



Speech by

Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard Tuesday, 16 October 2007

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (11.44 am): Under the watch of the Howard federal government, housing stress has increased to unprecedented levels right across Australia. Nine consecutive interest rate rises under Mr Howard have added fuel to the housing affordability crisis. Yet Mr Howard says that working Australian families have never been better off. Since 1996 and the election of the Howard government, the average mortgage repayment to income ratio for typical first home buyers has risen from 17.9 per cent to 30.8 per cent, the highest ever on record. Since 1996, the income needed to service a mortgage has more than doubled in Brisbane from around \$38,000 to \$93,000 in 2007.

Since 1996, the Howard government has failed to index funding to states in the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. If indexation had been maintained, approximately 2,000 more houses each year could have been added to the total public housing stock across Australia. This week Tanya Plibersek, the federal shadow minister for housing, met with residents and housing groups in the southern suburbs of Brisbane to promote the comprehensive housing affordability strategy that federal Labor has announced. Tanya Plibersek heard from local people, many of whom expressed concern that their rents were consuming something like 60 per cent or more of their income. One of the comments Tanya made was that there are enough bedrooms in Australia to house every Australian comfortably but not enough houses or units. What she was meaning is that many houses are underoccupied because we have a growing number of single-person and single people with dependent households in Australia. The 2006 census data showed that only 45.3 per cent of family types in Queensland were couple families with children. The rest were a variety of household types without children.

Federal Labor, like the Bligh Labor government in Queensland, has a comprehensive plan of action to reduce housing stress and improve housing affordability. We have developed policies to better match housing design to need, increase land supply, reduce development costs and red tape, and increase the stock of social and public housing. When elected, a Rudd Labor government will establish a national rental affordability scheme with tax incentives and financial support for private sector investors to build up to 50,000 new affordable rental properties across Australia. A Rudd Labor government will also set up a housing affordability fund to invest up to \$500 million in infrastructure levies and incentives to local governments to cut red tape and reduce planning and development delays that further add to the cost of building new houses.

Based on housing industry figures, the federal Labor policy will reduce the cost of a new house for 50,000 new homebuyers by up to \$20,000. At the state level, the Bligh government has established the Urban Land Development Authority and the Queensland state government Housing Affordability Strategy to ease housing stress in Queensland.

In Queensland we are not sitting around waiting for the Howard government to deal with housing issues. We have injected a \$719 million boost for housing into this year's state budget, assisting more than 250,000 Queenslanders with a housing solution to best meet their needs. We are supporting private partnerships such as the Brisbane Housing Company and the Gold Coast Housing Company. In stark contrast to Labor governments and the Rudd Labor government if elected, the Howard government has not placed a high priority on housing policy or the supply of public housing. The Howard government does

not have a dedicated minister for housing, nor has the Howard government ever developed a comprehensive national housing policy. It just is not an area that it has shown a lot of interest in, yet it is one of the greatest concerns to families. Many families in my area are finding it extremely stressful to meet their mortgage payments or their rental payments. I know who I am voting for on 24 November.