




Speech By  
**Fiona Simpson**

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2023

**HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.57 pm): I feel like we are living in a parallel universe. We hear Labor members sprout that they are holding round tables and they have a plan to address the housing crisis, yet what we have not seen is anyone in charge in this government. There are multiple ministers who do have legislative and moral responsibility, but we do not see anyone who is actually in charge and driving the program.

Let's have a little look just at the Land Supply and Development Monitoring Report, which is supposed to monitor the South-East Queensland region's land supply and development activity. This was supposed to be just one indicator to help monitor and drive the timely release and provide appropriate information to the market. I understand the latest monitoring report for December 2022 has still not been released. This is indicative of this government. I am sure they have the information, but they are not sharing it with all of the market. The market is also saying that the way the government is interacting with it is broken.

I believe in good planning. I believe in having the right infrastructure in place to deliver the appropriate types of accommodation in our communities, but this government has completely dropped the ball. I believe its concept of build to rent is recognition of and an admission that it has totally blown the systemic reform that is required to help encourage more investment in the private rental market.

I am sure there will be some nice projects that will help some, but they will be commercial-in-confidence. You will not know the deals that have been done. Why shouldn't there be an open book on this? If we really want to see investment in the private sector, with the government encouraging people in, have systemic reform. We do need private investment in this sector. Roughly 70 per cent of homes are occupied by owner-occupiers and 30 per cent are occupied by renters. It varies a little bit in some markets. In recent times a tremendous number of people have decided to enter the home owner market and have bought their own home for the first time. Many of the rented homes that have been sold have not come back into the rental pool. There is a shortfall in supply.

I want to quote some figures from the Sunshine Coast, where I am. We have seen a record number of people who are homeless or the working poor—people who never expected to be homeless. This experience has been reflected throughout Queensland. Between 2016 and 2021, the average population increase was about 8,500 per year. This was before the COVID disruption. What did we see in regard to new home approvals? We saw about 2,800 new home approvals per year. Currently, we are sitting with a vacancy rate in the rental market of about 0.8 per cent. To cut a long story short, there is a lack of supply. This is being reflected everywhere.

If we want to see more supply in the market, we will have to do a whole lot better than what we have seen to date. Some of the programs are nice, but it is tinkering around the edges. I will still have people coming into my office who are sleeping in tents or sleeping in cars. When I talk to some of the social agencies and people who are out there trying to help these folks, they say that it has changed from when a family living in a car would be found emergency accommodation. Now the question is,

'How old is your family living in the car? If the kids are old enough, okay. If they are little kids, we'll get you into emergency accommodation.' I kid you not: that is one of the conversations that has been relayed to me by somebody who is on the front line of trying to help the most vulnerable.

For goodness sake, we need more urgency and more practical solutions than round tables, which are more about media spin than about driving the wheels to release more supply. Not enough is being done, there is no minister who is responsible and still there are incredibly stupid decisions being made by some of the ministers of this government such as Minister de Brenni—what he has done with public works, what he has done with the National Construction Code and what he has done in ignoring the concerns of the building industry, who are saying, 'We are facing genuine situations where more will go broke.' He is not listening to them.

I believe that you can bring about appropriate reforms to the National Construction Code, but you would not do it the way this man is doing it. They are talking about an average increase of \$50,000 for an average house build in some areas. A whole raft of display homes will no longer be of use. In some places, the price for a slab-on-ground house has increased by about 20 per cent, while the price for houses on sloping sites has increased by around 30 per cent. When I talk to people in Far North Queensland and North Queensland about some of the proposed changes that are coming and the way this National Construction Code will be implemented, they say that it is a whole lot more than about \$50,000 per home. Other builders are saying that the uncertainty and the way it has been done, with this chaotic government, means they are going to get out of the industry.

We have to listen to these people, but I do not believe that this government is listening. We need the builders to build the homes to house the people who are currently living in the bushes, in tents—trying to head wherever they can to get shelter or living in their cars. You are still mucking around at the margins of this issue. It is time we had a minister who is responsible. It is time to release the data rather than hiding it—the land supply monitoring reports and all the other reports. This government has wall-to-wall data but it is not listening to industry. I have spoken to many people, not only in the building industry, who want to see the timely release of new housing stock into the market. This is about supply. What we have seen in the last eight years is a falling pipeline of supply relative to population increase. COVID on top of that has been disruptive, but the trend was already there.

It is pretty ridiculous when it can take eight to 10 years for a housing master plan to be released to the market but there is a lack of recognition from government that they need to do more. It is indicative when we have a transport minister presiding over a department that realises when it goes to expand the roads, 'Oops, there is a housing development.' Those home owners were never notified that their houses would be potentially affected by realignment for expanded roads. That is a government's bread and butter. A good government should ensure planning is done in such a way that it does not have to bulldoze brand new homes in a time of housing crisis.

This is a government that cannot plan, cannot deliver and will not listen to the people who have the solutions. Who pays the price ultimately? It is some of the most vulnerable people in Queensland. I have never seen so many coming through my electorate office door in Maroochydore. I know that my colleagues in this House and others across the parliament have seen the same in their electorates—people who are desperate. We need better from this government than round tables of hot air and talking. It is time for action. It is time to put a minister in charge with clear, transparent deliverable KPIs. Deliver housing and incentivise the private sector, rather than just your mates with a few commercial-in-confidence deals. Reform the system because it is broken currently. The announcements to date are only verifying that fact.

As I said, I am sure there will be some nice projects built, but it will not be enough unless we start to see a real reform of the system. I want to see people afforded the dignity of a roof over their heads, not in the terrible situation where they do not have that pipeline of supply. They are moving out of the area or, increasingly, moving into desperation and distress.

I heard some members laughing or cackling when my colleague the member for Surfers Paradise was talking about a gentleman who was looking to bring a shed into compliance as a dwelling. I thought, 'How ignorant they are.' There are people who are living in a whole lot worse than sheds. I know that there are people who are literally living in the bushes, in parks, in cars, under bridges, on couches and in vulnerable situations. That should never be the case. It is time we saw action from a government that delivers rather than what we have seen to date: a crisis of their chaos, which is now hurting the most vulnerable. It is time they woke up, stopped blaming other people and took action.