



Speech By  
**Hon. Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (6.02 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Amendment Bill 2013, which was introduced to the House by the Minister for Housing and Public Works, the honourable member for Everton, on 10 September 2013. Covering the areas of housing, building and disabilities, the objectives of this bill are threefold and it amends the following: the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008; the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991; and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009, which specifically will provide rights of access to accommodation for those who rely on guide, hearing and assistance dogs.

In July this year, the Minister for Housing announced the Newman government's plan for social housing, the Housing 2020 Strategy. I congratulate the minister for developing a flexible and sustainable approach to the housing system through this significant reform—reform that Labor governments refused to undertake. One of the key strategy objectives of this bill is to transfer 90 per cent of tenancies from direct government management to management by a community housing provider. Unlike those opposite, this government has always understood that our job is to be the enabler, not the doer. This applies across an array of sectors, including that of public housing.

This bill is a significant step in the right direction and, importantly, will not create any discrepancies between the levels of service tenants receive. Proposed amendments will enable a community housing provider to capture Commonwealth rent assistance, levy a bond or service charges and will require tenants who are transferred to provide relevant information. Importantly, those whose tenancies are transferred under these changes will notice no difference. There will be no paperwork and for all intents and purposes it will be an outwardly seamless transition. Community housing organisations are already permitted to levy bonds and, under this bill, the government will also have the ability to apply a bond. There are, of course, safeguards in place through a measured roll-out period and assistance through bond loans and the like for tenants.

These changes address the core of the Housing 2020 Strategy through a focus on preparing public tenants for the private market, in a concerted and measured effort to encourage an independent future. As the Minister for Housing noted in his introductory speech, there are some who will always require the government's support and this is not disputed. However, it is also important to address and assist those who are confronted with a barrier to the private market that can be overcome with our help. I am pleased to say this bill is one of the many steps in working towards that outcome.

Over the past year, this government has made significant inroads in curbing antisocial behaviour in public housing and elsewhere. I want to place on record my acknowledgement that the majority of social housing tenants do the right thing and respect their properties. However, it is the

minority who abuse their rights and, in doing so, treat all Queensland taxpayers with absolute contempt. Unlike Labor, this government refuses to turn a blind eye and we make no apologies for implementing tough penalties for those who act with such disregard for the roof over their heads. This bill strengthens the ability to act on unsociable behaviour. Where the lessor reasonably believes the premises are being used for illegal activity, the tenancies may be eroded. Further changes will grant the department and community housing providers the ability to act swiftly and decisively where persistent belligerent behaviour is occurring.

Recent statistics indicate that there have been three first strikes in the Currumbin electorate from 1 July through to the end of September 2013. Whilst it is very pleasing to see a low number of seriously bad tenants, there is still strong demand for housing assistance in my electorate. As at 31 August of this year, there were a total of 437 applications for long-term housing in the Currumbin electorate. Notably, 80 of those fell in the very high needs segment, with 181 in the high-needs segment. It is figures such as those that reiterate the significance of the Housing 2020 Strategy, with an aim to deliver an additional 12,000 homes by 2020. I welcome this objective and the changes encompassed under this strategy.

The second aspect of this bill is focused on facilitating commercial development and major government projects, and promoting quicker resolutions of building disputes. Specifically, amendments will enable a business or individual who is not a licensed building contractor to engage a licensed contractor to undertake commercial building work. Further, changes will see the Queensland Building Services Authority have the ability to apply to QCAT for an order to allow it to continue to act in a building dispute while proceedings are afoot. This will have a direct result in faster resolutions of building disputes, which is a win for all involved.

Finally, the bill makes amendments to support the rights of people with a disability to access accommodation without discrimination. The Queensland government has prioritised the tourism industry as one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy, setting the ambitious goal to double overnight visitor expenditure from \$15 billion to \$30 billion by 2020. The government recognises that Queensland boasts diverse tourism destinations that offer unique and engaging experiences. This bill makes it easier for all visitors to experience our great tourism offerings, without fear of discrimination. Industry sources inform me that there is an adequate supply of accessible accommodation on offer. Accessible accommodation rooms tend to be placed in locations near lift wells and are fitted out differently from standard hotel rooms. Admittedly, not everyone with a disability requires an accessible room. Whilst demand is expected to increase over time, it is very interesting to note that those rooms are currently occupied by people with a disability only about 30 per cent of the time.

The bill introduces a new offence where a person in control of a place of accommodation refuses to rent accommodation to an accompanied handler. Amendments also make it an offence for accommodation providers to impose additional charges, to separate a visitor from their guide, hearing or assistance dog or to refuse entry to part of the accommodation due to their guide, hearing or assistance dog. Importantly, this bill removes the current unfair process requiring a complainant to pursue a complaint through the Anti-Discrimination Commission. This often imposes significant time and financial costs on the complainant. The bill provides an additional avenue for pursuing complaints that is likely to be less time consuming and costly, given the government and not the complainant will investigate and potentially prosecute the events.

In conclusion, the amendments to the public housing, building and disability sectors are progressive and welcome changes. I congratulate the minister for this timely piece of legislation.