



Speech by

Hon. Kate Jones

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Wednesday, 7 October 2009

MOTION: PENSIONERS, PUBLIC HOUSING RENTS

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (6.10 pm): I rise to support the Premier's amendments. I particularly want to talk to the people who are sitting in the public gallery, ordinary Queenslanders, because I want you to hear—

Mr SPEAKER: You will talk through the chair.

Ms JONES: Through the chair, but I want them to listen loud and clear to the hypocrisy that I have seen here tonight. As members will know, I worked for the Minister for Housing for many years. That is one of the jobs I am proudest to have had. The reason I was so proud to work with the minister was that every year that this government has been in power it has increased the money to build public housing in Queensland.

It is very appropriate that we are debating this motion on the day that Peter Costello announced his retirement. Let us talk about Peter Costello's legacy. His legacy was not increasing the pension for 11 years straight. Pensioners in Australia had to wait for the Kevin Rudd government to get elected to see the largest increase in 40 years. That is what Labor governments do when they are in power. It was the largest increase to the pension since Whitlam.

Do members know what else Mr Costello did? He cut public housing for Queensland every year that he was the Treasurer. When he was the Treasurer Peter Costello cut \$500 million from public housing here in Queensland. That is Peter Costello's legacy. Even in the face of losing \$500 million from the federal government under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement that has been in place in Australia since the 1950s, even when it walked away from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, not one of the Liberal and National Party members opposite stood up against that.

Mr Nicholls: What about rental assistance?

Ms JONES: Let us talk about rental assistance. I really want to take that interjection from the member for Clayfield. A pensioner living in the private sector does not benefit from a 25 per cent cap on their income in their liability to pay rent. They are at the whim of the private sector. The big winners are the ones that are in public housing. If the member for Clayfield really cared about pensioners he would want more public housing, because he would want more pensioners able to have the cap of 25 per cent of their income towards rent. What the Liberal National Party did when it was in power was cut public housing and send more pensioners out into the private sector. They sold them out to private landlords. Let me tell the member for Clayfield how much rents have increased in the private sector under John Howard. They have increased by 50 per cent. What those opposite did is privatise housing assistance, force pensioners into the private sector and force them to pay more.

On our side of the House we expand public housing so that what tenants have to pay in rent is capped at 25 per cent of their income. The reason we do that is that it is fair. We do not believe in privatising public housing assistance which is what those opposite did. We had 11 years of diverting funding away from the construction of public housing and putting it into a privatised system. Their policy was to move people out of the public system and into the private system. The Liberal National Party sold

them out into the private sector. We have more public housing here in Queensland than when we came into government.

I will finish on this point: when we came into government the Housing budget in Queensland was \$330 million. When those opposite were last in government they gave up \$100 million in the Housing budget to the Howard government. Every other state diversified it across their portfolios but not the mob opposite; they took it straight out of the Housing budget. Our government will spend a record \$1 billion on public housing construction in Queensland. We will be spreading the availability of public housing so that ordinary pensioners can get the 25 per cent cut. That is opposed to the position of the member for Clayfield which is to privatise housing in Australia. That is his policy. Do not ever be fooled by those opposite.