



Speech by

## Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Housing Affordability

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.12 am): Affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing Queenslanders and indeed all Australians. There is a mountain of alarming statistics and reports showing housing affordability both in private rental and ownership is the worst since World War II. But Peter Costello's 12th federal budget has come and gone without housing, once again, scoring any serious mention. Make no mistake, the policies of the federal government are contributing to the worsening housing affordability, yet Messrs Howard and Costello seem content to bury their head in the sand and continue to ignore this problem.

While denying that it has any responsibility for housing, the Howard government continues to pump billions of dollars into its near collapsed private rental market. In the past nine years more than \$4.5 billion has been spent in Queensland subsidising private landlords through rent assistance. Imagine how much extra public housing that would have built. What the Howard government has done is to privatise public housing by stealth and this has proved to be a flawed policy.

I table a comparison of the weekly median rent being asked today compared to five years ago for each electorate in the state.

*Tabled paper:* A list (3 pages) of increases in median rentals in each Queensland electorate.

This information is based on data collected by the Residential Tenancies Authority. In some areas rent has jumped \$65, \$90 and up to \$150 a week, but the federal government rent assistance has only increased \$15 a fortnight or \$7.50 a week. As a result, private renters are being pushed out of private rental and on to public housing waiting lists.

Our government recognises the seriousness of the situation and has doubled its spending on social housing in response. At the same time the Howard government has raked \$400 million out of Queensland's share of federal funding under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. This year, our government will spend \$700 million to take the number of units of accommodation it provides to close to 65,000. More should be done, particularly by the mainstream media, to highlight the deplorable neglect of the federal government in addressing the needs of tens of thousands of low- and middle-income earners who are paying more for their housing than ever before.