



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Housing

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.35 pm): The housing affordability and rental crisis in my electorate and other regions across Queensland can be fixed. Concerningly though, even though we say it is a priority, we are following a similar path that led us to this point. Under state government rules, all local government areas should have four years worth of approved lots—land that is ready to go to market. The Deputy Premier in the 2021 estimates process said that the department was working to identify future land outside the urban footprint and include it into future South-East Queensland regional plans. Will this resolve the crisis in my community or other communities? The answer is in the key words ‘land’ and ‘market’. Within Noosa, the market pushes anything released beyond the financial capability of our workers and governments, as well as the rents associated when developed. Is more land the answer? Well, for decades land has been released across the Sunshine Coast and yet here we are.

The *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2020 action plan* notes as its very first action that it needs to identify and develop vacant and under-utilised government land. The state government, by its own admission, does not have a cross-departmental register of all available lands. I raised this with both the Premier and the then minister for state development, infrastructure and planning in 2019. Government sites we have identified over the past four years have led nowhere, even though zoned for housing, due to those tick boxes that could not be ticked off including land price, carbon offsets, biodiversity overlays, flood hazards and even a native title claim. One site that was suitable for a mixed model of community housing for our people with disabilities, workers and retirees is being considered for an Indigenous cultural centre or glamping. This is really admirable; however, when you have a humanitarian crisis, where are our priorities?

The outdated rationale of location has become a constant barrier as apparently affordable housing needs to tick the box of being central because, apparently, my workers do not have cars. These tick boxes and a number of others for the past 20 years have contributed to this crisis. It pushed our essential workers into sheds 20 minutes from town. It led us to this space where a site on a major state road three minutes drive from town has been negated. Other barriers include: share houses that are impact assessable when they have fewer impacts than many households; DV families forced to move instead of relocating perpetrators; social housing sitting empty or under-utilised through Centrelink rules; and a lack of options for empty-nesters.

We reject opportunity in light industrial areas that already have lofts incorporated and retain obsolete zonings in planning schemes, including commercial, when there is no demand for aged care where not required and environmental constraints governed by ERAs that did not have the technology to offset impacts. There are no incentives for transportable parks and tiny homes, rooming accommodation or living small. Australia lags comparable countries by some 15 per cent in community managed housing funded by superannuation funds, social impact investment funds and the private sector. Why?

In Noosa, our challenges are an example of conflicts surrounding how to provide for our community without sacrificing what we have worked so hard for. Should the tick boxes currently in place remain, what do we do? Utilise sites deemed previously unsuitable or to be conserved? The culture of 'cannot' instead of 'how' leads to decisions—or a lack of—that can create even greater issues when you push residents and communities past their breaking point. How do Queenslanders protect their environment and much loved wildlife and continue their commitment to conserve land when they cannot put a roof over their family's head?

We must now look to reconfigure and utilise space through a different lens. By calling for more land to be released, without a mechanism to retain affordability, we will be having these same conversations in a decade. I could stand here and ask for more funding, more land, more compassion or more social housing. With nearly 50,000 Queenslanders sitting on the housing register, which does not include our workers who are not eligible, I will be standing in a very long queue. Instead, I ask that those tick boxes—the systems that made them valid—be reviewed so that the building of long-term affordable housing for those in our community who need it most can start in partnership with our not for profits and the private sector, because if we cannot provide accommodation for our low-income workers and retirees or put their wages up to a level where they can afford, then we have failed our people in the most basic of ways.