




Speech By  
**Tony Perrett**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (8.49 pm): I rise to speak on the Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill has its origins in the housing crisis which is crippling Queensland. The bill seeks to expand the main purposes of the Economic Development Act to include the provision of diverse housing such as social and affordable housing.

The government says the objective is to give Economic Development Queensland, or EDQ, the tools it needs to address the housing shortage through various amendments dealing with housing supply affordability and diversity, investment powers, renewal framework, increasing operational efficiency and EDQ's corporate structure. This bill is significantly increasing the power and role of Economic Development Queensland. EDQ will simultaneously have control of approving and policing developments while also acting as a developer itself. This approach can be fraught with conflicts of interest and potential issues about conflicting roles.

As EDQ will be able to return dividends to the state, there is also the risk that decisions could be clouded by financial returns rather than based on the best outcome for everyone. Expanding the main purpose of the Economic Development Act to include the provision of diverse housing, such as social and affordable housing, raises several potential conflicts. EDQ is part of the department of state development. Under this bill, major housing policy and activities will be effectively steered by the department of state development. Where does this leave the department of housing? It opens the door to issues such as duplication of effort, increased inefficiencies and conflicts in policy direction or intent. Which department—or, rather, which factional colleague—will have precedence in overseeing housing policy?

As with almost every piece of legislation introduced by the government, stakeholders have raised concerns about limited time for consultation, ambiguity, confusion, differing infrastructure standards and whether costs will be passed on. Utility providers raised concerns about existing customers having to cross-subsidise growth areas. Local government will be required to hand over collected infrastructure charges. Where do they—or, rather, ratepayers—stand when some of those charges have already been spent or allocated? In a cost-of-living crisis, which has been exacerbated by this government, the last thing Queensland needs is costs being passed on. The housing institute of Australia has described this bill as 'fundamentally flawed and, if legislated, will increase the risk of new housing in Queensland'. It is concerned that conditions to deliver social or affordable housing, or, alternatively, a monetary contribution, will ultimately be paid by future homebuyers.

The housing crisis has been caused by the government's failure to plan and deliver. There is little to show after a round table, a housing summit, another round table, countless plans and dot points, dozens of media events and visits in high-vis vests and hard hats. Queenslanders have been given false hope and broken promises from ill-considered thought bubbles and kneejerk and haphazard responses.

The government has cynically repeated false promises to deliver and yet not released enough land for new homes. It never planned or forecast how many social homes were needed. It continually neglects the community housing sector. Today's budget was a reminder that, for two years in a row, the government has made the same budget announcement about 1,200 new social and affordable homes. It cynically repeated the same commitment from the previous year, which had never been delivered. Two years ago, the Treasurer declared that a unit block 'would not be appropriate' for Gympie residents who were expected to sleep rough in tents or cars.

Rents are skyrocketing and houses are at a premium because the Labor government has not released enough land for new houses and is demonising and driving away landlords. You need timber to build homes, yet the government has systemically undermined or ignored Queensland's homegrown timber and forestry industry. Last month, the REIQ chief executive said that the rental market will still heavily rely on everyday citizen investors choosing to rent out their properties. A healthy housing market needs a mix of options.

I regularly receive complaints about the housing market in my own electorate. People struggle to access safe and secure housing. It is one of the most difficult issues to resolve. A healthy vacancy rate is between 2.6 and 3.5 per cent. A tight market is between zero and 2.5 per cent. The Real Estate Institute of Queensland's March quarterly rental report showed Gympie vacancies were at 1.1 per cent. My office fields calls from distressed residents trying to find crisis accommodation. Too often, we are told that there are no available vacancies. Private renters contact me distressed that it is getting harder and harder to find somewhere to live.

Whether you call it social or crisis housing, there is very little available across the Gympie region. The pressure on the private rental market puts pressure on the social housing list. People are living in tents, under bridges, in the main street and in their cars. Charity groups—those that provide help for the vulnerable—are being stretched. The situation has deteriorated so much that, three years ago, former Gympie Citizen of the Year Marlene Owen co-founded the Gympie Regional Homeless Assistance Group to feed the homeless and vulnerable members of the community.

The government must get the mix right between renters, landlords, home owners, mum-and-dad investors and residential park owners. Queenslanders and Gympie residents are paying the price because housing has been treated as a political issue. When people are living in their cars or in tents or are couch surfing, when families are being split and forced to live apart, the last thing they need is badly thought out legislation, spin, platitudes and trickery. I do not oppose the bill.