




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2023

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION
(EXPENDITURE CAPS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (12.19 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill, including amendments to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008. On 28 March 2023, the Premier announced that the Queensland government will limit rent increase frequency to once a year as an immediate action to stabilise rents in the private rental market. Today we will move amendments to enact that change and bring Queensland into line with other Australian jurisdictions. We know there is unprecedented pressure on the housing sector right now and we recognise that tenancy laws in Queensland must be modernised to keep pace with the changing rental landscape. With more than one-third of Queensland households renting, it is vital that renters get a fair go. As we seek to modernise Queensland's tenancy laws, we are determined to strike a fair balance that protects the interests of both renters and rental property owners.

Acting quickly to limit rent increases is a critical government response to community concerns about the impact of current market conditions and cost-of-living pressures on renting households in Queensland. Taking this action will build on the Queensland government's record to improve protections in Queensland's private rental market through strong, balanced rental law reform. In addition to protecting the rights of renters and rental property owners, our rental law reform agenda seeks to improve stability in the rental market.

The amendments to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, through the Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill 2022, will limit the frequency of rent increases from every six months to once a year for residential tenancies and rooming accommodation agreements. This annual limit on rent increases will apply to all new and existing tenancies from 1 July 2023 onwards. The limit on frequency of increases will continue to apply across tenancy agreements where at least one of the renters remains in the same rental property under a subsequent agreement. The transition arrangements clarify that any terms of a tenancy agreement in place on 1 July 2023 that provide for a rent increase after 1 July 2023 will not be valid unless there has been at least 12 months since the last rent increase. Practically speaking, this means that if a renter had their rent increased two months ago, in February, then their rent will not be allowed to increase again until February next year, 12 months after their last increase.

Property owners and managers who increase rent before the 12-months minimum period allowed between rent increases face a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units. This is an existing penalty under the RTRA Act. The new obligations introducing a minimum period before rent can be increased in rooming accommodation also carry a penalty. Rooming accommodation providers who increase rent before the minimum 12-month period will also face a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units. This is a new penalty and will help protect some of our most vulnerable renters.

Consequential amendments to other sections of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act are also necessary to give effect to and for the enforcement of the limit on frequency. This approach aims to stabilise rents by reducing the frequency of rent increases. It will mean stronger consumer protections for renters in a market constrained by housing supply challenges.

In addition to limiting the frequency of rent increases, there is a minor technical amendment to section 277 of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 to avoid confusion about when a residential tenancy agreement ends. This does not alter the operation of section 277 but is necessary to remove any doubt or confusion about the parties' obligations and operation of the section. As a consequence of these amendments, the long title of the act will need to be amended for accuracy and will include a reference to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009.

This government has shown its willingness to work with stakeholders to build a more sustainable housing market. The housing round table and housing summits that we have held have unlocked housing investment and policy reform options with a strong focus on delivering more fairness for Queensland renters. I acknowledge all of those who have been working on this bill, particularly those in my department, with regards to ensuring that we are moving as quickly as possible to support renters right now. We will continue to work with the housing sector to ensure that renters get a fair go in Queensland. I support the bill.