



Speech by

DIANNE REILLY

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (6.57 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the very dire situation in relation to public housing and housing availability in general on the Gold Coast. Hardly a week goes by that my office does not receive a call from a constituent desperately seeking affordable housing, not only in the Mudgeeraba electorate but also anywhere on the Gold Coast. In fact, it is the single most common issue brought to my attention.

Affordable housing on the Gold Coast is disappearing, and reasonable rentals are as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth. The smaller hotels providing cheap, short-term accommodation are closing as they are being swallowed up by big tourism-driven hotel chains, caravan parks are closing or being revamped for budget tourists, and decent boarding houses and other options, particularly for low-income families, are almost non-existent. As a result, many thousands of people are facing homelessness, and with demand for affordable housing on the Gold Coast growing daily the situation is only going to get worse.

I lay the blame for this crisis solely at the feet of the federal government, which has chosen to pursue the policy of forcing low-income earners into the private rental market rather than putting money into building public housing. The federal government's rental subsidy scheme sounds fine in principle: 'Rent housing and apply for a subsidy to pay the rent'—if there is anything to rent and if you can actually find a rental!

Even if people can afford to rent, like the dual-income family that came to see me last week, if they have three teenage children they can forget it because their application is sure to be knocked back in favour of another, lower risk applicant. The family that came to see me, both working professional people who owned their own home and have sold it, need to rent for only six months while they build their new home. But somehow the unit complexes they were applying to, having answered an ad in the paper for a vacancy, kept telling them that actually they had no vacancy once they found out they had three teenage children.

That family is now pursuing that matter through the Anti-Discrimination Board. There is no chance of finding a four-bedroom house for that family, because they just simply are not there. In fact, most of the real estate agents in my area do not even deal with rentals anymore.

I return to the rental subsidy scheme. When people cannot find a rental house for under \$160 a week and they have two autistic children with special dietary needs and medical expenses, the subsidy just does not cut it. That is another scenario of a constituent in my electorate.

Currently, there are 4,600 people on the waiting list for public housing on the Gold Coast. The priority waiting list itself is 18 months long. It has its own priorities for people with chronic or mental illness who are at immediate risk of homelessness. What is the federal government doing? It is putting to the states an agreement which will cut more than \$174 million from Queensland's public housing budget.

So I am calling on my local federal members—the members for Moncrieff and McPherson, Steven Ciobo and Margaret May—to stand up and fight for the poor, the destitute, the low income earners, the battlers and, heaven forbid, the homeless and plead with Amanda Vanstone and John Howard to meet their obligations to the people of the Gold Coast and other areas of Queensland and put appropriate and real funding into public housing.