

**Legislative Council  
Hansard  
Wednesday 19 August 2026**

*[excerpt...]*

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

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCY AMENDMENT (SAFETY MODIFICATIONS)  
BILL 2025 (No. 59)**

**Second Reading**

[12.13 p.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak on this Residential Tenancy Amendment (Safety Modifications) Bill 2025 in absolute support of the quite straightforward, sensible, much needed, and probably somewhat tardily brought to this place, amendments that it puts forward. It makes entire sense to empower tenants to be able to make minor modifications that relate to making their home safer, particularly for children, when it comes to tethering furniture.

I appreciate the contribution made by the member for Mersey and the questions he raised there around electronic devices like large TVs and whether that's captured here. It's important to have clarity on that. I think we'd all be well aware of the potential there for there still to be accidents if that's not included. I think it's useful to have a nice clear precedent set here in what the government's brought forward that shows how sensible it is to make sure the balance is right between tenants and what they need to do to make sure their home is appropriate for them, and safe, secure and accessible, and landlords, who are the owners of the properties.

Mr President, I thank the member for Hobart for her contribution, she spoke about this in some detail. I won't go to as much detail, but I speak along similar lines and in support of what the member for Hobart put forward - that if we're doing it in respect to minor safety modifications here in this bill, of course the exact same principles apply to those other areas around security, around accessibility. For Tasmanian tenants who are in a horrifically disempowered situation in our current catastrophic failure of the private rental market in Tasmania, for vulnerable tenants it's incredibly difficult to ensure that they are able to live in a secure, accessible, appropriate home while they are tenants and have the current restrictions that they face when it comes to something as basic as an accessibility aid of some sort that would in fact make their lives immeasurably safer and easier but they can't potentially do, certainly if the landlord, for no particularly good reason, tells them they can't.

That's absolutely a nonsense, and in the market we have now, the private rental market, a catastrophic failure of a functional market - and it's worth repeating this every time we speak about this issue that touches into our private tenancy market. Mr President, a functional private rental market has a vacancy rate of three per cent. That's absolutely categorically factual. What we have and have had for a long, long time, is a vacancy rate of less than half a percent or thereabouts. Certainly, nowhere near a functional vacancy rate. What that means is that as a tenant, you live in fear. You live in fear every day. If you are lucky enough to be in a private rental tenancy, you are absolutely petrified that it's going to come to an end, because if it does and you'll be having to find a new tenancy, you will be really facing an uphill battle.

Particularly if you present anything that might be challenging to a new landlord to contemplate - because landlords hold all the power in this situation, Mr President. With the vacancy rate so catastrophically low, landlords absolutely have their pick of tenants, and they do not need to contemplate anything that might be a little bit challenging when it comes to a tenant, whether that means the person has a disability that might need to have adjustments made, whether the person - it may even be as simple as that they have a number of children or they have particular pets or they have whatever. Of course, the landlord can't discriminate against them on that basis, but the landlord has all the choice in the world when they know that they're going to have such a large array of people applying, they can take their pick.

I'm not saying that to cast aspersions on landlords. In fact, Mr President, I am a landlord and have been for a while. I'm also a renter and I know that when I turn up to put an application in for a rental, I'm probably going to be pretty high near the top of the list to be accepted for it because of the position I hold because of the income I'm privileged enough to have, et cetera, et cetera. But for so many Tasmanians - and I can think right now of young people that I know. A group of young 19 year olds trying their best to begin their adult life and move out of home and into independence, which in our day Mr President, was not necessarily difficult to do from the perspective of there being properties available that we could afford to rent even on a government payment that we might be getting. That's not the case now. Any young group of Tasmanians who are trying to take that big step into adult life and independence away from their family will find it very difficult to be chosen as tenants.

In that context of the absolute failure of our private rental market, the absolute disempowering of tenants who live in fear of maybe having their tenancy come to an end and then not be renewed, having to find a new home, having to face the prospect of homelessness. We know many Tasmanians are in fact exiting the private rental market into homelessness at the moment. We should be looking for every way we can to rebalance the power dynamics here, to recognise sensible, appropriate, particularly safety and security and accessibility measures that can be put in place and made available to tenants to at least address amenity issues in their home so that they don't have to jump through every hoop under the sun, or be at risk of being turned down for particular sorts of modifications or changes that are just being rejected on no reasonable basis, but because the landlord doesn't want them to do it and doesn't like it. On that, I'm really pleased that the member for Hobart is bringing amendments for us to consider. I think it will be interesting for us to address them should the bill go through to committee stage and have a conversation about that. It's disappointing to think that they might be dismissed out of hand without due consideration. When I look at those amendments, I see a lot of thought has gone into ensuring appropriate protections are there from both sides of the equation.

I encourage members to have a good look at those amendments and don't just dismiss them outright. I think it's a reasonable step. I also think we're inevitably on a path towards where the amendments take us. We will get there. It's a shame to think that we don't take the earliest opportunity to get there, which would be in this bill, that there would be any suggestion we should be waiting for an overarching review of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* - which is well overdue and needed - but when it comes to a bill that already presents us with a very straightforward, sensible model for safety modifications, to also contemplate similar other allowance for modifications on the basis of accessibility or security, et cetera, is entirely appropriate and I think merits attention and support.

On that, I will be supporting this bill. I'm also inclined to consider and support the amendments that have been foreshadowed and provided to us ahead of time to have a look at. There was one question I was going to ask on a matter that came up during briefings, and I will

put it on the record here so the government could - it's a very simple one - provide a little response to. It relates to when the tenant is moving out, which is clause 6 of the bill, which in turn relates to 54A - Safety modifications permitted, and it's subsection 6:

A tenant may remove any safety modification that the tenant has made to the premises unless the removal is likely to cause permanent damage to the premises.

For clarity: is it in fact up to the tenant to choose whether to remove the safety modification or not? Or are they obliged to attempt to remove it if it's not going to permanently damage the premises? It seems like, the way that's worded, it's an optional consideration in the first instance as to whether the tenant needs to remove any of the modifications that they've made as per this bill. That's, I hope, a fairly straightforward little clarification just to make here on the floor of the Chamber.

If it's not able to be answered in the Leader's summing up, we can certainly address it when we get to the committee stage. Either way, I'm happy for that to occur.

On that, I support the bill.