



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Hansard 27 May 2003

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AUTHORITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (5.28 p.m.): The Residential Tenancies and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 incorporates a number of worthwhile provisions to ensure the ongoing effectiveness and viability of the Queensland rental industry. One of the new provisions relates to the use of unclaimed bond moneys which have accumulated in the rental bond account managed by the Residential Tenancies Authority, or the RTA. As members are probably aware, the RTA administers a custodial rental bond service for people renting in Queensland. Prior to its establishment in December 1989 there were no laws or real controls about what happened to the rental bond moneys that tenants paid to lessors or agents. This put the tenants at a great disadvantage. With possession being nine tenths of the law, the bond money held by lessors does not always get back to the tenants at the end of their tenancy.

This is positive legislation that I know the minister—and indeed all of us on the government side of the House—support wholeheartedly. Sadly though, the minister's department has recently received correspondence from the present mayor of Maroochy council, who alleges that the management of the former Sunshine Coast Regional Group Apprentices Limited—SCRGAL—defrauded state governments of hundreds of thousands of dollars. She said that the alleged fraud happened during her time as SCRGAL chairperson. The claim centres around the Housing Industry Trade Training program—HITT—which was administered by the Department of Housing, or its project services branch. Mayor Grosse alleges that SCRGAL were falsifying records regarding the number of apprentices being employed on HITT funded projects. I understand that that letter was referred to the CMC. I commend the minister for doing that.

Sunshine Coast residents have clearly had enough. I believe that Mayor Grosse has been a party to improper actions that have allowed mismanagement, misappropriation, and utterly inappropriate goings-on that will bring about severe repercussions. Being a part of possible fraud against the state, against the same people whom Mayor Grosse is supposed to represent, is indeed reprehensible. At a federal government level, we have a member who gets drunk and gets thrown unceremoniously off Australia's national carrier, Qantas. Also, following a federal government Christmas party, that member finds himself so drunk that he cannot get out of a handicapped toilet. Sunshine Coast residents deserve far better. The mayor of Maroochy council must vacate the office that she holds. The people of the Sunshine Coast deserve far better. Maroochy councillors can no longer simply grandstand by moving votes of no confidence. I challenge any of those councillors to move to dissolve the present council, thereby allowing an administrator to be appointed immediately.

I commend the minister for referring the allegations of fraud to the CMC. As we realise, that is the right and appropriate thing to do. The CMC is well aware of the numerous shenanigans of the Maroochy council, not only involving the mayor but also other councillors. I commend the minister and all of those who worked in the preparation of the report of the special government backbench committee to inquire into the operations of tenancy databases. I commend the bill to the House.