



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADJOURNMENT

**Fadden Electorate: National
Rental Affordability Scheme**

SPEECH

Wednesday, 9 September 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 9 September 2009
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Questioner
Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP

Source House
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Responder
Question No.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (7.45 pm)—A few Sundays ago I organised a public meeting with the residents of Coombabah and specifically Hansford Road. There were over 200 people in attendance, all local residents concerned about the future of their suburb and their street. The issue is that at the end of the street there is a nursery on which a developer intends to build, with the support of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, or NRAS, a 135-unit apartment building.

Hansford Road in Coombabah is home to many older Australians. Many of them have lived in the area for a very long time and they are understandably concerned about a large development of this kind. They are also concerned about maintaining the character of their local area. The site in question is zoned for only 60 units and for buildings a maximum of two storeys high. The proposed development of 135 units will set a precedent for three-storey buildings in the area and will double the intended capacity of the site. Adjacent to the proposed site, even a two-storey building is currently a rarity. The residents are worried about traffic congestion both during construction and after. They are worried about parking problems. They are worried about the impact on their close-knit community.

In addition to these concerns there is another reason the meeting was so well attended. These residents want their voice heard and feel like they have not been given a fair hearing to date. The community has asked me to give to the nation a very simple message: they do not want this NRAS development approved. These people feel like they have been left in the dark. They have received no information packs. There has been no doorknocking in the area. Their state MP keeps passing the buck, claiming it has nothing to do with them, when the residents know full well that any NRAS application will not go ahead without the state government's stamp of approval.

In addition, NRAS has no facility with which members of the public can contribute to any debate on whether a development funded by the scheme should go ahead. Any NRAS application is not open for public comment and can be approved prior to local government approval. I feel this process does not do this community, or any community, justice. The approval process happens behind closed doors in meetings between the state and the federal government,

and those most vulnerable to the change cannot have their voice heard.

I have organised a petition calling on the House of Representatives to address these inadequacies of the Rudd government's NRAS legislation. The petition has received great support and will be tabled in this place in the coming months. The petition draws to the attention of the House that applications for a development requesting assistance under NRAS may be approved regardless of whether local government approval has been sought or received for that development and can be approved without community consultation. The petition also calls on the House to amend the NRAS legislation to ensure that local government approval is acquired for any development before applications can be submitted and that all applications are available to the public for comment prior to any consideration for an NRAS application.

This development could potentially receive an annual NRAS subsidy of \$1 million. That is no small change. The minister is looking to pump \$1 million a year for 10 years into a small community that is vulnerable to change. I would have thought that the minister would want and would have asked for the support of the local community before this occurred. I call on the minister to take a good, hard look at what is happening in Coombabah in the electorate of Fadden and to take a good, hard look at the impact of the lack of transparency and consultation in the NRAS application process. A community does not throw its arms in the air in frustration without due cause. Changes need to be made to the NRAS process and they need to be made now, giving the people of Coombabah the forum they rightly deserve.