



Speech by


**John Hathaway**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

Hansard Tuesday, 10 July 2012

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## **MOTION: PUBLIC HOUSING**

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (5.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment put forward by the honourable Minister for Housing. I speak in favour of the amendment because it would be negligent in the extreme to support the original private member's motion, as it is simply an attempt to paper over the history of the previous government's record on housing. That is a history of mismanagement and waste that has no equal; perhaps its only equal is its record on public health. It is a track record of public housing management without any basic adherence to the simple principles of building husbandry, asset management, cost control and maximising the utilisation of resources and reinvestment in assets. While they may have skills in English with the three Cs, we have the three Is: inept, inefficient and incompetent, which is what the previous government was. A lack of basic management skills is probably understandable when one considers the career pathways and inexperience of many of the former ministers of the government, particularly the previous housing and community ministers. That might be understandable, but it is not forgivable.

What is the record of the previous wasteful and inefficient ALP government? A waiting list for social housing in excess of 30,000 families or, as we heard tonight, 70,000 men, women and children; a housing program that is heading speedily towards a deficit of \$140 million; sales of housing assets to strip out \$48 million, simply to cover maintenance costs, with no reinvestment in stock; and no contingency across the forward estimates to build new or flexible housing assets. Despite the indignation of the members opposite, this problem did not crop up just in the past 12 weeks. This has been an ongoing issue that was patently ignored by a tired, lazy ALP government that was more concerned with remaining in power than biting the bullet and making the hard decisions. There is an old Army adage that, unlike wine, bad news does not get better with age. Over the past decade the previous government had all the opportunity to make the hard and meaningful decisions, but it chose not to. The Campbell Newman government has demonstrated that it can exercise its mandate for the benefit of the 31,000 families that currently do not have a housing solution.

The efforts of the honourable Minister for Housing in reforming the management of housing is aimed at maximising the utilisation of our scarce housing asset. His aim is to provide a housing outcome for as many of those 30,000 families—in my electorate of Townsville there are 1,800 families—on the waiting list. It should also be noted that there has been strong support for many of these reform measures from the respondents to the survey. It is worth noting the high level of respondents to the survey. Some 19 per cent or in excess of 10,500 people responded to the survey. I thank those people for their input. It makes the opposition's petition of about 300 pale into insignificance. Whilst I am not a statistician, I think those figures speak of a reliable representational result. It also demonstrates that as a government we do engage, we do consult and we do provide the opportunity for people to have ownership of the outcomes.

It is vital that we can utilise the 8,700 properties or 20,000 room equivalents to overcome the wait list. The majority of public housing tenants do believe in downsizing as a best solution to overcome this underoccupancy. The return of the survey clearly indicates that the tenants of public housing recognise the dire legacy that the former Labor government provided to Queensland. They acknowledge the gross mismanagement of public housing and recognise that it requires urgent action to overcome. That is why honourable members have no option but to demonstrate our disdain for the record of the Bligh Labor government in housing and its lack of accountability by voting for this amendment.