



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR ALGERIE

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URBAN LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algerie—ALP) (11.50 am): Under the watch of the Howard federal government, housing stress has risen to unprecedented levels across Australia. Through the establishment of the Urban Land Development Authority proposed in this bill and the release of the Queensland state government's Housing Affordability Strategy, the Deputy Premier has taken decisive and comprehensive action to ease housing stress in Queensland. These strategies and this bill have my full support. Despite disturbing predictions that the majority of Australians born between 1978 and 1998, the so-called Y generation, will never have mortgages or own their own homes, despite the fact there is a growing rent generation of young people who already believe property ownership is permanently beyond their reach, the Howard government has not placed a high priority on housing policy or the supply of public housing.

The Howard government has never developed a comprehensive national housing policy. In contrast the Rudd Labor opposition has a comprehensive housing strategy. I say 'bring on the federal election'. I am getting pretty excited about the prospect of once again having a fair and decent Australia. The federal government has relied on a policy of providing private rent assistance to low-income earners while severely cutting capital funds to the states and territories through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. This free market approach has helped to line the pockets of property owners and has done very little at all to help people with housing stress.

It might be a nice try by Mr Howard and Mr Costello to pass the buck, but they cannot cover up their failure to tackle the housing problem. Their appalling unwillingness to tackle this problem is very evident. Many working families are now economically excluded from homeownership. A typical first homeowner now needs to service a \$2,500 per month mortgage. Household debt is higher than ever under John Howard and people should never forget that when they vote over the next weeks.

Of 260,000 families who earn less than \$30,000 per annum—and these are families John Howard has no idea about, and most of these people rent housing—47 per cent are in housing stress. In Queensland over 36,000 people are waiting on the public housing list, and this is largely due to the lack of capital funds coming from the Commonwealth government. The state's median house price has more than doubled from about \$160,000 in 2001 to \$325,000 as at December last year. The rate of mortgagee failure nationally has increased significantly in the last 12 months. In June 2006 the number of households falling behind on their home loan repayments was up 150 per cent from five years ago. The overall proportion of loans in arrears is still low—just one per cent—but that equates to at least 40,000 households nationally in trouble. If Mr Howard does not get it with all these facts available as evidence, he is certainly blinded by the reality of how many people are doing it tough in Australia. Hopefully, they will give him that message loud and clear over coming weeks.

This bill establishes the Urban Land Development Authority to, among many things, facilitate the availability of land for urban purposes and make available as quickly as possible more affordable housing options for low- to moderate-income households. It is a very determined and genuine effort to tackle the problem. The authority will have the power to acquire and consolidate land in urban development areas suitable for new housing and ensure it is moved quickly to the market. The authority will undertake

planning, management and delivery of strategic urban redevelopment sites. The authority will have carriage to improve the land, and plan and control development within the designated areas to deliver government policy in these areas, including, where appropriate, requiring developers to include public and affordable housing on these designated sites.

Selected communities will be master planned, with housing affordability as a core goal. I accept that many housing industry stakeholders will have concerns about the increasing powers assumed by the state government through this bill. I urge all stakeholders, however, to put aside vested interests and get on board to make housing more affordable. They all have children. We all have children. We have a responsibility to make sure that children into the future can afford to own their own home, can afford to pay rents, can afford to have a decent roof over their heads. Ensuring that housing remains affordable and accessible to all Australians, particularly the young and the vulnerable, is a responsibility the federal government must share in, not buck-pass to the states.

In Queensland we are not sitting around waiting for the federal government to deal with housing issues. In this state budget this year we have injected a record \$719 million boost for housing including a five-year funding injection from the Queensland growth fund for social housing, assisting more than 250,000 Queenslanders with a housing solution to better meet their needs. We are supporting private partnerships such as the Brisbane Housing Co. and the Gold Coast Housing Co. The Brisbane Housing Co., for example, has a proven track record in delivering many hundreds of affordable housing units at a development cost of around \$160,000 to \$180,000 per unit. I commend the minister for housing, Robert Swarten, for his support of these kinds of housing initiatives. We need much more of it.

This bill gives the state government more grunt to tackle what is becoming a major housing affordability crisis across Australia. It is a national problem. It deserves and needs urgent national action. I urge all members of this House to support our state initiatives contained in this bill.