



Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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ADJOURNMENT

Regional Housing Ltd

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.20 pm): Today it is a true privilege to stand here and celebrate the story of an organisation that has not only changed lives but also changed the very landscape of housing across regional Queensland. More than 35 years ago, in the heart of Bundaberg, a small group of dedicated people came together with a simple purpose: to offer advice and a safe place to stay for those at risk of homelessness and the most vulnerable. What began as a modest charity with a single boarding house for men has grown into something truly remarkable. Today, Regional Housing Ltd stands proudly as the only tier 1 community housing provider that was founded and continues to operate solely within regional and rural Queensland. That alone is an extraordinary achievement.

Regional Queensland faces housing challenges unlike anywhere else in Australia, with vast distances, limited supply and communities that depend on one another. What sets Regional Housing apart is that the organisation's staff live in those very communities. They know the towns, the faces and the struggles, and they bring a deep personal understanding to every solution they deliver.

From those humble beginnings, Regional Housing now employs over 80 staff, delivering housing and support across 13 local government areas from Bundaberg to Townsville and the Fraser Coast to the Torres Strait. Soon they will be in the Southern Downs, Whitsundays and the Tablelands. Their reach is vast but their mission remains beautifully simple: every person has a home. Their housing portfolio now spans around 1,000 dwellings, from crisis accommodation and youth shelters to disability housing and homes for women, particularly those aged over 55. Their future looks bright, with over 200 new dwellings currently in development, each one representing hope, stability and a new beginning for someone in need. However, the organisation is about more than just housing; it is about support, it is about connection and it is about helping people rebuild their lives through services like homelessness support, financial counselling, home modifications and outreach programs that meet people where they live.

Regional Housing Ltd is proof of what is possible when compassion meets commitment and when a regional housing organisation refuses to accept that geography should define opportunity. From a small charity with a big heart to a respected leader in community housing, the organisation has grown, evolved and thrived, all while keeping one vision at its core: every person has a home. Thanks to Regional Housing Ltd, more and more Queenslanders do have a place to call home.

That brings me to a sad indictment as in the debate on a motion earlier today the member for Bundaberg viciously attacked this same organisation, which has done so much in our community. He made outrageous accusations such as that they are not able to provide homes. I say to the people at Regional Housing: the LNP gets you and we want to work with you on housing solutions. We will not use you as a political football, as was done today. Today's debate showed an incredible depth of immaturity and lack of respect. Most importantly, those most vulnerable people in our community, particularly in Bundaberg, deserve so much more than the cheap political stunt we saw today.