



Speech by

DON LIVINGSTONE

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

Hansard 1 August 2002

APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F]

Mr LIVINGSTONE (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.32 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the report of Estimates Committee F. I congratulate Ministers Bredhauer, Lucas and Schwarten on the tremendous job they do in their portfolios. It is not possible in five minutes to cover even just a few of those areas, so I will speak only about housing.

The new Leichhardt Community Centre has started in my electorate, thanks to the great work being done by Robert Schwarten and the Beattie government. Minister Schwarten has approved almost \$940,000 in funding to establish the new centre at Leichhardt. The centre is to be established as part of the community renewal activities in the Leichhardt area. Almost \$900,000 was provided to purchase the land and for design and construction costs for the centre. This funding also includes the cost of installing airconditioning and setting up a telephone network. A further \$26,000 was approved to landscape the surrounds of the centre and to establish a community gardening tool shed library that provides local residents with the opportunity to borrow tools to improve their gardens.

The new Leichhardt Community Centre will link local residents with local services, resources and information. It will also provide a much-needed and cost-effective venue for community organisations to meet, including the Leichhardt Community Group. Since community renewal began in Leichhardt, the state government has provided more than \$3 million for 37 projects to improve the appearance of and services in the local community.

The Community Renewal Program is a state government initiative coordinated by the Department of Housing and delivered in partnership with the local community, the Ipswich City Council and other state and non-government agencies. Certainly this whole program is a credit to this government. It has done a tremendous job in that area. We have received more than our share of funds—something that did not happen under the coalition government.

Although the Queensland government is doing a great job, it is a shame that the federal government is not able to pull its weight. Earlier, the member for Kallangur touched on some of the problems we are experiencing at a federal level. Queensland, in common with all other states and territories, faces rising demand for affordable housing. While the Beattie government has lifted spending on housing assistance, our efforts to expand the availability of affordable housing have been handicapped by the uncaring attitude at the federal level.

The major source of housing funding remains the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, yet through the agreement the Howard government is continuing to walk away from its responsibilities by cutting funds. It is a demonstrated fact that the Beattie government has been lifting funding while the Howard government has been doing the opposite.

Under the Borbidge government in 1997-98, Queensland Housing funding was \$330.4 million. This year, with Robert Schwarten as minister in the Beattie government, it is \$461.9 million. That is an increase of \$131.5 million, which is tremendous. Over the same period, the federal funding pool under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement—funds split amongst the states and territories—has gone from \$975 million in 1997-98 to \$938.5 million this year. That is a disgrace. The federal government should hang its head in shame.

While demand is increasing, the ability of the state government and housing groups to respond is being severely limited by funding cuts instigated by the Howard government. Demand for assistance from clients with a disability continues to grow. For example, in 1999-2000 the Department of Housing modified 2,432 public housing dwellings for clients with a disability—a 595 per cent increase on the 353 dwellings modified by the department eight years earlier.

In attempting to meet increased demand for accommodation for older persons, the Department of Housing now devotes almost 30 per cent of its construction program to seniors units. However, due to decreasing numbers of commencements—itsself a product of funding cuts from the federal government—in real terms this has seen a reduction from 149 units in 2000-01, which were built at a cost of \$22,206,000, to the forecast for this year of just 85 seniors units at a cost of \$13,246,000. That is an enormous reduction. The federal government should be ashamed of itself.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant growth in the private rental market but a decline in the supply of low-cost housing. There is a shrinking supply of low-rent housing in Queensland—a problem that also affects the other states and territories. The position is worsening as the private rental market focuses on high-rent priorities.

Time expired.