

## Legislative Council

### Hansard

Wednesday 5 November 2025

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

*[excerpt...]*

#### **RESIDENTIAL TENANCY AMENDMENT (PETS) BILL 2025 (NO.40)**

#### **Second Reading**

[5.53 p.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I have some relatively brief remarks on this bill. I'm rising to support the bill. It is certainly an interesting situation. I'm probably the person in the Chamber who is most comprehensively affected by this bill, as I am a renter who has pets and had to seek permission to have them. I'm also a landlord who has provided permission for my tenants to have pets.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Perfect balance.

**Ms WEBB** - Indeed. Fundamentally, though, regardless of my personal circumstances, which really aren't relevant to the principles of this, I support the principle that tenants should have a right to have pets as the default position. There should be reasonable circumstances under which that might be deemed to be unsuitable in certain properties and certain pets and certain circumstances. I believe the bill largely does well with that balance, and to ensure that the eventualities that might need to be considered can be, so that nobody is unduly disadvantaged or impinged upon by what's in this bill.

We are certainly coming to this later than we should have, given where other jurisdictions are up to. We're coming to this at a time where we should have done a comprehensive review of our residential tenancy act far earlier than now. I know it's theoretically coming up, and to begin and be done next year, but that's far too late. I was in the community sector the last time we did some substantial review and work on the Residential Tenancy Act 1997. At that time, we did make some good progress on a few issues, and many things were just kicked down the road. Here we are, probably more than 10 years later, I would think, still waiting for another comprehensive review of the act.

It would be good to have a range of other matters in that act addressed, which I believe are actively required to assist with the dire situation of our private rental market at the moment. It's a case of utter market failure to have a vacancy rate of well under 1 per cent. That is catastrophic market failure. In any discussion we are having about rights of tenants or rights of landlords, and what that power balance looks like, in the context of catastrophic failure of the market it is incredibly difficult to fully realise the rights of tenants, full stop. It doesn't matter what we have on paper and in statute, like this bill. It doesn't matter what we have on other aspects of tenants' rights on paper right now. In practice, in the context of catastrophic market failure, those rights cannot be protected and asserted. It's as simple as that.

While of course I support this bill and want to see it put in place, I believe that in practice, because of that context of an utter market failure, it's not going to help tenants too

much right now, because of the level of competition with a vacancy rate under 1 per cent. We have so much work to do when we comprehensively review the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 next year. I know the minister, I believe, will genuinely be interested in engaging on that work. There are some hard choices that need to be made if we want to make genuine progress. Thus far, under other ministers of this government, there has been absolutely no appetite for that. I'm genuinely optimistic and hopeful that this minister may have an appetite to engage genuinely on some of these things that will make tangible difference, to put us in a different setting than we are now. When I say that, I'm talking about things that are not just related to what's in our Residential Tenancy Act 1997, but what we do about things like short stay and what we do about things that are utterly eroding our private rental market.

Back to this bill: I know we're getting to the end of our day, and I don't want to take too long. I'm not going to go into blow-by-blow commentary on the matters in the bill, other than to say that I think it provides a very good list of grounds for reasonable refusal. I have an amendment in that space that I believe does pick up on an issue that has been raised with me that has come up in other jurisdictions. That's why I'm looking to pop it into our bill as a way to ensure there's clarity for people around the matter of nature conservation -

**Ms O'Connor** - Covenants.

**Ms WEBB** - Covenants - that is the word I was looking for. Thank you, member for Hobart. I'm hopeful, similarly, to the member for Launceston. I thought I'd made good progress with the government previously when we were thinking about this in the last parliament, that there was a receptivity there. It may be there's not so much a receptivity there, but I don't believe it contravenes the government's intent with this bill. I believe, if anything, the government thinks it's already covered, but I hope we can discuss it briefly, if and when we reach that stage of Committee, and members will consider my amendment as being clarifying and not obstructive.

I will add my thoughts, as others have done, on the importance of this from the perspective of quality of life for members of our community who are renters in the private rental market. There are 49,000 Tasmanian households in our private rental market, we were informed at the briefing today. That's how many active rental bonds there are in our system. That's a lot of households, and the difference now is that while in the past for many people renting would be a phase of their housing tenure across a lifespan - people would rent as young people coming into early adulthood while they prepared to buy - that is less and less the common situation for members of our community. What we are facing now is whole generations of people coming behind us - all of us in this place - whole generations coming through who are facing what looks like a lifetime of rental.

Certainly, I've had conversations in my household with younger members of the household who face the fact that they won't be able to buy a house, or even think about buying a house, until we die, as parents, and leave something to them. That's a shocking situation. It's not an equitable community. It's a community based on inherited wealth in our enabling secure accommodation in terms of ownership of property, and that's awful.

That's not only the responsibility of a state government; there's a whole ecosystem of housing policy across every level of government that is needed to address that. In that context when we talk about what we're doing to promote tenants' rights and ensure that people who are renting can have a full quality of life in the same way homeowners can have, the matter of pets is a really significant one. It's no small thing to have a member of your family who is a furry one - a dog or a cat, or hopefully not a ferret but possibly a ferret, guinea pigs, fish, birds, whatever they might be, pets are really special. They do add to our life. They're important

companions at a time that loneliness is a significant issue in our community. They can provide a great deal of security and safety for people who are vulnerable in our community as well. Quite frankly, I endorse the fact that we have a right to have pets. I'm pleased that this bill is going to be, at least on paper, helping to secure that right more broadly in our community.

One question I did have, and I've probably answered it for myself, but let's get it into the summing up so we can have it for clarity on the record. The bill comes into effect on proclamation. I presume that's for the benefit of either creating regs that need to sit under it or systems that need to be put in place for how applications are made and paperwork and that sort of thing. Maybe the government might like to take the opportunity to clarify why it's proclamation rather than Royal Assent. With that, I will just say I support the bill.