

16 March 2009

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Housing

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (9:22 PM)—I rise to support the motion on housing by the member for Blaxland. I think it is a very good motion that goes to one of the most significant issues affecting residents in my electorate. Before I enter into discussion of the substantive elements of the motion, I will simply make a few observations about the comments that have come from those on the other side. I think it is interesting that, when we have a debate in this place that affects Western Sydney, we only end up having one of the three speakers on the other side who has a remote connection with Western Sydney. I commend the member for Macarthur, who I know grew up in Western Sydney and has lived in Western Sydney. He does not anymore, but no doubt in future debates, when we discuss the impact of the first home owners grant on the North Shore, he will have an even more contemporaneous contribution to make. I look forward to that.

I want to take issue with the comments of the member for Cook, who made the startling comment that he has been consistent and, indeed, the opposition has been consistent when it comes to the first home owners grant. I think his words were: 'We have always supported this measure. It's a good measure. We support it. We just want it to go a little bit further.' I found it interesting that he would make that comment when, in a press release dated 29 October last year, he made a number of disparaging comments in relation to the doubling and the trebling of the first home owners grant. Under the headline 'Government must explain impact of home buyers grant on rising rents', he goes on to take up the case of the poor tenant coming to terms with the rising costs of rental. As someone in Western Sydney, I understand that rental costs have increased, but I also understand that there is only one party that has enunciated policies that go towards addressing some of those concerns, whether it be in the form of the National Rental Affordability Scheme or whether it be the measures that have been outlined in the stimulus package that address social housing. In that press release, the member for Cook went on to continue his disparaging remarks in relation to the first home owners grant to the point where he refers to it as a quick fix. He goes on and talks about some of the other things that should be done and says:

These are the hard yards of housing policy, not quick fixes that may serve to exacerbate the problem further ...

We heard a bit earlier that the member for Cook says the opposition has always supported this measure. He has always supported the measure, except back on 29 October when the measure was simply a quick fix. The quick fix has gone from being a quick fix to being now the panacea for all of the woes of not just the housing sector but the economy more generally.

Let us have a look at some hard evidence in relation to what has occurred since the first home owners grant has been doubled and trebled in relation to newly constructed properties. Let us have a look at one of the significant broadacre developments in Western Sydney, the Ropes Crossing project, which is being undertaken by Delfin Lend Lease. Since October, since the introduction of the first home owners grant measures, we have seen a 175 per cent increase in sales. By anyone's measure, that is a success. Coupled with reduced interest rates—

Mr Morrison interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY—I note the comments of those opposite. I find it refreshing to hear some of those people from the other side come in and say, 'Oh, it's outrageous that a government might seek to take the credit for lower interest rates'—those who have run campaign after campaign alleging that somehow, with their hands on the levers, interest rates have managed to stay low. In fact, if memory serves me correctly, I ran in one or two of those elections unsuccessfully and the member for Cook was probably the one reading the focus group research determining that that

was the line that was going to pull out the killer punch. The reality is that under this government we have seen measure after measure directed towards improving the situation so far as the affordability of housing in places like Western Sydney is concerned. With the stimulus package, we see an extension of that. The measures that will address social housing actually go towards the issue that the member for Cook raised, and that is the rising cost of rents. The government is the only party that has a plan. We will ensure housing affordability to the best extent possible. To the extent that government can play a role in this, we will ensure that housing is as affordable as possible. When the member for Cook says that he is consistent, go back and have a look at the transcript. Have a look at the press release of 29 October. *(Time expired)*