




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2024

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Residential Tenancies

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.44 pm): Renters in Queensland are angry. Under Labor and LNP governments it seems that rents will continue to skyrocket, renters will continue to be kicked out at the end of their lease for no reason, and more Queenslanders will be pushed into homelessness. The Premier talks about tackling the housing crisis, but he is not willing to put a limit on how much property investors can jack up the rent and he is not willing to ban property investors from evicting renters for no reason at the end of each lease. Is it any wonder Queensland renters are so mad? Until Labor bans property investors from evicting renters for no reason at the end of a lease and bans investors from raising rent by unlimited amounts, renters will be hesitant to enforce what little rights they have for fear they—

Mr BROWN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Please take your seat, member for Maiwar, while I take the member for Capalaba's point of order.

Mr BROWN: I know that the member for Maiwar is not in this House very often, but before lunchtime the Minister for Housing introduced a bill into parliament on the very issue he is raising in his private member's statement.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice.

Mr BERKMAN: I am happy to respond to the point of order if that would assist.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is okay. I will just take some advice from the Clerk. Member, I will get you to explain how this is not related to the bill that was introduced into the House prior to lunch.

Mr BERKMAN: Certainly. The speech I am delivering talks about the government's failure to prevent no-grounds evictions and—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock.

Mr BERKMAN:—its failure to address landlords' ability to increase rents by unlimited amounts. Neither of those are issues that were addressed in any way by the bills that were introduced by the housing minister this morning.

Mr KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The matters being raised in the member's contribution could be considered to be alternative policy approaches and therefore are captured in terms of anticipation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are just having a decent scrutiny of the bill that was introduced. Member, I will allow you to continue your contribution. I just caution that I may pull you up, depending on what we can find in the bill. I will allow you to continue for the moment.

Mr BERKMAN: It is fascinating to see that members are so sensitive about issues their government is not willing to touch. Every renter in Queensland knows that if they want their lease renewed—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member, that is skating close to a reflection on the chair. I will ask you to contribute to the debate.

Mr BERKMAN: My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not intend to reflect on you in any way.

Renters know that if they want to stay in their house and not see their rents jacked up then they need to keep their mouths shut. Right now, renters are denied lease renewals for simply speaking up about their existing basic rights. Because renters do not have the wealth and income to pull together a deposit and somehow outbid all of those investors using tax breaks to drive up house prices, they have literally no way of knowing how long they will be able to stay in their home.

As long as landlords are allowed to increase rents by unlimited amounts or kick renters out at the end of their lease with no good reason, there will be no such thing as secure housing for Queensland renters. Not a single renter knows whether they will be able to stay near friends and community, near their work and community clubs. Because half of all renting households live with their children, a massive number of Queenslanders do not even know if they will be able to keep sending their children to the same school once their lease is up.

Labor and the LNP stand by laws that have seen rents rise at truly obscene rates and have seen countless renters kicked out at the end of a fixed-term lease without any good reason and in retaliation for renters sticking up for their legal rights. When the Greens say 'no-grounds evictions', we actually mean it. We mean a guaranteed right to stay—a guaranteed right to lease renewal unless there is an actual reason to evict the tenant. No-grounds evictions go straight to the core of the power imbalance between property investors and renters in Australia. The government's claims that they have ended no-grounds evictions are complete rubbish. As long as no-grounds evictions remain while unlimited rent increases remain, all other renters' rights become compromised. What is the point of minimum standards in rental properties or any other rights for tenants if a renter seeking to enforce their rights can have their tenancy ended in retaliation or their rent jacked up by hundreds of dollars so they simply cannot afford to stay in the property?