




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (4.35 pm): Housing is one of the most pressing issues facing my constituents in Currumbin. While I note the contents of this bill, I question whether any of these amendments will make a real difference to the housing crisis we are currently facing. On the face of it, it appears that the bill will not actually meaningfully increase the accessibility or affordability of homes in this state. The reality is that housing pressures across our state are putting enormous stress on families, businesses and communities, which has been compounded by the skyrocketing cost of living.

From the conversations I have had with locals in my electorate of Currumbin it is very clear that the lack of rental vacancies and housing opportunities on the southern Gold Coast is creating significant hardships right across our community. Much has been made of the acute rental stress on the Gold Coast. Poor planning from the state government has meant that infrastructure has not kept up with the increase in population. For example, across the state residential building approvals decreased by close to 40 per cent between 2014-15 and 2019-20.

For the December quarter of 2022, the Gold Coast rental vacancy rate was a startling 0.7 per cent. A healthy rental market has a vacancy rate of between 2.6 per cent and 3.5 per cent. That is compounded by huge rental prices. According to SQM Research, for properties on the Gold Coast the average weekly rent has passed \$900, which is higher than Brisbane, higher than Sydney and higher than Melbourne. This time two years ago, for the southern Gold Coast and Gold Coast the average rental price was sitting at around \$554. I ask members to imagine a family of four where both parents work and, over the past two years, their rent has increased by over \$400 a week.

Mr Boothman: They're working for the rent.

Mrs GERBER: Yes. The latest census data shows that the Gold Coast is one of the most expensive places to rent in Australia. It is scary to think that our beautiful region is becoming unaffordable for the next generation. Why has this happened? It has not happened overnight. It is eight years in the making; eight years of failed policy and failed planning by this state government, which has resulted in a housing crisis that is genuinely affecting my electorate of Currumbin. Hardworking locals are desperately looking for an affordable place to live in the place that they call home. They are not asking for handouts. They are not asking for anything to be free. They just want it to be fair. However, over the course of eight years this state government has failed them. It has failed to plan and it has failed to deliver housing solutions. To curb the housing crisis, right now the absolute focus must be on boosting housing supply in the short, medium and long term.

Let me share a story from my electorate of Currumbin, where the state government's failure to plan and failure to deliver is painstakingly clear. Not too long ago, a concerned resident contacted me. They are part of a long-term local family, and they are being pushed out of the community because of the housing crisis. This family's rent went up and they could not afford the property they were in. They have been searching for a rental property since early 2021. They are now fearful they will have to move out of the area. They have been living house to house and have not had a permanent home since 2021.

They are trying to find somewhere to live, but they do not want to uproot their children from the local school. They do not want to leave behind their family and friends. Why should they have to, because of this state government's failure to plan and failure to deliver? This constituent said to me, 'I'm going to contact Labor and see if I can make a difference. Something needs to be done. People are suffering and if we don't speak up nothing will change.'

The rental market right across Queensland is so tight. It is being compounded by poor planning and a lack of foresight by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Social housing on the Gold Coast is not really an option, either. In the Currumbin electorate the number of people waiting for social housing has dramatically increased, by 84.3 per cent since 2018, yet the number of social housing dwellings has risen by just 63 since 2017. The Productivity Commissioner found that the Palaszczuk Labor government is the worst government in the country when it comes to housing, spending the least on social housing compared to every other state. The Auditor-General found that social housing promised by this state government is not meeting surging demand and that there are no forecasts or targets for how much social housing stock is needed in Queensland.

Mr Boothman: This legislation won't help.

Mrs GERBER: I take that interjection. This legislation does nothing to deal with those targets. The figures are staggering, and they reflect a government in chaos. They reflect a government with an inability to plan and an inability to deliver. This housing crisis has not just happened overnight; it has been eight years in the making—eight years of failure to plan and failure to deliver.

The southern Gold Coast is such a uniquely beautiful part of our state with magnificent beaches, beautiful hinterland and our village community feel, but small and family businesses in my electorate of Currumbin are finding it difficult to even attract staff, because those staff have nowhere to live because the rental market is so tight. This state government has failed to deliver housing supply.

In Coolangatta we have Southern Cross University—an amazing university and the university I got my degree from. It provides hundreds of students with the opportunity to learn in a beautiful part of the world. Those students then go on to get jobs in our local small and family businesses and go on to support our region, but in order for those students to be able to stay we need a healthy rental market. Those students need somewhere to live. Right now they do not have that, because this state government has failed to deliver housing supply.

Further, the lack of housing has made it incredibly challenging for families to stay together. I know from my own experience as a mum that I want my children to grow up and be able to afford to live in the area they love, where they are supported by their family and friends. Many in my community feel the same. I know that in too many cases people just cannot find a place to live because this state government has failed to plan, failed to deliver and failed to provide housing stock.

The LNP will not stand in the way of any measure that will assist Queenslanders to get into homes, but the Palaszczuk Labor government does not seem to grasp the full extent of this crisis. It is full of talkfests but no meaningful action to deliver homes for Queenslanders. This bill will not address the broader issue of housing affordability or supply across our state, especially in my electorate of Currumbin.

The Gold Coast needs a government that is going to provide real solutions on this issue—*not* just talkfests and platitudes. We have solutions on the table. They include more adequate land supply, partnering with the community sector to deliver affordable and social housing, and building projects on time and on budget.

Government members interjected.

Mrs GERBER: They do not like it, because they have failed to do it themselves. In fact, I will not be surprised if they pinch our policy. I will not be surprised if I hear them talking about partnering with the private sector in order to deliver social housing.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. There is way too much noise. We are getting out of control. We have been very good.

Mrs GERBER: We will also ensure that we deliver projects on time and on budget. That is another aspect in which this state government has abysmally failed. It has a trickle-down effect. On this side of the House, we are determined to drive change. We are determined to drive change so that every single Queenslanders can have a roof over their head. That is what Queenslanders expect of a good government. Under this Palaszczuk Labor government, people are failing to have a basic need met—that is, a roof over their head. It is really not good enough. Queenslanders deserve so much better than what they are getting. This housing crisis lies directly at the feet of this state government.