



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard 13 April 2000

STATE HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (2.56 p.m.): In hindsight, over the past 50 years the Queensland housing commission has made some very bad decisions in local communities. Nearly every large town in Queensland has ended up with large estates of public housing with a very high density of low-income families, and we are experiencing the problems associated with such estates today. However, the Minister and his department are obviously attempting to right the wrongs of the past with such initiatives as the Bill currently before the House, which will give some good incentives for people to purchase departmental properties.

Also, the Community Urban Renewal Program, which was established to look at crime prevention, has proven to be a great success in the Townsville suburb of Garbutt. The Community Urban Renewal Program has been successful in arranging partnerships between Queensland Housing, the police department and local councils to improve the standard of housing and the amenity of the neighbourhood through beautifying parks and streetscapes and in ensuring that streets are better lit to provide a safer environment for the public. In Townsville we have seen the suburb of Garbutt transformed into an attractive and desirable place to live. The residents have a safer, more comfortable environment in which to raise their children and the citizens of the area now view the suburb much more favourably. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister on his good work in this area.

However, Rasmussen, which is a suburb in the Upper Ross area of Thuringowa, is a totally different story. It has street upon street of Housing Queensland homes and has proven to be a hot spot for crime, domestic violence and truancy. My office has noticed a considerable drop in complaints from this area with the introduction of two Police Beats. However, the underlying density problem still exists, and the elderly members of this community are still afraid to venture out into the community and are virtually prisoners in their own homes. We still have gangs of children and teenagers roaming the streets at night, disturbing the neighbourhood, throwing rocks on roofs, littering and stealing.

Time has proven that grouping socially disadvantaged people together in a community such as this is a recipe for disaster. There is a very high indigenous population in Rasmussen, with a one in 50 adult indigenous custody rate as compared with the one in 500 custody rate for the adult population in total. This leads to a higher crime rate in the area and higher than average reoffending rates occurring in this segment of the community. Some 28% of young offenders are indigenous, yet they make up only 5% of the population. This problem needs special attention and these communities need support to assist in developing their own solutions. This area, more than anywhere else in the Townsville/Thuringowa region, needs to be targeted for upgrading.

The Department of Housing has been upgrading and selling houses in the Garbutt precinct to great effect. The mix of private and public housing is being realigned to reduce the density of public housing in the area with great success. I would urge the Minister to now consider the suburb of Rasmussen for inclusion in the Community Urban Renewal Program for the near future, as the problems being experienced there are not too dissimilar to those experienced in the Garbutt area prior to the commencement of its renewal program. I believe it is timely to make this request as the Minister's new Bill is an attempt to promote higher home ownership within the community. A renewal sales program, combined with this new initiative, should ensure the success of both.

The provision of secure, affordable housing provides parents with a more supportive environment for nurturing children and encourages the stability of the family unit. I believe that Housing Queensland is on the right track in assimilating lower income families into the general community, as this helps to build self-respect and reduces the feelings of social isolation and exclusion. I can see the good work done by Housing Queensland in the Townsville/Thuringowa region, and the introduction of this Bill as a further means of promoting home ownership within the community is to be applauded. This shows that the Minister and his staff are being innovative in their thinking towards providing housing solutions for the people of Queensland. I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to consider further expansion of the Community Urban Renewal Program into the Rasmussen area. Such a program, combined with this new initiative by the department, will not only inject much needed self-esteem into a currently neglected community but will also ensure that the aims and objectives of this new legislation have a greater chance of success.

I fully support this Bill, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister. Mike Mutzi in Townsville and members of the department there are absolutely excellent to work with. We are achieving great ends in Thuringowa.
