




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.18 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate with a feeling of deep disappointment in the case of the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Amendment Bill 2024 and a sense of I am not quite sure what in relation to the latest government imposed changes for private rental investors contained in the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Some years ago, a retired Emerald resident approached me for help. His mother had passed away at the great age of 91. He was the executor of her will but had been unable to resolve the estate or her modest bequest to family members.

Like many working Queenslanders, on reaching her retirement years his mother was searching for a residential retirement option that was affordable but which would also provide her with safety, independence and a way to preserve the financial value of her home. She purchased a manufactured home in a residential park in the Moreton Bay region and was happy there. This is an increasingly popular solution for many Queenslanders when they retire. The problem arose when they wanted to resell her home. The corporate owner of the park put up every obstacle one could think of. They were to be the sole selling agent, they had last approval of the advertising and they controlled inspections of the home and whether any open days could be held at all.

I sought the assistance of the Attorney-General, Yvette D'Ath, and I do thank the minister for her concern and the personal intervention of her staff in helping my constituent deal with a Sydney-based park owner to resolve the matter. Unfortunately, the entire time the park owner was blocking the resale he was still charging the deceased person's estate rent and other charges for maintenance and the enjoyment of shared spaces by the deceased. This woman had passed away and had not been seen enjoying the common spaces of her own home for many years. The problem played out over about three years and, by the time it was resolved, there was very little left in the estate to honour his nanna's modest bequest. This is an insult at the very least. Indeed, most reasonable people would view it as an evil scam played out on a deceased's relatives at the saddest of times.

When this bill was introduced into the House I was very hopeful that the issue might be completely resolved by closing every avenue for this type of behaviour by the park owners. It does try to address the issue by streamlining the sales process and introducing a scheme which requires the park owner to reduce site rent and to buy back vacant homes that remain unsold after 18 months. However, I note that it only reduces the rent, not cease charging it when the renter has passed away. If the park owner was unable to charge rent from the person who had passed away, we would no doubt see a highly motivated sales process. I note that they can continue charging this rent for 18 months.

Twiggy Forrest is not living in a manufactured homes park in the Greater Brisbane suburbs. The people living there are people of modest means. They have worked hard all of their lives and they seek a modest and safe retirement option and some modest bequest to leave their beloved families. A year

and a half will significantly reduce the already small legacy gifts to the family, grandchildren and favourite charities. Some 87 per cent of manufactured homes that will be covered by this bill are in corporate owned residential parks containing only manufactured homes—no caravans or cabins. These are clearly residential parks, not a tourism venture. Furthermore, for the park owners, business is clearly booming. Six corporate operators, each owning nine or more residential parks, account for almost 40 per cent of all parks or 60 per cent of all such homes in Queensland. This concentration of ownership is expected to continue with just five operators responsible for over 75 per cent of all new developments. This is very unwise.

All in all, this long-awaited bill is a disappointment. It has missed an opportunity to genuinely modernise the laws governing manufactured homes in residential parks in a way that is consistent with fair and proper treatment of home owners. This bill's existence demonstrates the fact that the Labor government is aware of these problems but is taking a half-hearted approach to the financial accountability, transparency, conflict resolution and corporate conduct of these park owners.

The other bill in this cognate debate introduces more rental reforms to an already fatigued sector. I said in my introduction that I am baffled to even see this bill brought on for debate. We have a major and unfolding rental crisis right across the state. This affects an estimated 1.5 million people. Private property owners house some 95 per cent of these people in private rentals. These property owners are mainly working Queenslanders seeking to build a retirement nest egg. They are teachers, police officers, nurses, fire, clerks and small business owners—and the vast bulk of them only have one investment property. In other words, they are reliant on their own jobs to put food on the table. They are not living off huge rent rolls from multiple properties.

Since introducing the so-called stage 1 rental reforms in 2021, we have all seen the continuing reports of a mass exodus of private rental properties from the rental pool. At the 2022 Housing Summit, the then deputy premier expressed his own bewilderment that 20,000 rental properties had disappeared from the private rental market. That is not baffling to anyone else. Everyone can draw a connection between the state government's so-called reforms and the exit by mum-and-dad investors, and that is before we even look at the impact on new rentals entering the market. I have it on good authority that in Emerald, a town heavily reliant on rentals to fill its workforce requirements, there is not one new residential rental property under construction—not one. This is becoming a serious constraint on the town's productivity in one of the most productive parts of Queensland.

The bill we are debating today represents the fifth tranche of reforms to Queensland's rental laws in as many years. Together, those so-called reforms have created a serious imbalance between the rights of the property owner and the rights of the tenant. In many ways this latest bill is possibly the most unfair of all. The very people Labor says it is protecting—that is, the Queenslanders who rent—will be seriously hurt by these reforms. That is why this fifth bill is absolutely reckless and ill advised. When these reforms started, my Emerald office received a call from a gentleman in Western Australia who rang to say that he was selling his Emerald rental house and taking his money back to WA. We need to have people investing in towns like Emerald and building rental properties so they can be rented out so we can get a workforce out there to take up the jobs that we need to keep this state going. Between the Labor government's rental regulations and reforms, the thought bubble about land taxes, what he saw as inflated valuations and local government rating arrangements that explicitly disadvantage investment in rental properties, he wanted to get out of the Queensland market as fast as he could go.

There are so many damaging aspects to this bill which in a truncated debate I will not have time to specifically address, but I believe that among the most damaging we must include amendments to allow renters to modify and personalise their rental property with both fixtures and structural alterations. The bill will establish a head of power for a framework to be prescribed by regulation to agree to property modifications. In essence, this debate is not even able to address what will actually be put in place. It will not come before the Queensland parliament. There are changes around bond processes which will make it harder for property owners to claim against bonds. There are changes around fees and charges such as the landlord having to provide a fee-free method for the renter to pay rent and an obligation to advise the renter of any financial benefits the property owner or the property manager receives. Will this include tax deductions for mortgage offsets against one's house or capital gains in a self-managed super fund?

Then there are the rent control amendments. Unfortunately, the banks are not required to cap the interest rates on loans for private investment that provides a property to the rental pool. All in all, this bill will damage Queensland's rental pool and make things even harder during this housing crisis. The Premier need only look to his own policies when the rental pool shrinks even further and private rental properties go from being the most common form of rental arrangement to a nearly extinct category.