



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (11.55 am): Many Queensland families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, with rising interest rates, rising rents, increases in petrol prices and increases in the cost of groceries. No-one can deny that this year the housing affordability crisis is worsening as families are finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet.

I have witnessed firsthand the families who come into my office on a daily basis describing their housing situation. Last month, for example, two family members came to see me. The sister is undergoing treatment for cancer and they are both struggling to find another rental property as the house they are living in is being sold. They have gone to numerous real estate agents and they have been told time and time again, 'You are both on disability pensions and you cannot afford to rent in Inala.' Let me repeat that one more time: 'You are both on disability pensions and you cannot afford to rent a house in Inala.' They have had their name on the housing list for years and last week they were confirmed for priority housing. I also recently met a family who are sharing a three-bedroom house with another family—so 11 family members in a three-bedroom house. I heard firsthand how their two young sons are finding it hard to study as they are sleeping on mattresses on the lounge room floor. Real estate agents will not return this woman's calls. They cannot afford to live in Inala.

This year my office has been overwhelmed by families in need of urgent housing. Earlier this year I asked the Department of Housing to see what properties in Inala are being utilised by community groups which are owned by the department. I did this with the aim to find these groups alternative accommodation and, most importantly, to free up these houses for families most in need. Many of these community groups were placed in these houses in Inala many years ago when there was a surplus of housing stock. The number of community groups occupying these properties will be identified next month. We are looking at trying to see which one of these groups can actually move up to the Richlands community hub, which will be set up for office accommodation.

Already the Department of Housing, through Community Renewal, is in discussions with the Inala Youth and Family Support Service. In addition, the department is liaising with the South West Brisbane Tenants Group to free up their house as soon as possible. This group rarely meets in their house and they have been offered an alternative meeting venue at the office of the Department of Housing in Inala. I am advised that three houses being utilised by Q-Build are being freed up to return to housing stock. I have also asked residents in my electorate to contact me if they notice a vacant house in their street. We need to do an audit of all of these vacant houses and let families move into them as soon as possible.

Addressing the issue of housing affordability does not just mean the provision of social housing. It also means the creation of a range of housing options for families. The Brisbane Housing Co. is in the midst of building 30 two-bedroom and three-bedroom town houses in Inala at a cost of \$5.2 million. Construction of these units is well underway. We are also seeing the construction of additional private town houses in Inala, Richlands and Darra which will result in cheaper rental options for families.

The Queensland government is committed to addressing the housing needs of families, not just in Inala but right throughout Queensland. According to its 2006-07 annual report, the Department of Housing assisted almost 255,000 Queensland households by providing 78,000 households with social rental housing and helping 176,000 households access or sustain private market tenure. This included assisting over 18,000 Indigenous households, 24,000 households with a person with a disability and 27,000 households with an older person. These figures are indeed impressive.

In 2006-07 the department assisted more than 78,000 households across Queensland with social rental housing—an increase of 4,118 households, or 5.6 per cent compared with the previous year. This is no small feat and I pay tribute to the Hon. Robert Swarten, the minister for housing, for his commitment to social housing throughout Queensland.

As the minister stated in a ministerial statement early this month, over 1,900 people have been assisted to move into social housing over the past three months. In addition, the department is spending the equivalent of \$3.35 million each and every day on social housing in Queensland. The minister for housing just this morning announced a new departmental trial called RentConnect, which will see Department of Housing officers working with real estate agents to help people into the housing market. This is a great initiative and I applaud him for this. I notice he said that this initiative was going to be trialled initially in Caboolture and Rockhampton, but I will be the next person to put my hand up and say that I want RentConnect rolled out to Inala.

I am passionate about social housing. I believe that a family needs a good start in life, and it is hard to address other issues if you are constantly worried about where your family will sleep at night. As one man told me last week, he has two months to leave his rental property as it is being sold. He has been going to real estate after real estate and said to one real estate agent, 'Mate, it's not about me; it's about my kids.'