



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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COMMONWEALTH/STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.04 p.m.): We on this side of the House have persistently heard and read the misleading comments from the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing surrounding the newly signed Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. The Minister has claimed publicly that the latest Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth will short-change Queensland by around \$37m because of the non-indexing of the agreement.

Let us look at the newly signed CSHA agreement—an agreement not reached by the coalition but an agreement negotiated and signed by the Beattie Government. Throughout the media and in this House during a ministerial statement on 9 March 1999 the Minister claimed that the State of Queensland was going to be financially disadvantaged to the tune of \$37m over the four-year term of this agreement because of the Commonwealth's unwillingness to index CSHA. If he had bothered to ask his departmental officers, he would have discovered that CSHA agreements have never been indexed since their inception back in 1945—a situation that existed under the Keating and Hawke Federal Labor Governments when the Goss Government Housing Ministers, including the member for Chatsworth, signed CSHA agreements. That is right; we have had the Minister bagging the Howard Government to whoever will listen, yet it is adopting the very same practices adopted by the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating Governments. In effect, he is bagging the Leader of the House, who has also signed earlier CSHA agreements which were not indexed.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. I have never stated any of the things he is suggesting. I find it offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr LAMING: I withdraw anything that the Minister finds offensive.

The Minister also accuses the Federal Government of not caring about homeless and disadvantaged people. How does the Minister explain the ever-increasing payments by the Commonwealth for rent assistance—a system that in effect partially removes the pressure on State housing authorities, including Queensland?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. Since I have been asked a question by the honourable member, I will answer that.

Mr LAMING: That is not a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! Does the Minister wish to have something withdrawn?

Mr SCHWARTEN: The question is about the removal of the \$60m from the Commonwealth/State housing arrangements.

Mr LAMING: In the past year up to the end of February the Commonwealth had made payments of rent assistance to about 243,700 Queenslanders for the price tag of approximately \$371m. But all of these arrangements aside, there is one simple fact that the Minister cannot run away from and that is this: it is his signature on the bottom of the agreement. It was the Minister who agreed to the Commonwealth's proposal and it is the Minister who is receiving over \$719m over the next four years.

But this is not the only issue about which the Minister is being less than truthful to the taxpayers of Queensland. One has only to look at his comments regarding the effect of the GST on the public housing program. The Minister has claimed publicly that the introduction of the GST will cost Housing Queensland about \$90m over the next three financial years, yet the Minister is only telling Queensland about his first bid. I am advised that the \$90m was only his starting point. After laying his bid on the table and having the other States seriously question his figures, the Minister showed the other States his modelling. I am advised that some of the figures that the Minister has included in this modelling are consistently higher than those used commonly by the other State Governments. So until the Minister makes his modelling public and allows it to undergo public scrutiny, the people of Queensland should be very wary of his claims. I am advised that the Minister's second bid to COAG was more in the order of \$70m. Was the \$20m that the Minister dropped from the bottom line just a figment of his imagination?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. The statement that we have somehow misconstrued those figures is offensive and incorrect, and I demand that it be withdrawn.

Mr LAMING: I withdraw what the Minister finds offensive.

One of the key issues that the Minister continually fails to tell Queenslanders about is the GST compensation specifically for housing authorities—the very same compensation package which would see Queensland compensated to the tune of \$60m over the next three years. I ask the Minister: is the apparent shortfall only \$10m over the next three years? But there is no shortfall, is there? What about the signed agreement that allows the State Government to leave in place and collect the revenue from stamp duty on unlisted securities until the year 2003-04? The Office of State Revenue advises that the State Government collected over \$5m last financial year from stamp duty on unlisted securities. So for the next three years one could assume that the State will collect around \$15m in revenue from the retention of stamp duty—\$15m additional cash for the State housing programs. We now see that what was possibly a \$10m shortfall is now in fact a \$5m windfall for the Minister and his department. What we have here is a Minister bagging the Federal Government—

Time expired.
