




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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**HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY (PLANNING AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; BUILDING INDUSTRY FAIRNESS
(SECURITY OF PAYMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.37 pm): I want to address some of the issues my constituents have been raising with me about housing, homelessness, the cost of construction and the distress that has come with the housing crisis. At a time when there are unprecedented numbers of people living in tents, even those we would not have expected historically to find in such dire circumstances—they may have a job—we are seeing that more and more people do not have many other options. This crisis is not due to COVID, which I heard the member for Bundaberg try to blame. This is a crisis that has been brewing because of failures of government and bureaucracy. They have not listened and understood that if you do not enable construction and investment in the housing market then you can, in fact, make a tight market worse. We will see it get worse than we have already seen. I do not like saying that, but I am talking to people in the industry who have a passion for building houses so that people can own their own or rent their own homes. They tell me that the government is not listening to the concerns that they are raising.

The bill before the House does not address housing affordability because this government is still adding extra costs and is not listening. I want to address the issue of the new construction code and the fact that Queensland, under this Labor government, decided to go it alone and not carve out exemptions. They persisted not only with the way that they were implementing the accessibility standards as a mandatory requirement but also with the energy ratings. Today a manufactured home builder told me that they are able to address the accessibility issues fairly effectively, but they estimate that the new energy system will cost them \$20,000 to \$40,000 extra per dwelling. That is a very efficient and effective builder of manufactured homes. That is a substantial increase.

This government is not listening. Guess what? You do not have energy ratings on a tent and yet they are putting energy ratings at a level 7 star rating which is actually adding to the homelessness issue. It is time they listened to the industry and the people who actually build things rather than to government ministers who prance around in construction hats and vests, saying, 'We know about the industry'. They are not listening. It is time that they listened because in this one example a builder estimates that \$20,000 to \$40,000 will be added to the cost of the dwellings that they build and they are an efficient and effective builder. However, there are other examples.

If they want to unlock housing supply and get people off the streets and into housing and get young people into homes that they can afford, rather than having government ministers prancing around in their little hats and vests they should listen to the people who hold a hammer. They should listen to the people who actually build houses and stop treating them with contempt. It has been disgraceful. They are still not listening and they still do not get it. It is extremely distressing to see people living in tents. Those 40,000 to 50,000 people might be on a waitlist for social housing, but I talk to people who are over the threshold for social housing but do not have enough to buy a house or enough to afford

the rental hikes because there is no supply. It is time that the government got serious, rather than putting more barriers in the way of those who can solve the problem. It is time that, instead of denying there is an issue, ministers talk to the people who build houses. That is vitally important.

I spoke to one manufactured home builder whose company is a one-stop shop. They believe—and the minister can confirm whether this is right—that QBuild's approach to manufactured homes is to buy the building that has the floors, walls, frames and external cladding. It then goes to a factory at Pinkenba where it is fitted out. It then goes on site and somebody else installs it on the stumps and another company might come in and do the civil works for the connections and services. The minister can confirm whether QBuild does all of those steps or just one or two of those steps. I would certainly appreciate the minister advising which of the steps QBuild undertakes. In the industry there are very efficient and effective operators that do all of those steps. They are the ones who are telling me that the new regulations this government is bringing in will add substantial extra costs. They say there is a better way to do this and achieve not only energy efficiency but cost efficiency and affordability because it matters—all of these things matter.

We have heard about some of the provisions that were in the original legislation that have now been pulled out of the legislation. My colleague the member for Kawana has outlined that. There is chaos and crisis in regard to the way this government mishandles planning. It is time that they worked with local government to understand that, when they bring in changes without talking to people beforehand, there can be unintended consequences and confusion that not only adds to the cost but also delays the willingness to invest in the development that needs to occur.

We should not be seeing the level of homelessness that we are seeing in this state. I am sick of hearing people trying to palm it off on something like COVID. They need to bite the bullet and understand that government has a responsibility across all of its departments to listen. I know the government has tried to say that granny flats would be part of the answer, yet we still have not seen any evidence of that supply being unlocked. I would suggest they might want to talk to the utility companies. If you were to put a granny flat on your place or even build a granny flat within your existing home that may be compliant with all the rules, water utility companies can come along and say that it is a secondary dwelling. You do not have an extra service to your property and you do not have an extra meter, but they can charge you double the service access as an ongoing recurrent charge—not just an infrastructure charge, Minister. I suggest that you might want to find out about that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Through the chair, please, member.

Ms SIMPSON: I say to the minister: there are utility companies such as water utility companies that will say, 'Whacko', because it is not just an infrastructure access charge; they will actually recurrently charge double the service access fees on that property.

These are some examples where others have got their fingers in the pie and are affecting housing affordability. They are affecting people's recurrent costs, as in the case that I have just outlined. Even though there would be no additional metering, the utility companies would do that in some of the examples that I am aware of. One home owner had an extra sink installed in his property and the local water utility company said it was a granny flat within the house, even though it was not actually occupied as such. The only way that they could avoid paying double the water access fees for that property was to rip the sink out. How ridiculous!

There are many areas where the government and some other entities are adding to the costs which, in turn, adds to people's reluctance to invest in some of the solutions. My plea to this government is: listen to those who actually build the houses. Do not keep adding to the costs. Do not refuse to listen when there is a lack of clarity. On the software that is necessary to assess the energy ratings on buildings, we are still talking to people who are finding that, where they have to have certified people to apply those ratings, it is not clear enough. In some of the examples I have heard from builders, the expense can be \$20,000 to \$40,000 extra per dwelling.

(Time expired)