



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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STATE HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (5.42 p.m.): Briefly, I wish to speak to the State Housing Amendment Bill, which I fully support. One of the most empowering things we can do for people is give them the opportunity to own a home. That is especially the case for those people who might not have had a chance to own a home through the normal avenue, that is, banks and so on. A lot of people have no hope of ever raising the enormous deposit needed before the banks are willing to take a chance on them. I commend any Government that spends time on making sure that home ownership is made possible for the majority of people.

I have not had a chance to go through the details of the percentage rates, deposits and so on. However, I trust that the intentions of the Minister and the department in this realm are honest. Giving people the opportunity to buy a house, particularly in an area in which they may already be living, enables them to establish roots. By doing so we target some of the big issues in our community at the moment—giving people civic pride and the ability to look beyond next week. I suppose it is about giving them the sorts of roots, for example, that I grew up with. This allows them to take pride in the area from which they come. It gives them the opportunity to achieve bigger and better things for themselves.

However, one minor issue is raised with me time and time again, that is, the location of some of these houses. I am of two minds about this. I have had discussions with different people. My concern relates to housing commission houses, as I call them, in small towns. The job prospects of people moving through housing commission houses in small country towns are limited. Let us face it, there are not very many jobs in towns such as the town from which I come—Malanda—or Millaa Millaa and so forth. But I do not believe we should cluster housing commission houses in suburbs such as Woodridge or places such as Ipswich. That would limit those places and people's ability to find jobs in those areas. However, I believe that, if the Government is looking at establishing more housing commission houses or giving people the ability to buy and move into housing commission houses, it should be looking at some of our regional centres, such as Townsville and Cairns—and I know that is happening—and perhaps moving away from country towns. The problems of isolation in country towns are real. If people are already isolated and they do not have job prospects but they are buying a house, I think they are leading themselves into the position—

Mr Schwarten: They've put a fair few houses on the market in Atherton.

Mr NELSON: They have. Atherton is a growing regional centre.

Mr Schwarten: For exactly the same reasons you're saying. That's the reason for it.

Mr NELSON: I am referring to houses in places such as Millaa Millaa and Ravenshoe. Perhaps it would be a good move to sell off some of those houses and get them off the State register. How do I say this without being horrible?

Mr Schwarten: I know what you're saying. What you're saying is correct. Hughenden, Julia Creek—all those sorts of places, people don't want to live there. There are 300 vacant houses in Blackwater.

Mr NELSON: That is right. I know the Minister is targeting those areas. The point I am trying to make is that it is not that we do not want those people living in those towns. In most cases, people do not want to live in those towns. If they are pursuing work, study or other interests, they need regional

facilities nearby. I unreservedly support this Bill and I congratulate the Government on bringing it forward. As I said, the greatest thing we can do for people is to empower them through home ownership. Giving people a sense of ownership leads to many other benefits.
