

## **Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 — *Sandy Bolton MP for Noosa***

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As we are all too aware, the volume of Australians that are couch, car and shed dwelling is devastating whole communities, with more being placed in that situation in my electorate every day.

The lack of affordable options is contributing to the decline in mental and physical health, increase in domestic violence, and strain on every aspect of our world.

Inside and outside of Chamber I have been raising the issue of housing affordability before it was a headline.

We have not been idle in Noosa, where high demand and a very finite supply of urban land requires innovation in our approaches to housing.

For the last four years we have searched for government land, looked at upzoning opportunities, funded share programs, put call outs for headleases, and secured partnerships. Noosa Council has developed a Housing Strategy, which requires action from all levels of Government. We even identified state government sites prior to COVID and pleaded to utilise them that continue to sit idle, with one that could have been used as a temporary workers village now open for tender. I have yet to hear of any efforts to secure this site.

With an ongoing staffing crisis, and more leaving due to a lack of accommodation, our businesses continue to experience hardships. What does it take to get the temporary accommodations desperately needed right now whilst permanent housing solutions are developed?

Let me share just two stories from my office last week from long term Noosa residents. One mother is commuting, now for two years, from temporary accommodations an hour away, to drive their children to and from their school and sports. The stress and impacts on the family of their situation now see one son with an eating disorder, another with a heart condition, both with mental health impacts, and a mother close to breaking point.

Then, an elderly couple, one with mental health issues that prevents living in share accommodation, have been sleeping in their car since September whilst endeavouring to care for elderly parents. As their own mental and physical health disintegrates, there is a very real risk of a preventable tragedy. Calls to all agencies who are unable to assist increases the frustration to all, as the only option is to move them hours away from all they have known for four decades, leaving those reliant on them in a desperate situation.

We need assistance urgently, not in a year or two years' time as that is the expected timeframe for any current proposals.

This *Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2022* aims to contribute to the objectives of the *Queensland Government's Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* — to boost the supply of social and affordable housing. It also increases consumer protections by reforming the legislative framework for financial reporting in retirement villages.

To do this, the Bill amends the *Housing Act 2003* to establish a donation deed scheme called “Homes for Homes” in Queensland, established by the non-profit organisation The Big Issue, which generates revenue to invest in affordable housing by voluntary donations of 0.1 per cent from landowners upon the sale of a participating property.

This scheme already operates in other States such as New South Wales and Victoria.

While this is a worthwhile action, I note the Committee's recommendation that the responsible department ensures that community messaging and materials clearly and simply communicate the voluntary nature of the administrative advice.

And that is where this Bill fails – it is voluntary in the middle of a monumental crisis.

Members of the crossbench have brought forward a number of sensible solutions over the last two years to increase our community housing. One example by the Greens, was a rezoning windfall tax , which would ensure that the profits made from the rezoning of tracts of land, for example from rural to residential that increase substantially in value, also contribute through taxation to community housing.

Another example is mandatory inclusionary zoning which is used in South Australia since 2005. This requires that 15 per cent of new dwellings in all significant development projects be affordable through community housing management. In the first stage, the affordable housing requirement was applied to government land releases, now the policy is applied to urban renewal sites. In New South Wales Voluntary Planning Agreements are used where a developer agrees to provide or fund affordable housing during the rezoning or development application stage.

The Housing Summit hosted by the State Government at the end of last year identified key issues such as the under-supply of up to 50,000 rental properties and the need for greenfield and brownfield property development.

However, the Government will need more than a 'voluntary' donation scheme and a one-off \$2 Billion Housing Investment Fund to address the chronic underfunding of social and community housing, as while appreciated, it must be seen in context.

Queensland has the lowest recurrent spending on social housing in Australia and has had falling capital expenditure over recent years. We now have 3.3% in Queensland in comparison to 6% in South Australia, with comparable overseas jurisdictions like Switzerland at 5%, Finland at 11% and the UK at around 20%. We need to at least hit 5% rapidly.

The summit also identified the need to review of economic impacts of short-term rental accommodation — STAs — including the impact on housing availability.

Having advocated to the Government and relevant Ministers since 2018 to establish a position on the regulation of STAs, for my electorate the lack of recommendations previously from the Roundtable tasked with resolving is another example of where inaction can lead to trauma.

May this current review actually deliver something constructive. Given we have yet to see how this will be undertaken, by who and when the public consultation and ensuing report can be expected, understandably there is dismay, and I would expect the Government will provide this advice shortly.

The Bill also attempts to enhance financial transparency in the retirement village industry by amending the *Retirement Villages Act 1999* to create a new regulation-making power to clarify and strengthen existing provisions relating to financial documents and increase access to certain financial documents for village residents.

Stakeholder responses to the proposed amendments were mixed. In particular the cost imposition was highlighted, for example the Property Council of Australia pointed out that adding more red tape simply transfers more costs onto older Queenslanders. They went on to say “in the wake of the Housing Summit, the Government has stated that increasing housing affordability and availability is a top priority. The Bill appears to be counterintuitive to this priority”.

We have seen this in other areas. The Government has put out a proposal that even one person granny flats have to have onsite wastewater systems big enough for eight people, increasing the cost of affordable housing solutions.

If housing affordability is a priority for the Government, I ask that Government assess the impact of each bill, and commit to passing no new bills or regulations that increase housing costs for the rest of this Parliament.

In closing, I thank the Committee, Department, Secretariat, submitters and those who took part in the inquiry for their examination of this Bill.

We knew that to address this crisis it would take many different avenues; however, this Bill falls far short of any meaningful contribution, however I will support in hope that it may provide for a small number of Queenslanders.