



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 27 May 2003

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AUTHORITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (5.24 p.m.): The tenancy database or, as it is fearfully referred to in my electorate, TICA, has been responsible for some of the most unfair, inequitable practices which have contributed to many families in my electorate running out of options for what is the most basic human right—that of adequate housing. Unfortunately, there are people who quite simply have no sense of financial responsibility, who may have no idea how to care for a home or how to live in a community, who sadly make a database necessary. Sometimes these people can respond to a community worker assisting them, but sadly there are others who simply thumb their nose at society and will cause trouble wherever they go. Thus, the need for a tenancy database is established to protect property owners who have invested their funds to provide for our private rental market. However, it has been painfully obvious to me for many years that legislation was required to strike a balance and to offer protection to tenants in privately rented properties who do the right thing.

I would like to commend, first of all, Ms Linda Lavarch and her committee for their initial report and, secondly, the minister and his staff for bringing this legislation to the House. It is very timely. This morning my electorate officer was visited by a mother and her young daughter who are seeking housing. They are listed on TICA and have been living in a park for some weeks. I have dealt with hundreds of people over the years who have battled to find a roof over their heads while listed on TICA. I must say that I have to thank Tim, my local LJ Hooker man, for clearing many, many names from that list. He has been very, very kind to many of my constituents. He is a good man.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Next door to my office.

A government member: Thank you, Mr Hooker.

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT: Thank you, Mr Hooker.

As the federal government has turned its back on public housing we have seen a gradual increase in wait times. A three bedroom house in Woodridge now requires a wait of in excess of 12 months where once it was four to six weeks. There are many contributing factors involved, one of which is our urban and community renewal programs which have made the suburbs of Woodridge and Kingston far more desirable places to live. Families are recognising that Logan is a great place to raise their children. They enjoy the community spirit, the great services, the educational opportunities and so much more. This government has been eager to improve the lot of the people in my electorate.

It has often been a rude shock to people when they find that their names have been added to the tenancy database. I am pleased to see that the operators will now be required to notify a person in writing along with the details of the complaint, and that the person must be listed on the tenancy agreement and that, if in arrears, the amount must exceed the bond money held. Many of the complaints I have received have been for small amounts and often the names have remained listed long after the arrears were cleared. There was no safeguard. Now tenants will be able to apply to the tribunal within six months if they believe their listing is unfair. However, once the bill comes into vogue existing tenants who were listed previously will have 12 months to apply to the tribunal.

This legislation will truly even up the balance of power. The Small Claims Tribunal will be given powers to order amendments and, should the operator fail to comply, the RTA will be able to prosecute through the Magistrate's Court, with serious offences attracting fines of \$3,750, or 50 penalty units. I

believe it is fair that there be provision for a compensation order to be paid in cases where a person has suffered personally due to wrongful listing.

This legislation will bring about a great deal of positive feedback from my constituents, many of whom have felt powerless to fight to clear their names from such an all-powerful listing which has, in the past, had such a devastating effect on their way of life. I applaud these measures.