



Speech By
Lachlan Millar


MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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ADJOURNMENT

Western Queensland, Housing

Mr Nicholls: Tell them more about the wool scourer.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (6.58 pm): I would love to but I am going to talk about Western Queensland and the housing crisis that we have out there. We have a housing crisis here in Brisbane at the moment with the floods. I understand that. My heart goes out to all those Brisbane, South-East Queensland, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast families who have gone through such a tragic situation. We need to get behind them, but we also need to get behind a housing crisis that we have in Western Queensland.

Last week, the Deputy Premier attended the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils in Charleville. I thank him for coming out and being there. Given that nearly half of the local governments who make up the alliance are constituents of mine, I was there to see what was happening. He made an announcement. He knew that housing is a key area that the alliance wants urgently addressed. Late last year the alliance released the first study of the housing situation across 22 Western Queensland LGAs. As I told the House back in October last year, it showed that an area spanning 60 per cent of Queensland is short 1,500 houses.

Western Queensland receives only one-fifth of the housing investment of South-East Queensland. This is not an illusion caused by a lower population. Over the last three years to June 2020, in Greater Brisbane, the average value of approved residential building work—be that new build or renovation—was \$2,675. In Western Queensland, it was a measly \$320. It creates a chronic shortage of housing that is now threatening our economic sustainability.

Private employers—be they tourism and hospitality, transport, small business or agriculture—repeatedly tell me that they cannot recruit workers because they cannot rent a house in the town. One of the big changes in Western Queensland is that the Queensland government no longer takes responsibility for owning or maintaining its own employee housing. It chooses to rent from our tiny, tiny private rental market. It is like having a whale shark in a swimming pool!

Last year I told the House how the Queensland government had a young Longreach couple evicted from their rental house for a government employee. The young pair had been paying \$400 a week. The Queensland government gazumped them with a \$680 per week pay cheque. Why would any responsible government do this? Well, a responsible government would not. It would build new employee housing so we could recruit and retain doctors, nurses, police officers and teachers. Instead, this government has run down our housing stocks in Western Queensland—both government employee housing and social housing.

We need to get better housing outcomes for regional and rural areas. We have employees such as tyre fitters and boilermakers—people are screaming out for workers—but we do not have a housing market in rural and remote to be able to accommodate those people. If we want to grow Queensland, we have to grow our housing market out my way.