



Speech by

Hon. R. SCHWARTEN

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard 6 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Housing Rental Rates

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: I want to draw to the attention of honourable members and tenants of public housing in Queensland an issue raised with me by the member for Nudgee, who received a complaint recently from a public housing tenant who had been telephoned by a salesperson claiming to be employed by a large home building firm. The tenant was asked whether he was interested in buying a home through the building company. The tenant told the caller he was not interested because he was in public rental and intended to remain so. The caller then told the tenant that all public housing rental rates would soon rise to market rates and asked whether the tenant had received a letter from the Department of Housing to that effect. It is suggested that this line of approach was taken in an effort to have the tenant reconsider his decision not to become a home buyer.

The facts of the matter are that the department's rent policy is reviewed from time to time, but no such review is under way at present. The department has not initiated any communications with tenants regarding changes in rents. Rent levels are based on a percentage of income—between 21% and 25%—up to a maximum of the market rent of an individual property. Only slightly more than 5% of public housing tenants pay market rental.

This morning I phoned the principal of the building company involved, who assured me that the company did not endorse such misleading statements. Nevertheless, I take this opportunity to warn all tenants of public housing not to be taken in by such approaches. I also want to warn building companies—and telemarketers in general—that I will not tolerate misrepresentation of Department of Housing policies in an effort to make a quick and easy sale.

In the interests of fairness, on this occasion I do not intend to name the company involved in the recent complaint, since telephone canvassers do not always reflect the attitude and standards of management. However, persistent complaints of this nature will easily change my mind on that score. There should be no doubt about that.
