

17 March 2008

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

### **Housing Affordability**

**Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (8.46 p.m.)**—I rise in support of the motion moved by the member for Blaxland. It just goes to show that, notwithstanding the election, those on the other side have not learnt the lessons that are there to be learnt from the election. Principally, one of the things the Australian people were telling the former government was that there was real pain in the community. That is what this motion is demonstrating—that there is considerable pain out there.

Hearing the member for Fadden reminds me of the former Prime Minister's comment that working Australians, working families, had never been better off. He forgot to mention that we currently have the second highest level of interest rates in the developed world and the highest inflation in 16 years. This is the legacy that we have been left by the former government. But compounding these national figures is the impact that these figures are having on the ground, the impact that they are having in terms of mortgage stress in my electorate of Lindsay. These are the 2006 ABS figures, so this is not a recent phenomenon. It is not about international pressures that have all of a sudden come on the scene since the last election, as the member for Fadden would have you believe. Mortgage stress figures from 2006 indicate that 33.5 per cent of households in the Lindsay electorate are suffering from mortgage stress. That is up from 19.5 per cent in 2001.

Equally, the problem of rental affordability is a challenge that many people in my local community are facing. As I was handing out leaflets in my local community at the train stations a couple of weeks ago, a number of people came up to me and told me that they were facing massive increases in rents. And I saw recently in the Penrith Press, one of the local papers in my area, a local real estate agent, Mr Sandy Almazan, the director of Ray White Glenmore Park, stating:

Two years ago we'd be lucky to receive three or four applications for every property—

those being rental properties. But now, he says:

... we get at least 20 applications for every house and have had up to 80 names of people interested in a particular property.

This is a crisis. I know that the former Treasurer, the member for Higgins, said that it was not a crisis. As recently as July last year he refused to admit that there was an affordability crisis for housing in this country. We, on the other hand, have recognised that and we put forward to the people at the last election a range of policies, a package of policies, that will address, in part, some of the challenges that we face on the housing affordability front.

First and foremost we have created the position of Minister for Housing. The former government saw it as such an important priority that they did not even have someone sitting within the ministry who had housing as their area of responsibility! On top of that we have a plan that includes our First Home Saver Account scheme, which will allow young people in particular but first home buyers more generally to



save the funds that they need in order to get a deposit with which to then crack the housing market—which is very difficult, particularly in areas such as the area that I represent and the area that the member for Blaxland represents in Western Sydney. We have also proposed a National Rental Affordability Scheme, where 100,000 new rental homes will be built and delivered at rental prices 20 per cent below the market value. Our Housing Affordability Fund will be a key element of our fight against the housing affordability crisis.

From time to time those on the other side will simply say that the housing affordability crisis is the result of the entry taxes that exist on properties, whether they be local government or developer charges or state government taxes. There is no question that these factors are a consideration, and that is why we need to be working with the states to address that situation. But, unlike those on the other side, we have a plan to address that. One of the key elements of our plan is to ensure that money is available to fund the essential infrastructure that is needed, to take the burden off those developer charges, to ensure that the cost of buying a property will be reduced—and our plan will reduce the cost of individual blocks of land by up to \$20,000 as a result of our National Housing Affordability Fund.

On top of that, Labor have a clear plan for not only identifying surplus Commonwealth land but also actually getting on with the job of releasing it. There is one property in my particular area, the North Penrith Army Land, a site that has been ready for development for many years but which has not been developed because the former Commonwealth government were dragging their feet. These obstacles will not get in the way of a federal Labor government, and that is why we intend to implement the plan that we put to the Australian people and to deliver greater housing affordability to people throughout this country.