




Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

---

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE  
AMENDMENT AND TRADE AND INVESTMENT QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (5.56 pm): I rise in the House tonight to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill 2013. The 2013-14 state budget is focused on growing our economy, rebuilding Queensland and making our communities more resilient for the future. Since the Newman government was elected we have unashamedly been a pro-growth government. While we are working to grow the economy, we are also continuing the task we began last year of rebuilding the state's finances—a task made all the more difficult after the January 2013 natural disasters. In tough financial times, it is important that we do not forget those on the margins of society, and I am happy to report that the 2013-14 budget includes a number of initiatives to deliver more housing for needy Queenslanders.

Due to the tough economic circumstances, demand for affordable housing far outweighs supply. As more and more families struggle to make ends meet, we have seen a rapid escalation in the number of households registering for social housing. Unfortunately, that increased demand has not been matched with increased supply. In fact, before the Newman government came to office, the only person investing in social housing in Queensland from the other side of the House, or of their flavour, was Kevin Rudd, but they seem to have ignored him. When the Newman government was elected, the public housing system was losing \$140 million a year. That is an extraordinary statistic and one that those opposite ought to be ashamed of.

Under their watch maintenance costs were rising, rents were falling and the waiting list had blown out by around 50 per cent in just three years. If things had kept going the way they were, it would not have taken much longer before the whole system collapsed under the weight of its own inefficiency. Thankfully, things did not keep going the way they were because the Newman government was elected, and we have begun overhauling the way social housing is delivered—replacing an old-fashioned, 1950s style system with a modern, flexible and, more importantly, supportive alternative.

While it would be nice to have the sorts of rivers of gold to help us along the way that those opposite were accustomed to, those days are gone. Right across the world and in every Australian state, governments of all persuasions are experiencing massive falls in revenue, and Queensland is not immune, with our revenue since March 2012 being over \$4.5 billion less than expected.

In light of the new fiscal reality, last year my department started work on a range of reforms that would allow us to do much more with less. That process began with a review of underoccupancy in public housing. I am sorry to say that those opposite had shown no real interest in stopping undeclared tenants moving into public housing properties without paying any rent. That review uncovered more than 1,600 people who had been living completely rent free in taxpayer subsidised housing. The additional rent from those people alone was estimated to be close to \$5 million. The department also restarted eligibility reviews to make sure our tenants had an ongoing need for social

housing, and implemented three-year fixed term tenancies for new tenants to put an end to the expectation that social housing was, or is, an ongoing right for the rest of one's life.

Earlier this year we announced a three-strikes policy to crack down on antisocial behaviour in public housing. This was another area in which Labor's unwillingness to address a problem that was staring them in the face was costing taxpayers millions. Between 2008 and 2011 wayward tenants were issued with a combined total of 103,126 breach notices, yet over that same period fewer than 350 households were evicted. In the absence of any meaningful consequences, taxpayers were left to foot the bill of roughly \$5 million in unscheduled repairs and maintenance each year. Each of these initiatives will play a role in putting the social housing system back on a sustainable footing, but they will not be enough to help house the 23,000 households still waiting for a place to live. Doing that will require a significantly expanded service delivery role for non-government housing providers. Ultimately, we want to see the community housing sector take on the tenancy management function of the majority of the social housing portfolio and harness the efficiencies of the private sector to boost the supply of social and affordable housing.

The pilot program for this innovative approach is currently underway in Logan in the form of the Logan Renewal Initiative, a joint venture between the state government, the community housing sector and the Logan City Council, which will see an additional 1,000 homes built over the next 10 years. As part of this budget, the government is also working with Economic Development Queensland on a series of projects in priority development areas including Townsville, Mount Isa, Gladstone and the Gold Coast. These projects will increase the availability of social and affordable housing and reconfigure existing properties to more closely match the needs of families on the waiting list. Put simply, the type of properties we own are no longer suitable for the people whom we house. It is not good enough to simply put a roof over someone's head; we need to ensure that it is appropriate for their needs. It is worth remembering that Queensland's social housing system was conceived and implemented in the aftermath of World War II, during a period when the average tenant was a low-income working family with a couple of kids. As such, the bulk of our stock tends to be detached three- or four-bedroom houses in the suburbs. These days, the largest group on the social housing register consists of people who are single, Centrelink dependent and often dealing with a significant physical or mental disability. As such, old-fashioned suburban houses are seldom a good fit.

As I said, it is not good enough to simply put a roof over someone's head. We also have to make sure that it is appropriate for their needs, which is why we are committed to renewing and reconfiguring our stock as well as boosting supply. This budget commits roughly \$400 million towards doing just that. This money will be spent building and purchasing new social housing in areas of high need right across the state in areas like Brisbane, Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast. In keeping with this government's commitment to doing more with less, some of the construction activities will see old detached properties with high maintenance costs redeveloped into apartments that are not only more modern and functional but also more in line with the needs of our tenants. As well as building new properties we are also investing \$72 million of the total capital budget on improving existing dwellings throughout the state. Carrying out upgrades to existing social housing is an important part of the capital program: first, to ensure that these government assets continue to provide adequate functionality and amenity; and, second, to provide modifications to these dwellings to suit social housing tenants with a disability.

