



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Ms STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (7.05 p.m.): I was alarmed several months ago when I uncovered data that showed that 30 per cent of people in Acacia Ridge in my local area earn little more than \$200 a week. This is 30 per cent of people living well below the poverty line. In fact, it is claimed that more than 13 per cent of Australians are living below the poverty line.

This is Anti-Poverty Week. It is an important time for us to reflect on the fact that far too many people are struggling to put a roof over their heads. Far too many people are struggling to pay food, education and health costs. Far too many people in my local area are going to bed tonight wondering if they will be able to score a job tomorrow.

Despite a strong period of economic growth nationally and within Queensland, the benefits of this growth are not being shared around widely enough. It is great news to hear in Queensland that we have an unemployment rate of 6.5 per cent—the best rate in many, many years. It is due to the determined efforts of the Beattie government and our Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program as well as our efforts through State Development to generate a lot of industry, jobs and growth in Queensland.

Getting a secure job is a key for people to move beyond poverty. The other important key is access to affordable housing. In this very important Anti-Poverty Week, I join the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, the Hon. Robert Swarten, in calling on the federal government to develop and commit to a national affordable housing access plan. We need a national, determined effort to make sure that all people can put a decent roof over their heads. We need a national, determined effort to make sure that the sons and daughters of our adult generation will also be able to own their own homes or afford a rental property. The way things are going, housing costs will rise well above the acceptable standard of 30 per cent of weekly income.

Under John Howard's policies, people are already facing rising health costs and rising education costs. Many will not be able to afford housing as well. We need a national plan that will bring some sense to the excesses of the federal government's first home owners grant and negative gearing tax arrangements on luxury investment properties. The federal government must act immediately to restore the capital funds for housing through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement to the states. That is one key action that needs to be taken immediately.

Let us reflect on these struggles of many people not only during Anti-Poverty Week; let us also take determined and committed action to do something about poverty. I can assure people in my local area, particularly in suburbs like Acacia Ridge, that I remain committed to ensuring that we continue to get our fair share of public housing. I am pleased that the minister has recently allocated a new project to Sunnybank Hills in my area. Let us act during Anti-Poverty Week. Let us not just think about the struggles people have; let us also take some determined action now.