



Speech by

## Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Wednesday, 11 February 2009

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Economic Stimulus Package, Public Housing

**Hon. RE SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology) (10.17 am): When times are tough Labor governments always know what to do. I congratulate the Rudd Labor government on its \$42 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan to stop the Australian economy falling into recession. After 10 years of persecution of public housing by the Howard government it is terrific to see one of the big winners is social housing, with funding provided to build 20,000 new social housing dwellings across Australia—4,000 in Queensland.

This announcement was the best news the battlers of Australia who are trying to find a place to rent have received in my time as housing minister. I note that those opposite continue their persecution of public housing.

So what does it mean for Queensland? Quite simply, it means more jobs for Queenslanders and a major boost to social housing. Under the plan, which allocates funding on a per capita basis, Queensland will receive \$80 million over two years for repairs and maintenance to existing social housing stock, \$138 million for construction of new social housing during this financial year and next financial year and \$1.1 billion for construction of new social housing between 2009 and 2012. In total, the plan represents an investment of more than \$1.3 billion into Queensland. That is on top of an already record state contribution to housing. It is terrific news for those people in this state who have been persecuted by the Tories for the last 10 years.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Whenever we mention public housing, we get that same rant coming from those over there. They do not want public housing. That is why they have not got a policy on it. This will deliver an immediate boost to the building and construction sector, helping save existing jobs and creating new jobs.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** Again, we get inane interjections against the construction industry in this state.

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** We now have 65,000 public houses in Queensland. Under your lot we had 48,000! The record speaks for itself!

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** The budget under you was \$330 million; it is now \$790 million. So don't you come in here telling us about your commitment to social housing in this state! You are a disgrace!

The Department of Public Works will play a key role in delivering both the social housing and education capital programs. It is ideally placed to do this because of its long-established working arrangements with the departments of Housing and Education, suppliers and the building sector across the

state. To ensure Queensland is doing all it can to secure jobs in the building and related industries, the departments of Housing and Public Works will identify maintenance upgrades and new construction projects that can commence immediately. I am confident that, given our track record of delivering projects on budget and on time, the departments will also successfully deliver this ambitious program. I am committed to ensuring that this once-in-a-lifetime funding boost is delivered quickly and smoothly, with maximum impact for jobs in the building industry. The only hold-up to doing this is the opposition in the Senate. It is time it stopped playing petty politics and pressed the green button and let us get on with it.