




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 11 June 2024

HELP TO BUY (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Public Works) (6.15 pm), in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate. There is no clearer example of how unfit and unprepared the LNP is for government than the debate on this bill. From the frankly bizarre contribution from the member for Burleigh, who effectively suggested that unless you are a 63-year-old white male you do not have the experience to be in this House, through to the unhinged rants from the member for Everton, who in one breath called us socialists and then in the next breath said they are going to support the bill—I thank those opposite, comrades—it is clear that they have not learned a single thing since their slash-and-burn approach to housing policy in this state. The member for Everton has the audacity to come into this House and talk about social and affordable housing in this state when he was the housing minister who sent social housing backwards by 428 homes. That is particularly—

Mr Hart: More rubbish!

Ms SCANLON: I take the member's interjection. It is not rubbish; it is factual. It is especially alarming when we think about the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is keen to appoint the member for Everton to have another crack at it.

I would now like to address some of the specific matters raised by members during the debate. We heard a lot from those opposite about how the problem with the Help to Buy scheme, and why the LNP in Canberra opposed it, is allegedly because of the lack of detail. Frankly, that is fundamentally untrue because the Queensland LNP MPs in Canberra made it clear that they have a basic ideological problem with the shared equity scheme. Honourable members do not need to take my word for it; they can take the word of the member for Bowman, who said—

This housing scheme, unfortunately, will not offer homeownership but rather home co-ownership with the government.

...

We've got serious concerns about the shared-equity model. ... Shared-equity schemes are not the solution to help Australians into their own homes.

Then there was the member for Herbert, who said—

This bill should be scrapped, and the Albanese Labor government needs to set up policies that get out of your way, not in your way.

...

The coalition wants a smaller government. ... They don't want to force people to go into partnership with the government to buy their home.

Then there was the member for Dawson, who said—

I don't know anyone who wants to skip hand in hand with the Australian government down the path to the first front door that they have ever owned.

...

A coalition government does not want a stake in your family home.

Those are the words of the LNP.

As I highlighted in my second reading speech, the Leader of the Opposition's hand-picked candidate for Oodgeroo called the Help to Buy scheme 'really dangerous'. Let's be honest: this is not about the detail; it is about the policy. The LNP have been clear that they do not support shared equity schemes, and it is typical of this opposition not being up-front about what they actually think. They are focused on a tiny target, not actually being up-front with the people of Queensland.

We also heard the members for Burleigh and Gympie, among others, indicate that the LNP does not think those earning under \$90,000 should have access to this scheme. Just to be clear—

Mr Hart: Where did I say that exactly? Actually, I'll be writing to the Speaker about that.

Ms SCANLON: I take the member's interjection.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Comments will come through the chair.

Ms SCANLON: I take the member for Burleigh's interjection and I recommend that he go back and look at what he said on the record.

Mr Hart: I recommend you go back and have a look at—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burleigh, cease your interjections. They will come through the chair.

Ms SCANLON: I am happy to stand up on my record compared to the member for Burleigh's any day of the week. This is a scheme entirely designed for low- and middle-income earners. An early career teacher or nurse or police officer would be excluded from this scheme in the view of some of those opposite.

There was a series of reflections about the cost of housing, and it is one thing I will agree on: we need more affordable housing in this country and the best way to drive down prices to ensure that we have affordable housing is to build more homes. In particular, the member for Burleigh indicated the significant cost of housing in his electorate. It is unfortunate, though, that the member for Burleigh and other Gold Coast colleagues have then been opposed to building more houses in their own electorates. In one breath they say, 'We need more supply,' and then when there is supply proposed in their own backyard they say, 'No, not here.'

