




Speech By  
**Linus Power**

**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (7.09 pm): I rise to speak on both the bills, but I am particularly proud to speak in support of the manufactured homes bill. I love—I really mean that—representing the great residents of Greenbank Gardens, Claremont Resort, Chambers Pines and Opal and Amber by Living Gems in Logan Village. Over the years residential park residents have brought up a variety of issues with me. One of the most important is the huge increases in site rents that could simply blindside residents, upsetting their plans for a stable, secure and safe retirement. I was invited to speak about these issues at a packed community hall at Claremont Resort and I also spoke to many other residents about these issues. People were passionate, they were direct and a little angry. Frankly, I agree with them. Many elderly couples are downsizing and they are seeking certainty and community, and they look to us to keep them financially secure.

Recently, larger corporations have taken over what were often family run parks and I think some of them have taken advantage to cleverly push the boundaries of market rent reviews. Some of these parks were old enough to have their roots as caravan parks. At that time there was little regulation over rents simply because the caravan park residents—or at least enough of them—could relatively easily vote with their feet; they could pack up and move to a caravan park with better rates. At least they had that credible threat to do so and that kept the rates lower as, of course, a park owner earns nothing on an empty caravan park site. Now almost all of these manufactured homes, although they are on a plot that is perhaps not much bigger than a caravan site, are built—and some people would say this is the way they are designed—to be impossible to move.

These homes are not in any way caravans. They can be very spacious, comfortable and, in some cases, luxurious. This means that downsizing seniors make a major capital investment into their manufactured home and soon they can actually feel trapped in that place, trapped in that investment. This means there is a distinct imbalance. Residents can buy into the strong sales pitches, be wowed by the newly built pool or bowling green and have the slick salesman gloss over the issues of long-term costs. As I said, these seniors felt they were buying into security where their costs would be controlled so they could enjoy a secure retirement. However, we saw these extreme rent increases and an abuse of the market rent review process.

This bill restores more financial security to residents and indeed a measure of dignity by limiting rent increases to either the consumer price index or 3.5 per cent, meaning that next year's family budget will not have the extreme blow that hurts our park residents. Speaking to residents, we recognised that many residents are pensioners or part pensioners. Because the Commonwealth pension is linked to the consumer price index, if there is a higher CPI, the pension will increase in parallel. That provides certainty to seniors in our residential parks and a fair return to park owners.

Many park owners and managers do the right thing by residents. We know that a community works best when they work together. However, just like most things in human nature, sometimes this is just not the case. This can be especially daunting after a resident moves into a nursing home or, even more sadly, is deceased. In these cases distressed sons and daughters or other family members are left to deal with the sale of their parents' manufactured home. Of course, there is no incentive for the park to facilitate that sale; they still receive the site rent even though the house is empty. No-one is driving on the roads or using the bowling green or the hall, but they will receive all of the site rent. I have heard that when a park is still expanding there are even incentives to do the opposite as sales of brand new houses make money for park owners and older houses do not.

The member for Gregory spoke of limitations on advertising and holding open houses being placed on home owners, making it even harder. I have heard the same stories including park owners saying the home had to be sold through the park owner's sales office. I spoke to one gentleman whose father was in a home and he was trying to sell it to give his father financial security. His father was quite distressed that he wanted to hand over what limited capital he had, but the park was refusing to participate. I asked them for a meeting. It was actually a park outside my electorate. I asked for a meeting. They did not respond. I asked for another meeting. Finally, we set up a meeting. When I spoke to the gentleman and said, 'Are we still doing the meeting next week?', he said, 'No. As soon as we confirmed the meeting, they rang, made an offer and concluded the sale.' They would rather stall than conclude the sale or actually talk to an MP about the complex issues involved. That is why we are acting.

As sales fail to go through, families' limited savings dwindle and the families and former residents are in distress. That is why we are introducing a new buyback and site rent reduction scheme for families in this distressing situation. It will limit their losses but, more importantly, reduce rents on sites by 25 per cent after they have been uninhabited for a certain time. That really incentivises the park to work for sales because after 18 months, if the park owner has not found a buyer, they must buy the home at an agreed price. We want to see park owners with the same motivation to help owners get a fair price for their home and these site rent reductions to continue so this provision gets it right. I note that this is distinct; these are where people have a significant capital investment that is trapped on a particular site and a particular site rental agreement. They are very different from other agreements like caravan parks or normal renters where, although it is difficult, there is a credible threat that you can walk away.

I want to thank some of the MPs who really worked hard on this. I can see the member for Hervey Bay, who I know is passionate about this. I speak particularly of the chair, Chris Whiting. We would have spoken almost weekly about our campaign to do this. He was the one who really kept it on track. I also thank the member for Waterford and, of course, the member for Macalister, Mel McMahon, as well as Shane King. This is a passion project for people like ourselves. We have sat down at kitchen tables, at halls and at senior events. Collectively, we can feel proud that we have made a difference and we are providing certainty and security for future residents. I also want to mention the housing minister, who took this issue seriously and pushed it through the department after we made those representations.

Now I will be going to these houses with a new conversation. I will be speaking to them about embedded networks and about the \$1,300 that two Labor governments are delivering to reduce their cost of living. I will continue to keep fighting for the cost of living for manufactured housing residents because they are great communities; they are great people. I am extraordinarily proud to be able to stand up for them in this place for a better deal.