of the housing crisis and the things that would solve it. We know that Queensland is a really wealthy state. I would like to remind everyone that we have a \$5 billion surplus because the government finally decided to raise coal royalties. Let's just hark back to the last time the government put in a voluntary scheme when they said to mining companies—

**Ms KING:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I question the relevance of the member's current contribution and refer to your former ruling.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for South Brisbane, I am listening carefully to what have you to say. You are starting to stray away and I will pull you up.

**Dr MacMAHON:** I am just drawing parallels between this voluntary scheme and the voluntary scheme the government put in place asking mining companies to tip in a little bit more. In terms of royalties, it raised hardly any money and fell flat on its face. It was not until the government raised royalties—

**Mr Berkman** interjected.

**Dr MacMAHON:**—that we started to see more money coming into the Queensland Treasury to invest in the things we need, following, as my colleague has said, Greens policy to raise coal royalties. This begs the question: where are we going? Why are we going to all this effort for a nearly useless bureaucratic change to property titles, which is what this bill does. This bill is being presented by the government as something that will help the housing crisis here in Queensland, but in essence it is a charity. This bill facilitates something that can already happen in Queensland. We do not even need to pass this legislation. As noble as donations to social housing are, the scheme will deliver just a handful of community housing homes nationally when we have a shortfall in Queensland of 31,000.

Why are we wasting our time on this? Why are we not getting to the bottom of who is actually controlling the millions of dollars in the Housing Investment Fund, for example? Given that this bill looks to have emerged from the Housing Summit, I would like to spend a moment reflecting on the Housing Summit. Rental affordability was not touched on at that summit at all, which is reflective of how this government treats renters, because they did not talk about rental affordability at all. From what I can tell, there were just—

**Ms McMILLAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I am the third member who has raised the issue of relevance. This bill is not about rental caps, the price of rents et cetera.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for South Brisbane, I am going to give you some latitude because the minister brought up this subject, but please stick mostly to the bill.

**Dr MacMAHON:** To clarify, this bill seems to have come out of the Housing Summit. Other key solutions that we would have liked to have seen come out of the Housing Summit are not being talked about at all because there were not any renters in the room. In light of this, I would like to move the following amendment to the second reading—

That the words 'be now read a second time' be deleted and the following words inserted: 'That Queensland introduce a two-year rent freeze, followed by long-term cap on rent increases at two per cent every two years.'

I table this motion. To conclude, this bill is an embarrassment and Queenslanders deserve more.

*Tabled paper:* Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, amendment to second reading motion moved by Dr Amy MacMahon MP [375](#).

**Ms McMILLAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I seek your guidance and advice. My understanding is that there is a bill before the House that relates to the amendments the member for South Brisbane has proposed. As the chair of this committee, I do recall writing a report about this. I seek your advice as to whether what the member for South Brisbane is doing is appropriate.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will just take some advice on that. Member for South Brisbane, we are going to seek some further advice on that. We will hold proceedings for the moment.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a further point of order. While you are getting some advice, I would also question whether now is the appropriate time for the amendments being proposed by the member for South Brisbane.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, member; that is the advice we are seeking.

### **Deputy Speaker's Ruling, Amendment Out of Order**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for South Brisbane, on advice I am ruling that amendment out of order.