This bill is just one of many measures as part of our Homes for Queenslanders plan. What I note with interest is that often when bills come into this House relating to housing all I hear from members of the opposition is references to the REIQ. They do not seem to ever want to talk about Tenants Queensland or any of the other organisations in the housing sector. They do not want to talk about the fact that the Property Council backed in our housing plan. They do not want to talk about the fact that the Queensland Council of Social Service described our plan as nation leading. They do not want to talk about any of those things because we know they think that our plan is too much—and that is what they have said—and that is code for cuts. As I said, this is one of many measures. We also have our first home owner's grant. We have doubled that to \$30,000 for new homes. It is the most generous in the country, and today the Treasurer confirmed that we are also lifting the stamp duty threshold to help more young Queenslanders get into the market.

We also have our Housing Investment Fund which members of the LNP have raised a number of times today, and I want to be really clear: the Housing Investment Fund is housing hundreds and hundreds of Queenslanders through the purchase of National Rental Affordability Scheme homes. We would not have had to buy those homes to keep them affordable if the LNP in Canberra had not decided to end that scheme.

Mr Hart: It was a 10-year program. Tell the truth!

Ms SCANLON: I take the member for Burleigh's interjection. It was a time limited program and the LNP decided to not continue it, so I make the point that because it had decided not to continue it those people would have been subject to the private market—not affordable housing rates—unless we had stepped in, and those opposite are opposing that. If they do not support us using the Housing Investment Fund to buy National Rental Affordability Scheme homes, they do not support those homes being affordable. We are doing that because we think it is the right thing to do, but at the same time we are also building more homes. We have hundreds of homes under construction right now. In fact, we have nearly a thousand homes under construction right now both through the Housing Investment Fund and a whole range of other funds that the LNP conveniently does not want to talk about because it does not suit its political narrative.

Just last week—and I mention this because I hear the member for Everton frequently talk about how those opposite are going to unleash the community housing sector despite the fact that we are doing a whole range of things to support the community housing sector and there has never been more money available under our government—the Brisbane Housing Co. topped out on one of its HIF projects in Chermside, and there are hundreds of homes under construction. That demonstrates that we have homes under construction under the Housing Investment Fund. Every time those opposite criticise the Housing Investment Fund and the timeframes, they are actually criticising community housing providers. That is what they are doing. As I said, we are building social homes through a number of our funds. I know that is an unfamiliar concept to the member for Everton because he saw social housing in this state go backwards by 428 homes and took the extraordinary step—

Ms Enoch interjected.

Ms SCANLON:—I take the member's interjection—to cut the social housing construction program by 90 per cent. That is their record. I note that the LNP in Canberra has also attempted to block the Housing Australia Future Fund, so I find it very interesting that those opposite talk about the HIF but stay silent on the Housing Australia Future Fund. I look forward to seeing their comments in support of some of those projects that are coming out that are no thanks to their colleagues in Canberra, who spent months and months blocking that bill from going through the parliament and voted against it when it came to the Senate.

On the issues raised around the operation of the scheme, operational details are a matter for the Australian government and will be established in the program directions made under the Commonwealth legislation, including the eligibility criteria such as income thresholds, property price caps and what happens if a scheme participant's circumstances change. The Miles government has been advocating strongly to the Australian government to ensure that this scheme helps as many Queenslanders as possible. What I find hypocritical is the LNP having the audacity to lecture me about advocating to the federal government, which I do, and I raise those issues publicly because I will stand up for Queensland any day of the week. Where on earth were those brave soldiers when the LNP was in government over the last 10 years when it discontinued the National Rental Affordability Scheme, when the coalition axed the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, when it voted against the Housing Australia Future Fund? Those opposite were silent—silent—and then they have the audacity to come in here and tell me that I need to advocate to the federal government when that is exactly what we are doing.

The Miles government understands that owning a home is still a vital part of the Australian dream, but for many aspiring home owners, particularly low- and middle-income Australians, it has become increasingly difficult. That is why we are committed to using every tool at our disposal to make sure that that great Australian dream of home ownership remains in reach for all Queenslanders. This scheme will work alongside our other initiatives and programs to help more Queenslanders into safe and secure housing, and supporting the rollout and delivery of the Commonwealth Help to Buy scheme is a crucial step towards our goal of ensuring every Queenslanders has a place to call home. I commend the bill to the House.