




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 7 August 2014

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, Report

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (4.26 pm): It is a great privilege to rise to speak on the debate of the estimates committee report. One thing we did learn from the estimates committee process was what the Labor Party is very good at. It is very good at misrepresentation and it is very good at scaremongering, and nobody does that better or exemplifies that better than the member for Bundamba. Let us look at the track record of the member for Bundamba. She has scared the living daylights out of nursing home residents, she has scared the living daylights out of caravan park residents, she has scared the living daylights out of those in the private rental market, she has scared the living daylights out of public housing tenants and of course now she has moved on to the Housing Service Centre staff—those very hardworking departmental staff who do a fantastic job.

What is different about this government compared to the previous government is that we have actually engaged with people and we have engaged with public servants. I have been to the 22 housing service centres at least once and I have been to Woodridge three times and I have been to Robina two times because they will be directly affected by the policy that we have of transferring 90 per cent of property and tenancy management to the community housing organisation. In terms of those discussions, the first thing is that they are shocked that a minister has taken the time to speak to them and talk to them about the changes that we are making. The issue that has been at the forefront of my mind is to ensure that we look after them in terms of their employment conditions into the future, and I am extremely confident that at both Woodridge and Robina, where the first two transfers will take place, those staff will be totally looked after and will have a job in the community housing sector and in five years time they will look back and say, 'Thank goodness we actually did this.' So we can put away all of that scaremongering from the member for Bundamba because it is total rubbish.

Where else does this scaremongering apply? It applies to the temporary absence policy where people have been abusing the system for years—taking three months, six months, nine months or 12 months off in heavily subsidised public housing where they are subsidised at an average of \$8,000 a year. One example that was mentioned in the debate on Tuesday is one woman who has just applied for three months leave but who has already had 12 months off in the previous four years—25 per cent of the time she is not in her home. The compassion that those opposite are trying to show is totally misdirected. It should not be towards those who are actually in houses at the moment receiving heavily subsidised rent; it should be directed to those who are on the waiting list who want to get into a house. When they see houses that have been vacant for six to nine months they are coming to me and asking, 'Why are these houses vacant when I'm sitting here on the waiting list?'

Let us look at the record of this government with regard to social housing. The social housing waiting list has dropped—

Mr Cox interjected.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Stop the clock, please. Member for Thuringowa and member for Bundamba, your comments will be made through the chair. If you want to take your conversation outside, please do so.

Mr MANDER: Let us look at the record of this government with regard to social housing. By far the biggest achievement is being able to reduce the social housing waiting list from over 30,000 to below 19,000—around 18,600. There is no trickery in this at all. The opposition has claimed that we have tricked the housing waiting list. The system that we apply today is the same system that was applied in the days of Labor. That is why these results are real results. We are comparing apples with apples. There has been no trickery. We have put people into homes and, very importantly, we have diverted people away from the public housing system by providing incentives for them to go into the private rental market. That system is working and the 14½ thousand people who were put into housing over the last couple of years are incredibly grateful for that.

We have also introduced a very successful antisocial behaviour policy, the three-strikes policy. It is working. People now understand that, if they are in public housing, they have an obligation to their neighbourhood, they have an obligation to the property they are in—that they must look after it, that they must respect their neighbours. If they do not do that, we will give them a warning. We will give them plenty of chances to change their behaviour but, ultimately, if they do not respect that, they have no future in public housing. The system is working. The second strike rate is low—at 25 per cent. People are getting the message. Under this government, social housing is far better off.