



Speech by

## Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Thursday, 24 May 2007

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Indigenous Housing Improvement Program

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.13 am): Twelve months ago almost to the day I announced a new maintenance program to reduce the loss of housing in 34 Indigenous communities in Queensland through a more centralised maintenance regime. I said then that the program would enhance upgrades and better manage the waiting lists and that it would also have a focus on new construction. Q-Build would manage the maintenance program instead of councils and would, where possible, use local labour.

I am happy to report today that the program has been a resounding success. A free call number has been established for tenants in 31 communities so far to request necessary repairs directly. More than 10,000 calls have been received, resulting in 15,000 work orders being issued. Almost half of these were completed by April, including a great deal of work that will prevent the risk of serious injury to tenants. More than 230 upgrades, which involve a complete refit of rooms such as bathrooms or kitchens, will have been completed by the end of June.

This increased focus on maintenance has resulted in improved living conditions. A call for tenders to install safety switches and smoke alarms in nine communities has recently closed, and work is said to start in the next few weeks. Remaining communities' tenders will be out in the market next month, with work to be undertaken in June and July. Tenders for painting, gas repairs, hot water system replacement and veranda replacement programs will be out in the market in June and work should start in July.

An upside to the program is that it has led to fewer vacant properties. In one community there were 16 vacant properties in November 2006. Now there are only four and they will be tenanted as soon as possible. Further, close to 60 new constructions and 70 replacements will have been completed by the end of June. Tenders have closed to provide eight factory-built homes, which will provide 30 bedrooms in smaller communities. I look forward to reporting further progress as the government continues to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils to improve housing in these communities.