




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Indigenous Housing, Federal Funding

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.03 pm): I rise today to speak about the Commonwealth government's recently announced funding cuts to remote Indigenous housing in Queensland. Last month we found out that the Turnbull government is withdrawing funding from the long-running National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. In the 10 years it has been running, the Commonwealth government has invested \$1.1 billion into housing in Queensland's remote Indigenous communities and has delivered for Queensland over 1,100 new homes and 1,500 housing refurbishments. The national partnership has been a boon to Indigenous employment and local business. Each year in Queensland around 800 apprentices and trainees are employed by the building program, and local business involvement has increased from 10 per cent in 2011 to 70 per cent in 2017.

Since the national partnership commenced in 2008, chronic overcrowding in Queensland's remote Indigenous communities has almost halved, from 47 per cent down to 25 per cent in 2016. This result clearly demonstrates that the national partnership is working. With continued Commonwealth funding we can reduce that rate even further. The Turnbull government's funding cuts will be a devastating blow to Indigenous Queenslanders who desperately need solutions to endemic problems such as chronic overcrowding, homelessness and substandard housing maintenance. Neglecting these problems will just result in worse physical and mental health for Indigenous people, higher rates of infectious diseases and higher rates of domestic violence and emotional stress. Poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities exacerbates inequality and makes it difficult for Indigenous Queenslanders to move forward.

As ministerial champion for Mornington Island, I acknowledge the mayor, Bradley Wilson; deputy mayor, Sarah Isaacs; CEO, Frank Mills, and their team. They know that the national partnership agreement has delivered great outcomes for the Mornington Island community, resulting in 36 new houses being built between 2009 and 2016, with 11 more houses currently under construction. Around 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been employed each year on Mornington Island thanks to the national partnership's building program, and that includes four apprentices currently completing certificate qualifications. Unfortunately, once Commonwealth funding runs out in June these workers face unemployment and the apprentices will have fewer opportunities to complete their apprenticeships.

The Palaszczuk government is serious about Closing the Gap, and we stand behind the thousands of Queenslanders in remote communities who will be impacted by the Turnbull government's cruel funding cuts. Curiously, the opposition leader, Deb Frecklington, has been silent on this subject. Where does she stand—with Queensland, or with the Turnbull government? I implore the Leader of the Opposition to stand with Queensland and support fair Commonwealth funding for remote Indigenous communities.