




Speech By
Amy MacMahon

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Residential Tenancies, Mould

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (2.42 pm): Queensland's housing crisis extends beyond a lack of affordable housing. A combination of a climate crisis and dismal rental standards is leading many everyday Queenslanders to suffer a health crisis, with outbreaks of mould. Gold Coast renter Christine Butler launched an e-petition in August last year calling on the government to raise the standards for mould prevention and removal in rental homes. Chrissie's home was engulfed by toxic mould, which spread to her furniture and belongings. Chrissie's doctor advised that the property was unsafe after her family suffered serious health impacts. What is more, Chrissie and her family ended up out of pocket by \$12,000 for mould testing, additional rental costs and loss of damaged goods and furniture. Unsurprisingly, the landlord refused to take responsibility for the mould outbreak.

Sadly, Chrissie's story is not unique. Last week a renter in Woolloongabba shared her story with me. Over the last two years, this renter and her housemate have been through two floods, a leaky roof, a broken air conditioner and a massive mould infestation. As their landlord does not reply to their requests for maintenance, these two renters have been paying out of their own pockets for repair and maintenance. To make things worse, the property manager has been pushing to increase the rent by 33 per cent—despite no repairs or upgrades to the property. These housemates now have to decide: do they accept an extreme rent increase, or do they risk getting evicted in a cutthroat rental market?

The sheer power imbalance that renters face when asking for a safe home is mind-boggling. I note that there are no requirements for a real estate agent to alert prospective tenants if a property has flooded in the past. This puts people, their homes, their lives and their possessions at risk. No wonder Chrissie's petition, calling for stronger rental standards that protect renters from mould outbreaks, gathered nearly 3,000 signatures.

It is promising to see that as of October last year, following Chrissie's media advocacy and the launch of her petition, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation now requires landlords to ensure a property is 'free of vermin, damp and mould'. Unfortunately, these new regulations will not apply to new tenancies until September this year and all tenancies in September next year. I would argue that this needs to be set out in the legislation. Mould of a structural nature or mould relating to flooding must be dealt with by the property owner.

Crucially, without real security for renters, even these regulations are largely meaningless. While landlords can still evict people at the end of a lease for no reason or evict people with an extreme rent increase, tenants remain at the mercy of real estate agents and property investors and will continue to be forced to choose between enforcing their flimsy rights under this regulation and keeping a roof over their heads. I close by sincerely thanking Chrissie Butler and her family for advocating so fiercely for the right of renters to feel safe in their homes.