




Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Tuesday, 10 July 2012

MOTION: PUBLIC HOUSING

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (6.04 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Bundamba regarding the Newman government's attack on Queensland public housing tenants. The Minister for Housing has deliberately fostered an atmosphere of fear and panic throughout my community and communities all over Queensland. Last month the minister had taxpayers fund a highly political and inflammatory letter to all public housing tenants advising that extreme measures would be pursued to rectify a crisis whipped up by this government to justify it retreating from its social housing obligations. The minister and this LNP government have proposed that those who currently reside in properties with more than one room will be forced out of their family home and their community.

If this letter was meant to inform tenants of what the government's intentions were, it failed dismally. All it did was create uncertainty, panic and fear. Many elderly tenants use their additional room to have a carer spend the night or their grandkids stay with them on the weekends. This breaks down social isolation and builds stronger families and stronger communities. A woman who recently lost her lifelong partner contacted my office. She was worried sick about being moved by a heartless government that believes fiscal discipline is achieved by taking a stick to those least able to fight back.

From the moment the letter hit letterboxes in South Brisbane, the phones in my electorate office have rung hot. I can tell members that the concerns have not and will not stop. There are more than 1,400 public housing units in my electorate of South Brisbane. We are talking about elderly people, people with a disability, single mums and those who, through no fault of their own, find themselves needing a hand up. In one block of units in Greenslopes, three-quarters of the tenants are aged over 60. They have raised a family, they have served their community and they have contributed to Queensland's economy. They deserve far more respect than is forthcoming from this heartless minister and this greedy government.

Many public housing tenants are on a pension and live week to week, meaning that they will be hit hardest by this government's deliberately greedy and heartless decision to include the federal Labor government's household assistance payments in the assessable income of public housing tenants. Yesterday, when the minister advised that he plans to include carbon-pricing compensation payments in the assessable income of public housing tenants' rents, he exposed himself to be the Dean Priest of Queensland housing: 'Put up the rents and let the carbon tax take the blame. Whatever the federal governments gives you with one hand, we will take away with the other.'

Labor understands the fundamental tenets of social housing. It is not about profits. It is about people. It is about preventing homelessness, which is something this government and this minister do not care about. In the past five years, the previous Labor government not only built more than 5,000 new public housing units but also recognised the cost-of-living pressures on tenants and agreed to quarantine the 2009 pension increase from social housing rents. Labor's record in this respect is proud and it is strong, which was confirmed by the minister himself in answer to a question on notice from a member of the government backbench. I table it for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Answer to question on notice No. 186 of 2012 regarding public housing throughout Queensland [\[497\]](#).

If the minister had a heart today, right now he would guarantee that this government will not overturn Labor's decision to exempt the 2009 pension increase. During the last parliamentary sitting, I participated in the St Vincent de Paul CEO sleep out. In the past I have also volunteered at the Crisis at Christmas homelessness effort in London. Participating in programs such as those gives significant meaning and understanding to the problems of homelessness and the critical importance of social housing. For me, those experiences confirm the fundamental Labor belief that reducing the rate of homelessness requires a government not only that is determined not to leave people behind but also that believes in a strong social housing system and does not believe you should turn a profit off the back of people's misery.