



Speech by

Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Wednesday, 9 August 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Home Assist Secure

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.10 am): It is an unfortunate fact of life that many in the community have been separated from family and friends and do not have anyone to call on to help them do essential chores and maintenance around the home. When the new laws associated with the new safety requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Amendment Bill are in place, there will be an onus on the owners of detached houses and units to install at least one 12-month battery powered smoke alarm by 1 July next year.

I am pleased to announce that a Department of Housing fire safety initiative will be providing grants totalling \$800,000 to help clients of Home Assist Secure to have these smoke alarms fitted. Home Assist Secure aims to remove many of the difficulties experienced by people aged over 60 and anyone with a disability who wishes to remain living in their own home.

The program is an excellent service bringing help, support and advice to clients in both the city and the country. This initiative will enable Home Assist Secure providers across the state to help about 15,000 clients whom we expect to take advantage of this offer. These providers—church, charity, council and community groups Queensland-wide—will supply and install new smoke alarms where none exist, as well as replace batteries for existing smoke alarms where the battery has expired.

To be eligible for subsidised assistance from Home Assist Secure, clients must hold an Australian government pension or benefit and be unable to make use of alternative forms of assistance, such as Home and Community Care and Veterans' Affairs or a member of the homeowner's family—the sorts of people that the member for Chatsworth does not want in his electorate.

Mr Seeney: You don't like him, do you?

Mr SCHWARTEN: You have got that right.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please come back to the issue. Member for Callide, you are provoking the honourable minister.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I despise anybody who picks on underprivileged people, which the member opposite does.

Mr Caltabiano: Have a look at yourself, then, Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Chatsworth, I warn you under 253.

Mr SCHWARTEN: To help the maximum number of eligible households comply with the new legislation, the fire safety initiative will be available to all households eligible under Home Assist Secure, not only those eligible for subsidised assistance. This is a commendable initiative and one worthy of the support of all of the community—with the exception of the member for Chatsworth, of course.

Tabled paper: Copy of ministerial statement by Hon. R Swarten titled 'Fire Safety Initiative'.