




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; MANUFACTURED HOMES (RESIDENTIAL
PARKS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (7.50 pm): I rise to address the cognate debate on the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Amendment Bill. As many others have said at the outset, the LNP and I support renters. I am, as you have heard ad nauseam, the father of five children. At the present they all still reside at home. I have high aspirations for them. I hope that one day they can aspire to home ownership but I suspect, like all of us, they may have to make a start as renters within the rental market, so I will always support efforts to make sure that as renters they get a fair go.

It is very much a balancing act, because without landlords you do not have renters; indeed, without renters you do not have landlords, so you have to make sure it is finely balanced. I would also point out that you need things like good planning laws, critical infrastructure and a few other things to make sure there is a supply so that people like my kids have places they can move into, whether as home owners or as renters. At the moment, the fact that I still have living under my roof a 23-year-old carpenter, a 21-year-old university student and a 19-year-old in their gap year suggests that on the Sunshine Coast our market is not in the right place, and it may not be for many years to come.

I mentioned that it is important to keep that balance. I fear that we may have already tipped that too far in favour of the renter. I will use an anecdotal story to illustrate that. I take quite a lot of offence at what the Greens members of this chamber often refer to as wealthy landlords. Not all owners of investment properties are wealthy by any stretch of the imagination. I think particularly of my parents. My parents are not upper class. They worked most of their lives to scrape into the middle class and then worked their way into the middle class quite solidly. When we moved back to Queensland some 35 years ago, between them they had spent a combined total of 50 years working in the aged care sector. They have done it tough: they put four kids through school, they made sure they provided for us and sent us on our way.

As they neared their retirement years they decided to make an investment, something that would give them an additional return on top of their superannuation and their pension payments. They did not buy a property in New Farm, Ascot or Hamilton. They bought an investment property in Morayfield, a couple of minutes up the road from where they live in Burpengary. They were good landlords. They worked hard to ensure they were responsible and provided all the maintenance and ensured everything was kept shipshape. They were also very understanding when at various times their renters were not able to make payments and came to an agreement through the real estate to ensure those renters could stay on.

Sadly, after the last lot of legislation that we passed in 2022 they realised that things were just getting a little bit too hard to continue to be landlords, so they sold the property. In one way it was great because aspirational first home buyers, such as I was talking about earlier, purchased their first home.

That is great. That is wonderful, but it has also taken a property out of the rental market. We heard some statistics earlier on, and please do not quote me, but I understand we have seen a reduction of some 20,000 rental properties in Queensland. You cannot keep doing that and expect people to find the housing they require.

As I said, I fear that the last tranche of legislation may have tipped that scale a little bit too far, and I am concerned we may be going even further here again tonight. Others have gone into some detail, but let me briefly touch on the unintended consequences. There is the potential that we will see a further reduction in the rental pool available for renters looking for housing. There is the potential that we will see steeper rent increases. We also fear this may limit the choice for how tenants structure their rental payments. I said at the outset that we want to support renters. We are not going to oppose this, but we will be watching very closely how this is implemented and how it is received within the rental market and whether it does have any of those unintended consequences we have listed.

In the time remaining I want to return to the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Amendment Bill. Like others, I am very fortunate to have a number of these in the electorate of Glass House: the Twin Cedars Village outside of Beerburrum and the Living Gems Village in Maleny. We have a very large new one coming on the outskirts of Beerwah. We are not sure when the opening date is for that. It seems to still be a fair way off. Just on the edge of the electorate at Palmwoods we now have two: the more established Palmwoods Tropical Village and the recently opened GemLife. They are very attractive to a certain buyer. I am shocked to admit that I am now in the over-50 category and could potentially move into one of those lifestyle villages—apart from the fact that I still have five children living at home and they would not be welcome, so maybe that is the way we get around it. No, I do not think that is me yet.

In the same way I mentioned that we need to find the balance in terms of landlords and renters, we also need to find the balance between site owners and park owners. You cannot have a site owner unless you have a park to own a site in; therefore, you need people who are willing to make investments in establishing these villages. Equally, a park owner is not going to get a return on their investment if you do not keep your site owners happy, so it is a case of finding that finely tuned balance.

I know there are some amendments in this legislation that will look to achieve that, but there is one that I particularly want to raise as a concern, which is that we will now be capping site rental increases to the higher of CPI or 3.5 per cent. I know others have said it, but I need to repeat it: many of the people living in these villages are pensioners. Their pensions are capped to CPI. If you get a situation where CPI is less than 3.5 per cent, they will be disadvantaged. They will have a net increase in their site rent based on their living expenses and their income, so that is a concern.

The Greens just suggested that we do something similar in the broader rental market. I think that would just be catastrophic. You would see property owners leave the market in droves. I am pleased to see that the Labor Party agreed with the LNP and voted that down.

Like others, I think this reform in manufactured homes and residential parks has been a long time coming. It has involved a lot of consultation. Obviously there are a lot of people who live in these homes and villages. They have had a lot of input. I know they had greater expectations than what we are seeing in this legislation. There are missed opportunities around things like conflict resolution, financial transparency and how both site owners and park owners conduct themselves in their negotiations with each other and ongoing. Like the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, we know there are very good things in this, and we will therefore support it. We do put a place marker out there to say we think there are things that need to be monitored and there is potentially further work required.

I will finish my contribution with an acknowledgment that addressing these balancing acts between renters and landlords and park owners and site owners is really only tinkering on the margins of addressing our housing availability and affordability crisis. I briefly touched on supply. That is a critical matter that needs to be addressed if we are to ensure people like my five children will ultimately one day be either home owners or renters.

I mentioned briefly in our debate earlier this evening the disastrous news that AV Jennings has pulled out of their development in Caboolture West, citing investment uncertainty and infrastructure costs. I commend Mayor Peter Flannery of the City of Moreton Bay for calling out the fact that it is all well and good to have housing targets and it is all well and good to have growth areas, but if we do not get the critical infrastructure like water, sewerage and roads then we are not going to make these affordable. We are not going to make them a wise investment decision for developers, and in the end it is potential aspirant home owners who will miss out. We will never fix our housing crisis if we do not address those matters.