



Speech by

Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Boarding House Program

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.20 am): The recent property boom in Queensland and right across Australia has seen many low-income people squeezed out of the private housing market in recent years. Many of the traditional forms of affordable housing provided in the private sector, such as boarding houses and caravan parks, have been lost and replaced with new residential developments pitched at middle- to high-income earners. This is a problem we have seen right down the coastline. The result has been a significant increase in single people needing housing assistance.

One of the initiatives of this government to meet this change in demand has been to move away from building detached housing and provide more units and boarding house style accommodation. As part of the record \$668 million allocation for housing in this year's state budget, \$40 million was allocated specifically to deliver the Boarding House Program. I am pleased to advise the House today that the department has been very active in expending this special allocation of funding by purchasing existing motels and boarding houses as well as land for future construction.

We have also commenced construction on a number of new projects including a \$4.9 million, 26-unit boarding house in Totness Street, Scarness, in the electorate of Hervey Bay. Preliminary construction work has also commenced on a \$4.9 million, 26-unit boarding house at 237 Government Road, Labrador, which is in the electorate of Southport.

Government members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take that interjection. I am also pleased to announce today that we are now under contract with a builder for the construction of a \$4.9 million, 24-unit boarding house at Glenlyon and William streets, Gladstone. As the member for Gladstone is aware, finding a suitable site for this boarding house has been a challenge. However, this site has the full support of the member for Gladstone, and I thank her for that. These are difficult things to do. Unfortunately, there is a lot of nimby when it comes to boarding houses. I do not know why that is so.

Construction is also due to commence on another complex in regional Queensland. I have just approved \$3.8 million to construct a 19-unit boarding house at Oak and Duke streets, Gympie, in the electorate of Gympie.

In the Burleigh electorate, the Department of Housing recently purchased a 21-bed motel in Burleigh Heads for just over \$2 million. I thank the honourable member for her very considerable support in that project. That was a very difficult project.

The department has also signed a contract for a 16-bed motel in Milton Street, Mackay, which should settle in the next couple of weeks. That site was shown to me by the member for Mackay, now the minister for primary industries, when I visited Mackay last time.

The Department of Housing has also purchased around 10 blocks of land, valued at more than \$10 million, across the state in places like Upper Mount Gravatt, Labrador, Maroochydore, Yeppoon,

Maryborough and Toowoomba. It is expected that around 250 new units of accommodation will be constructed on these sites.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, despite the Howard government's refusal to face up to its responsibility when it comes to housing, we are looking at new ways to deliver housing outcomes for low-income Queenslanders. I thank every single member whose projects have been nominated today because they have really gone out on a limb to support them. That is not easy to do in our electorates against some of the people who do not want these projects there.

After eight years and several promises from successive shadow housing ministers, the opposition still has not come up with a housing policy. This is because the Liberals and the Nationals do not care about housing. The record of their federal colleagues in Canberra says it all. The last time those opposite had control of the Treasury purse strings, the Borbidge government was the only state government in the country to take its contribution for the Howard government's deficit reduction strategy straight out of housing instead of sharing it across agencies.