This budget also contains good news for the Indigenous community, with \$237.7 million set aside for Indigenous housing. That money will be used to start construction on at least 204 dwellings and complete construction on another 280. There is also \$44 million to be spent on general upkeep and maintenance. This money will deliver benefits for Indigenous communities right across the state—from Aurukun, which will see 26 units completed; to Kowanyama, 29 units; and Palm Island, 47 units. There will be upgrades in towns like Doomadgee, Mapoon and Mornington Island as well as new houses in places like Cherbourg, Kuranda and Yarrabah. Even in tough financial times there are things that simply have to be done, and addressing the shortage of appropriate housing in Indigenous communities is one of them. I am proud that this government is continuing to invest heavily in Indigenous Queensland.

As I mentioned before, it would be nice to have access to the same cushion of skyrocketing revenues that kept the Labor Party so comfortable in years gone by, but that is not to be. That those opposite managed to spend this state into the poorhouse, despite being in receipt of the sorts of revenue that most governments can only dream about, is a mark of just how incredibly irresponsible they were. The financial repair job ahead of us is a long-term task, a journey that will take a number of years to complete. But it is a task that we must not shirk if we are to deliver the services that the people of Queensland expect and deserve.

Because Labor has maxed out the credit card, we will need to be smarter and more efficient. We will have to become adept at doing more with less. We will continue to link up with the private and non-government sectors to use the limited funds that we do have to invest in new infrastructure and revitalise services, because the people of Queensland deserve better from their leaders than decades of debt.

This government is open and upfront about the problems and challenges that we face. Unlike the opposition, who got by on spin and trickery and refused to acknowledge that there was a problem until it was too late, we are determined to take Queenslanders into our confidence and to deal with these challenges together. This budget is a demonstration of our commitment to fix the state's finances and to grow a stronger Queensland economy so that we remain a great state with great opportunities for all.

I am also delighted about the benefits that have been granted in this budget for my electorate of Everton. One of the major announcements that was made was a grant from the education department for approximately \$7½ million to build a performing arts complex, a science complex and some additional classrooms at the Albany Creek State High School. This is an incredibly exciting development for the school, which has fought for this for many years. The school is renowned for its performing arts emphasis and has a strong body of work in the areas of drama, instrumental music, art and dance. They have won many awards right across the state and there is a very strong emphasis on the arts in this school community. They welcome this announcement. It was great to have the Minister for Education, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, at the school last year when the P&C and the school administration presented their case. He went away highly impressed. It was great that this year, after intense lobbying by me, we received this funding for the performing arts complex. I would like to congratulate the P&C president, Mr Jim Harrison, and his predecessor, Mr Bevan Crooke, who campaigned for this for a number of years. This will be a great asset not only to the school community but also to the community at large because this will be a facility that everybody will be able to enjoy.

I am also delighted to see in the budget that \$360,000 has been put aside for the Bunyaville Environmental Education Centre. The Bunyaville State Forest is in the middle of my electorate. I often describe it as the lung of our electorate. It is a great spot to go out in the bush and enjoy when we have spare time. In the middle of that forest is an educational centre where many schoolchildren go along and learn about the environment and related matters. It is great to see that that facility will be improved with an extra injection of \$360 million.

It is also great to see that there is a continued investment in our schools through an additional \$100 million for the schools maintenance fund. This has been welcomed in my electorate, which has eight state schools. It is important that we have the best facilities for our students. This is, again, a sign of our commitment to make sure that that actually takes place. We are slowly but surely getting through that \$300 million backlog that we inherited. I know that my school community has welcomed this increased funding to ensure that the facilities in our schools are topnotch.

I am also delighted to see that the flashing lights program for school pedestrian crossings is still being rolled out. Albany Creek State High School was one of the first schools to benefit from that program and Albany Hills State School will be benefiting shortly. It is a great initiative of the Minister for Transport which ensures we have a very safe environment for our children.

Finally, I would just like to say how delighted I was to hear from the Minister for Sport about the increased funding for Get in the Game. This has been a fabulous success in my electorate, where the \$150 vouchers have been welcomed by those families which struggle to afford to pay their sporting fees, especially those with more than one child. We all know how important it is to have active kids. One of the best ways to ensure that they remain healthy is to be a member of a sporting club. This has been very, very welcomed, and the clubs themselves have welcomed the infrastructure funding that has come their way. The Mitchelton Football Club received \$100,000 to improve their dressing room facilities. It is great to see that this government is committed to our young people in particular, but also to sport as well.

In closing, I would just like to say that this is a budget for which the Treasurer should be commended. It is a responsible budget. It is a budget that will again set the foundation for the future, and I look forward to seeing the result in 12 months time while we continue to build this economy and make Queensland the great state that it deserves to be. I commend the bill to the House.