




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 16 April 2024

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

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.33 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to address the Speaker's statement this morning in the House concerning correspondence from the Leader of the House. This is the first time this matter has been drawn to my attention. In response to the Speaker's request, I confirm that I have removed my social media post which said that not a single minister made a ministerial statement on the day in question. I wish to correct the record and advise that my social media post should have instead said that only one minister made a ministerial statement on the day in question and that 18 of the 19 ministers did not make statements on the day in question.

This bill has been touted by this state Labor government as a solution to the housing crisis, and that could not be further from the truth. This bill in fact does nothing to meaningfully address the housing crisis that Queenslanders face. There are now more than 20,000 Queenslanders living without a roof over their head, and it is because of the failures of this state Labor government.

Today I am going to give a voice to one of these individuals. His name is Matthew. His experience with homelessness paints a stark picture of the challenges faced by so many in our community. I want you to imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you have lost your home and you are forced to sleep wherever you can find shelter, such as on a park bench, a covered doorway or on the ground outside your local shopping centre. I recently met Matthew in Kirra. He was sleeping on the bench outside my office. He was cold and he was the victim of youth crime. His wallet with what little cash he had and the shoes off his feet had been stolen overnight by youth criminals. This was not the first time it had happened. Matthew told me that he is regularly robbed of his possessions while sleeping in the streets of Coolangatta. Matthew is one of the most compassionate people I have met. Despite his own dire circumstances, Matthew commits his time to aiding others who are in similar situations to his own. He spends his week distributing food and warm clothes that are donated to him by local businesses to support others who are experiencing homelessness in our area. He connects them with support services.

Matthew has been on this state government's social housing waitlist for four years. He has been living without a roof over his head for four years while waiting for this state Labor government to do something meaningful to fix the housing crisis plaguing our state. Last month the Premier made a commitment to another Queenslanders facing similar conditions. He said, 'If it stops you sleeping in a car, then the state government will pay for hotel accommodation.' I say to the Premier and Minister for Housing that there are more than 20,000 people like Matthew who are living without a roof over their heads right now. What is this state government doing right now to fix the housing crisis for people like Matthew? Matthew has been on the social housing waitlist for four years. For four years he has been waiting to have a roof over his head, and because of the failures of this state Labor government he is still sleeping rough without housing. This bill will not help Matthew.

This bill will not help Matthew or any other family experiencing homelessness. In fact, despite what the government is claiming this bill seems to be less about delivering homes for Queenslanders and more about shifting blame. That is not the leadership our community deserves. This state government is in a constant state of chaos and crisis. This bill was introduced by the then minister for state development, infrastructure, local government and planning. Despite making an absolute mess of the bill, he is now Premier and the new minister has to come in to clean up his mess. As late as this morning she came into this House and removed items from the bill because Premier Miles refused to listen to stakeholders and LNP committee members who told him there were issues with this bill. Instead, the Premier pushed these changes through.

The LGAQ said as much about the unworkability and impracticability of the urban investigation zone in their submission to the committee. They said—

As the bill is currently drafted, we are concerned, and local governments have raised concerns with us, that the utility and application and the workability of that zone and the effectiveness, therefore, may not actually deliver the intended outcome.

Instead of listening to all of the stakeholders who shared their views, this Premier pushed ahead. He forged ahead to serve his own political gains instead of supporting Queenslanders. We saw that evidenced in question time again today. When the Premier was asked about youth crime, the Premier admitted that they vacated the field on youth crime and they are putting politics above people yet again.

This will be the 14th change to the Planning Act 2016 since Labor came to power in 2015. Their priorities are clear. The housing crisis is getting worse. It is because of nine years of Labor government inaction and mismanagement and incompetent ministers that we find ourselves in this position today. There is not enough housing. There have not been enough lots released, and there is not enough infrastructure to support our great state's population and growth.

Premier Miles and this minister are directly responsible for those failures. The Premier had the opportunity to fix the housing crisis when he was the relevant minister and he allowed it to happen. Under his watch, over the past nine years, we have seen this housing crisis unfold before our eyes and people like Matthew are paying the ultimate price. A record number of Queenslanders are living in tents and cars. A record number are homeless right now. Every day I see messages from my community and my constituents on the southern Gold Coast who are struggling to pay their rent, who are having to make a choice between putting a roof over their family's head and eating good nutritious meals and who are considering leaving our beautiful state and city for somewhere more affordable.

Meta and her beautiful young family are working hard in our community. She has two jobs. Her partner works full-time. They have a small business but they are struggling to find a home. Jess and her fiancé are in the same position. The rental property James has been living in for the past two years is now up for sale. He runs his own business but is struggling to find a home. Andre and his partner are working multiple jobs but are struggling to find a home. Ashleigh is a nurse. She too is struggling to find a home. The message in our communities is clear: the housing crisis is getting worse under this state Labor government.

For those who have secured housing, the crisis does not end there. They are facing continuous pressure from skyrocketing rent as a result of the Palaszczuk Labor government's failure to release land for new houses. The Gold Coast now has among the highest rental rates in Australia. Vicki's rent has gone up \$100 a week. Naomi's is up \$120. Jennelle's is up \$190. Natasha's is up \$200. Cheryl's is up \$250. Alana's is up \$300 and Nat's went up \$320. They are real people who are facing the very real and dire situation that has been created by this state Labor government through its failure to increase land supply so that we are now in a housing crisis. The great Australian dream is getting further and further away and young Queenslanders are losing hope that they will ever be able to afford to buy their own home.

This bill does not give us hope. This bill does not give Queenslanders hope. This bill does not even give the minister hope. In fact, she could not even bring herself to use the full 30 minutes when speaking about one of the biggest issues facing Queenslanders. She had two bills to speak about but she could not bring herself to use the full amount of time allocated to her to speak on this bill and the serious housing crisis that Queenslanders are facing. There were two bills to speak about.

Year on year, building approvals are down 31 per cent since Labor came to power. On the Gold Coast, the reality is even more stark: residential lot approvals are down 52 per cent. As a result, the amount renters are paying has skyrocketed by 64 per cent. For those trying to buy a house, on average, they are paying 88 per cent more than they were paying when this state Labor government came to power in 2015. This state government is completely out of ideas when it comes to fixing the housing crisis. They have run out of housing forums. They have run out of ideas and the only way Queenslanders are going to see this crisis fixed is if they change the government in October and show Labor the door in 2024.