



Speech by

Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Housing Needs

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.18 am): It is a well-known fact that Australia's population is ageing and this presents a challenge for government, business and the community at large. In the next 20 years, the number of people in Queensland aged over 65 is expected to more than double, to 1.1 million. As people get older, their housing needs change. The stairs to the front door become harder to negotiate and climbing into the shower is not as easy as it used to be. The home we live in can have a dramatic effect on our safety, our independence and our quality of life.

The Department of Housing is a leader is responding to this changing housing need and offers a number of programs designed to assist. It offers financial assistance to eligible homeowners to help them modify their home and increase their safety and independence. There is Home Assist Secure and home modifications programs that help people remain in their home by, for example, assisting with minor home modifications. In partnership with the Department of Public Works, the Department of Housing is working to influence the design of new homes with easy access features through the Smart Housing initiative.

As more and more people from all walks of life look for homes with easier access, it is an ideal time to start to identify and promote these properties. Tonight I will officially launch a new Department of Housing initiative aimed at improving information about the accessibility features of properties for rent and for sale. The Home Access Information program, which will be trialled in partnership with the REIQ, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, will see realtors assessing various aspects of properties including, but not limited to, the number and location of stairs, ramp access, the inclusion of wider doorways and the presence of supportive handrails in bathrooms. This information will then be used when marketing the property so people with special needs can accurately choose a property that is right for them. The trial I will launch tonight will take place in the Brisbane region and will continue until 2008, after which time the department will assess the program to see if it could be used statewide.