




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (6.43 pm): We have another cognate debate and this time it is two very relevant bills. The Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Amendment Bill proposes to increase certainty for the owners of homes in parks across Queensland. This is a popular form of retirement living; however, it should be available for all ages due to their affordability. I have advocated for years for governments to develop these in my own community in addition to the ones we have. The fact that there is still nowhere for manufactured accommodation, including tiny homes, has me scratching my head, especially with the former House with No Steps site vacant five years on. I continue to call on the government to utilise in the interim this site until affordable projects are realised in my community. We have workers consistently sleeping in cars throughout our streets and they need somewhere to go.

Community living has great benefits, as well as challenges, including laws that regulate the relationships between residents and between residents and the park operator. There have been calls for reforms to these laws for many years. After much advocacy, a public consultation process occurred which included seeking feedback on an issues paper and a consultation regulatory impact statement last year. Home owners and their representatives—such as the Queensland Manufactured Home Owners Association and the Palm Lake Resort Hervey Bay Homeowners Association—supported aspects of the bill, although they suggested parts could go further, such as registration to provide home owners with proof of ownership and preventing retirement village style fees. Park owners and industry representatives—such as the Caravan Parks Association of Queensland and the Urban Development Institute of Australia—largely opposed provisions in the bill due to their potential impact on the future viability of residential parks. We need to look after both the owners and the operators as we actually need more of these parks, not fewer.

The biggest change in the bill and the one of greatest interest to my constituents is how rents are set. The amendments ban the use of market rent reviews to increase rents and it caps annual rent increases. Understandably, this was supported by home owners and opposed by park operators, including AHC and Ingenia, who argued that the market should set the price for rents. The department responded that the limits on rent increases provide greater predictability as it prevents large increases in high-inflation environments. Overall, the bill introduces many beneficial changes to the regulation of manufactured home parks. Even if it does not contain everything that was sought, it is really good progress in this space.

The Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill introduces a range of much requested changes to Queensland rental laws with the objective of strengthening renters' rights and making it easier to resolve disputes between tenants and landlords. The following provisions are included in the bill: a portable rental bond scheme; a sector code of conduct; the banning of rental bidding, which I think we are all really pleased to see an end to; and

improvements to privacy. Views on the bill were diverse, with general support from renters and representatives, such as Tenants Queensland and Q Shelter. However, they also identified changes that they believe should have been included, such as: an annual cap on rent increases, which I have just mentioned for manufactured homes and it is interesting that it has not transgressed across to here; ending evictions with no grounds, which is really important, especially for our community, where after COVID renters were being displaced because Dutch auctions were being held because rents spiralled—some things happened that should never have happened; and improving energy efficiency in rental properties. This could occur if our advocacy regarding environmental upgrade agreements is realised so that owners can install those energy-capturing solar systems et cetera via loans that they can repay through their rates over a period of years.

The Property Council of Australia submitted that the bill undermines investor confidence which could result in a further decline in rental accommodation. The Real Estate Institute of Queensland opposed many of the changes in the bill for similar reasons, while supporting others. Ultimately, has anyone analysed whether these changes will lead to fewer rentals? Alternatively, if investors leave the accommodation market, will that lead to more houses to purchase, leading to a stabilisation of housing prices and rents?

There is an argument here for Treasury to model the housing market so that we can at least estimate how all of the different levers affect the market to make better policy and decisions in this chamber. As I am not an economist and we cannot find this information, I can only revert to personal experience. Yes, when I was very young, I was a renter; also, later on in my life, though this was many years ago, I was a landlord. The reality is that you look after your good tenants. I would have no issues with these changes if I was still a landlord. However, as I experienced, when you have a bad tenant—and, yes, there are those—the trauma to the owner is extensive and expensive with little power to evict those who refuse to pay their rent whilst trashing your house.

On the other side, there are good landlords who are then blanketed by rules and regulations brought in to address the bad landlords. Ultimately, these all add to the cost that is then passed onto the tenant. It is a vicious cycle; however, one outside the scope of this bill.

Finally, I would like to thank the minister, departmental staff, the committee and secretariat and all who contributed to the review of the bill. I commend them both to the House.