




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 5 August 2014

MOTION: SOCIAL HOUSING

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (5.45 pm): I move—

That all words after 'House' be deleted, and the following words inserted—

'notes that the Newman government has made significant progress helping those with the highest needs to be accommodated in social housing, including:

- placing 14,800 households into a social housing property;
- assisting over 5,000 households into a National Rental Affordability Scheme property;
- providing over 50,000 bonds loans and assisting over 9,000 households with RentConnect; and
- as a result the Newman government has reduced the public housing waiting list to under 18,600 from 30,000 under the previous Labor government.

In 2012 the public housing system was a complete and utter basket case. We had a waiting list blow out of over 30,000. There was an incredible increase of 50 per cent in the few years prior to 2012. We had a \$100 million a year shortfall in the social housing sector. We had antisocial and destructive behaviour going totally unchecked. We had houses sitting empty for up to a year, with tenants holidaying overseas and, in some cases, serving prison terms.

Over the past 2½ years we have been systematically working through the public housing system to make sure those with the greatest need are those who are housed. Today, as a result of the policies of this government, we have reduced the social housing waiting list by 40 per cent. It is now down to below 18,600. We have implemented the three-strikes policy, which I mentioned today. This has finally made people who do not respect their property or who do not respect their neighbours accountable. The policy is working. We have now introduced a far fairer temporary absence policy.

As I travelled around the state and as I heard from local members, more and more people on the social housing waiting list were frustrated when they saw government property left vacant. They were wondering why that was the case when they were left wallowing on the social housing waiting list, desperately in need of accommodation.

After we did a bit of investigation we found out that the former government's policy was to allow up to 12 months leave. People were able to leave their property vacant for 12 months. A person could be imprisoned and the property would be maintained and held for you for 12 months. They would pay less than \$11 per week in rent and they could have a caretaker come and look after the property for them. That was a patently ridiculous policy. That was while we had over 30,000 on the public housing waiting list. Every year hundreds and hundreds of tenants spent between three to 12 months away from their social housing property, with the average being six months. Something had to be done.

The member for Rockhampton mentioned a lady from his area and he used the pseudonym, Mary. Let me tell members a bit of background about Mary. She wants to take another three-month holiday. In the last four years she has spent a total of 12 months travelling overseas. This is a regular occurrence with Mary. It is not something that has just come out now. She is frequently away from her property. This is not about being tough. This is about being fair to those who are on the social housing waiting list and looking to get a place.

It is unfair to the people on the waiting list. It is also unfair to pensioners. Ninety-seven per cent of pensioners are not in the public housing sector. Many of them are on the same amount of money that people in public housing sector are on. Pensioners in the public housing sector are paying an average of \$125 a week. Those out in the community are paying double and triple that amount. What do you think they think when they see people in social housing having three, six and nine months leave when they have heavily subsidised rent? This policy is about being fair to those within the system and those outside of the system. It is not about being tough; it is about being fair.

When you get that level of subsidy from the government there are certain conditions that need to apply, and that is all we are doing—making sure that people in public housing understand that there are conditions when you do get heavily subsidised housing. That is the only thing that is fair for those within the system and those outside of it.

(Time expired)