



Speech by

BILL FELDMAN

MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

Hansard 13 April 2000

STATE HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (3.52 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the State Housing Amendment Bill and at this point I indicate the support of the City Country Alliance, Queensland for the Bill introduced by the honourable member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing.

I also indicate at this stage my support for Queensland Housing in the Caboolture and Redcliffe areas and, in particular, the support I receive from there, especially from Mick Shearer at Caboolture who deals with most of the complaints. It is probably due to his tenacity that I do not bother the Minister more often than I do. I think I have only had to bother the Minister a couple of times, once in relation to some water in someone's yard at one stage and once when a Catholic Sister of Mercy had a parking problem. I think we sorted that problem out. I think she has probably moved on from that area where she was.

Mr Lucas: Was mercy shown?

Mr FELDMAN: Mercy was shown by the Minister on that occasion. We were trying to sort out the parking problem but I think the Sister actually moved. The problem resolved itself in one hit. Some problems cannot be solved, but I know that Diane Roper at Redcliffe does a fantastic job in dealing with them.

I will touch on Compton Village a bit later on in my speech. I know Brett Fyfe does a marvellous job there dealing with the problems with the elderly in respect of that partnership between Queensland Housing and Compton Village.

I am aware that recent indicators show that the percentage of Queenslanders actually buying their homes is falling and has been falling over the past number of years. I believe that the Queensland level of new home ownership is lower than the national average. I know there are many factors that affect that as both older and younger people take that step towards considering home ownership.

Employment is one of the major factors in proving to financial institutions that a person has a stable enough job and a credit rating such that the institution will be prepared to accept the risk. Unfortunately, a lot of financial institutions will not take that risk. However, with employment also comes the risk of people locking themselves into a home in an area where the chances of securing employment cannot be maintained. With the advent of job descriptions such as casual, permanent casual, permanent part time and part time, is it any wonder that financial institutions are not willing to take that risk and gamble on the reliability of clients making their required loan repayments or indeed getting together that deposit that will make home ownership a possibility.

The pending GST and the increased prices of new homes and the inability of young families to stretch their dollar even further is another factor in the downturn of new home ownership and the trend towards the merry-go-round of renting and seeking more and more public housing.

I, like the majority of members, know that home ownership is a privilege, and it should be the right of everyone in our society who wishes to extend himself or herself and work hard to achieve that privilege. Owning a home is a hope that also brings with it the heartache of responsibility that comes with the worry over the stretched financial position, looking after the parts of the home that are

deteriorating, maintaining a garden and all those other sorts of things that make the place really feel like it is a home.

While I do not know the effect this Bill will have on lifting the level of home ownership, I feel that its introduction will provide a service and fulfil a role that will assist in securing home ownership for some honest and hard-working battlers out there in our community. Caboolture is no exception. It is a very hard-working area, one for the battlers. Some of those people would not otherwise have had the opportunity of home ownership if it were not for the Minister's introduction of this Bill.

I grew up in the bush on farms and on share farming properties because my parents actually loved the bush.

Mr Lucas: They were Labor voters then.

Mr FELDMAN: Very much so! I think they are changing now. I think a couple of Bills the Government introduced earlier might have swayed them to another party. By today's standards some of the homes that I grew up in would be called shacks. However, as the member for Lytton pointed out, I did have a set of very loving parents who provided not just a house but a home for me to live in. Wooden floors with gaps and cool breezes in the winter whistling up through the floorboards were not strange experiences for me. It just meant an extra Wagga on the bed at night to keep warm.

My wife Gail's experiences while growing up were not that different. She actually grew up in the heart of Inala in Crocus Street, not too far away from the Minister for State Development and his family. She went to school with Jim and I think they actually had a few reminiscences at the opening of Parliament

Mr Hegarty: She graduated, though, didn't she?

Mr FELDMAN: She did; she matriculated. She is very grateful for that time and for her experiences in growing up in Inala that have made her the person she is today.

My in-laws, Bill and Gwenn Smith, took the opportunity to purchase their dwelling at 48 Crocus Street, Inala. It was actually the pride of the street. I am sure the member for Woodridge would acknowledge that, from looking at the condition of houses when walking or driving down those streets, an observer could say, "Renting, buying, renting, buying." Those who were buying had pride in their houses because they knew the value of actually having a roof over their heads. They were given the opportunity to really extend themselves and they really took pride in their home. They are typical of the battlers today. Bill worked for the basic wage at English Electric. Until the age of about 48 he used to ride his pushbike from Inala out to Evans Road until other employment took him away from the area, when they actually rented out their Inala property, which by that stage they owned. It was a shame to see it deteriorate from the immaculate piece of real estate that it was. They, too, made their house a home. Gail and the rest of her family are very proud of their heritage, how they grew up and how their parents made their home.

