

Legislative Council
Hansard
Tuesday 18 August 2026

[excerpt...]

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

MOTION

Referral of Short Stay Levy Bill 2026 to Government Administration Committee A

[8.28 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the motion to send the short-stay levy bill to committee. Thank you to the member for Murchison for bringing it to this place for consideration. It's an interesting one, I think, for us to consider. It has been fascinating listening to contributions. Thank you to members for sharing their thoughts on it because it's an interesting insight into how people see the balance of things in terms of our role and how we go about it and what resources we have available, et cetera.

There are a few comments I would like to add on the record on my view on the prospect of sending the bill to a committee. First of all, I think most members here would agree that I'm fairly consistent in sharing my views about the housing catastrophe that we face in this state. The absolute, horrific urgency of addressing that. We have Tasmanians utterly unable to be housed in secure, affordable accommodations. We have lives on hold because of that. We have children being impacted every day in terms of their ability to attend school, to be well and healthy, to form family relationships that are appropriate and meaningful because without a home that's secure and affordable to be in, you can't do those things. We have adults who are in supreme risk for health conditions, for all sorts of other wellbeing conditions because they are without homes and have no prospect of getting one, or are, in fact, living daily with the sword of Damocles over their heads that they will lose their housing. It's absolutely appalling.

There's no question in my mind that we have a housing catastrophe and we should be and the government should be doing everything in its power to address that. Clearly they aren't even close to that, not even remotely close to that. And on the matter of short-stay accommodation, this government persistently, for the whole tenure it has had since 2014, has persistently refused to do anything meaningful about regulation.

In terms of us choosing how to best get the balance right between the benefits of having this form of accommodation in our state as part of our tourism offerings and all of that side of consideration, against the housing needs of our state and the needs of our communities - and that's a very diverse question. Different communities in different regions of the state, split across urban and regional are all different. What are our communities' needs in terms of the balance of those things?

This government has utterly failed to do that; has pigheadedly refused to, to be honest. That is unfathomable to me and this bill does nothing about that. This is not a regulation bill of short-stay. It does nothing to pick up the responsibility of addressing this head on. I have grave reservations about the bill because I don't think it delivers anything clear to us, but we're not here to debate the bill. We're here to debate whether it goes to a committee.

I just want to be clear that my thinking on the bill is in light of my extreme concern about our housing situation. I don't have anything to declare in terms of a short-stay property. I don't own one. I haven't ever owned one. I do think on the matter of conflicts of interest, while we do have a register of interest that's put up each year on the public record, I think it is also important in these debates to be nice and upfront about conflicts of interest.

I always admired the previous member for Hobart, Bob Valentine. Second time I've mentioned him in this place today, but he would always, members will recall who were here with him, whenever we spoke about something that he felt he needed to declare something about, he would do so to an extent I think that was probably unnecessary. We would talk about education in some sort of sense, and he'd always make sure he'd say that his wife was a teacher working in the public education system. Now that's, I think probably taking things to a level that's unnecessary. However, there's a principle there that I think is valuable and I think the more we practised it here the better, particularly if people do have a direct pecuniary interest of some sort in the matter at hand before us. But back to the point here.

I think it's really important to understand that this prospect of sending the bill to a committee is a really standard part of the work of a chamber of parliament, particularly a chamber of review, actually standard practice, standard work. The fact that we are busy with committee work and that we're stretched thin because we're a small chamber, of course, it's a consideration we have in mind, but it shouldn't take away from the fact that we're here to do our work and this is a core piece of work for a chamber of the parliament. It also isn't doing the government's policy works. Committee work isn't policy work often, particularly when it's in terms of reviewing a bill. We review a bill as a standard piece of parliamentary work in order to better inform the Chamber and to have a deeper dive into a bill that the Chamber feels it needs more information about and more consideration of beyond what can be delivered in the context of our usual bill scrutiny process. That's standard and normal and expected and the fact that our parliament and this Chamber doesn't do it as often as might be expected probably is partly a function of it being a small Chamber, but I think it's something that there should be a greater appetite for, not a lesser appetite.

There are various things that can be an outcome of conducting an inquiry into a bill on behalf of the Chamber by whichever committee it might get sent to. You could have a bill be inquired upon and then brought back to this Chamber and the recommendation could be that the Chamber passes it as is, or the recommendation could be that the Chamber doesn't pass it at all. Or the recommendation could be the Chamber passes the bill with amendments and the committee provides some recommendations about amendments, because the process can also look at potential amendments that have been proposed and be able to provide an informed view back to the Chamber from the committee.

We literally look to committees to do this sort of parliamentary work all the time as the Chamber. It's the reason we have a subordinate legislation committee. Previously, of course, in times past, all subordinate legislation would come through the Chamber without being considered first, and it would be on the Chamber. That's a huge power of work for the Chamber to do as a whole. Thus it became standard for subordinate legislation committees to be put in place in order to undertake that work more thoroughly on behalf of the whole Chamber and come back to the Chamber with a recommendation about whether the regulations should be passed through or perhaps shouldn't be. Standard parliamentary work.

I did look at some of the suggestions from some of the people who have contacted us on this matter about the idea that we could just pass the legislation and then put a review clause in the legislation so that we might look at it later to see if it delivered what it was supposed to

deliver. The problem with that being, of course, there's absolutely no clarity about what the government actually expects it to deliver, necessarily. There's no nice clear outcomes specifically built in that we've all been made aware of. There are thoughts about what it might or might not do, but if we were to review it later to see whether it 'worked', I think that we'd be in a pretty difficult space to do that.

I'm also not persuaded by arguments about certain sectors needing certainty now about this. It has been around since 2024, since the election commitment. Yes, time has passed since then. It's up to any government of the day to decide when it wants to bring forward attempts to action election commitments made. This government has dragged its feet to do this. Some more time passing for the purpose of an inquiry and a review by committee I don't think is here or there in terms of certainty. The main focus for this Chamber should be its own certainty and should be how to best furnish the right information so that it can do what it considers to be its job in relation to reviewing this particular piece of legislation, as we do with all legislation.

There are a few thoughts there. I support the motion because if there's a selection of members who feel that there's a strong reason to put a bill to a committee for an inquiry, that's an indication that it's going to be a pretty messy time of it in the Chamber, particularly if there's amendments to be considered. I'd rather we were well informed about that process. I also am entirely unconvinced that this bill will do anything meaningful to address our housing situation in this state, so I'm not in a crushing rush to see this bill pushed through for that reason. It simply does not have any certainty about delivering on that front.

I support the member for Murchison's motion. I suspect that that's probably not the side of the debate that's going to prevail here in the Chamber, but it's important for us to have considered it. It's always a good conversation when we discuss our role here and how we each see the importance of different aspects of that role. I'm pleased to have had a chance to do that. Thank you to the member for Murchison. I'll be supporting.