Children are born, families grow up and eventually people die within the walls of these houses that become homes. One of the aspects of the Bill that pleases me a great deal is the concept of existing tenants being able to purchase their rental dwellings—dwellings that have over many years and sometimes decades become the home of the tenant rather than just rental accommodation. I understand that some 200 or so homes will be made available for sale each year. Have areas and individual homes been earmarked?

Mr Schwarten: It's all over the State.

Mr FELDMAN: Is it?

I have concerns in respect of people who do not want to move—those who have made their house their home; as the member for Woodridge said, there has been a bit of scaremongering about this—having their homes sold out from under them. Most of the people in those places have treated them as their homes—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. On the other hand, it would be heartbreaking if a tenant wishes to purchase his home but cannot do so because it is earmarked for sale. I know that some people would like to be on that program in order to purchase their home. That may eventuate.

I am also concerned to know what would happen if a tenant who has rented premises for some time decides to buy the home through the scheme and then, for whatever reason, defaults on the loan. What would happen in that instance? Would he still be able to live in the place he called home? This happens all the time to battlers; they extend themselves to buy the home they love and, all of a sudden, things just go wrong.

Mr Schwarten: The worse case scenario—they revert back to rental.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. That has allayed my fears and those of a number of other people, too. I think they would be appreciative of that. As I said, a home is a home. It would be a

shame to see someone suffer us because of the mere fact that they had defaulted on a loan after they had extended themselves.

I shared some of my concerns with the Minister for State Development when we were speaking about rental accommodation. Battlers tend to extend themselves. We both grew up in somewhat humble circumstances in large families. We all bunked in together. In my instance, there was the boys' room and the girls' room. The kids were double-bunked, and mum had a room. Most places had only two or three bedrooms. I slept on the sleepout of an old Queenslander for most of my life.

Not so long ago, Gail and I reminisced when we took a drive through Inala. It was a shame to see so many vacant houses. Sadly, people feel that they should be entitled to a four bedroom or five bedroom home, and they do not take the opportunity to grow up as a family. I cannot see anything wrong with a couple of people bunking in the same room together. It is a shame to see so many unoccupied houses. Today public housing tenants expect a room apiece for children, and they want four or five bedroom houses. It is a shame to leave two and three bedroom homes unoccupied while the waiting list grows. I suppose sometimes the location is a problem. Because some may think suburbs have a bad name or that a street might have some sort of problem, people do not want to live in these places. Leaving houses languishing unoccupied is a shame. Some people are crying out for that sort of accommodation. When the State is prepared to put a roof over people's head and is doing the right thing, to demand more is a bit rich.

Putting those issues aside, I know that the Bill will provide Housing Queensland with the flexibility to offer a broad range of housing loans to members of our community by inserting the new interest rate setting provisions in the State Housing Act 1945. One issue in respect of which I wish to voice concern is crisis and emergency housing in Caboolture. The Minister has probably heard this story from everybody. This is an area that needs to be addressed. The community hospices, such as Caboolture Community Care, Family Haven, the Neighbourhood Centre and Breakthrough Housing, are all crying out for accommodation. The community is experiencing domestic violence and other problems. Given the growing population and the increased proximity of residents, this accommodation is a real need that I will be highlighting to the Minister on many occasions to come.

I thank the Minister for the Community Urban Renewal Program in the "Waytown" area. Back in the Hinze era the area was developed by Usher of Usher Paints. They whacked in as much housing as they could. It was very close together. As a policeman, I chased a young fellow across the roofs of those houses; they were that close together. I jumped from roof to roof on two-storey houses. I was almost sprinting right down the street across the roofs of the houses. That sort of development is not right.

Mr Lucas: I heard you were a bit of a flatfoot.

Mr FELDMAN: I was a very quick flatfoot.

Mr Schwarten: A fleetfoot.

Mr FELDMAN: I was a fleetfooted flatfoot.

Mr Lucas: It would be good to say that it was the fall of the house of Usher—Usher Paints.

Mr FELDMAN: I think that might have been the wish of a few people before he built that estate.

It is good to see that the Platypus Creek area is being redeveloped and that the profile of the area is being lifted. I think urban renewal is doing its best to give that area a lift and show that it is worth living in again. That is good to see.

I said I would touch again on Compton's Village. As other speakers have said, it is good to see Queensland Housing moving into the area of advocacy for the elderly. Eventually, I think Compton's Village will overcome a few of its hiccups. I encountered a few problems in relation to the set-up of the units. Some of the rooms are not set up to cater for the disabilities of the elderly residents. Some advocacy is needed so that in future those units better cater for the needs of the elderly. For example, tenants have raised their needs with me, such as handrails, wider door passages and so on. At the moment, Compton's Village is trying to come to terms with the needs of the elderly and work with them and help them. I do not think I have had to come to the Minister with any major problems there. I think that bodes well for the elderly there. The elderly see Caboolture and Bribie Island as a bit of a haven. The hospital and so on up there have done wonders for the area. Again, I commend the Bill to the House and thank the Minister for introducing it.
