

NICK DAMETTO

Katter's Australian Party

Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

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Regional housing market suffers under Labor

LABOR'S refusal to expand the First Home Owners' Grant to existing homes will continue to see regional housing markets suffer, says Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto.

Following an initial positive meeting towards the idea with State Assistant Treasurer Glen Butcher, Mr Dametto received a letter this month which all but ruled out the government expanding the grant to existing homes in regional Queensland in this year's Budget, citing concerns over the impact on housing affordability and availability as well as the building industry's competitiveness.

Mr Dametto said he was disappointed by Mr Butcher's response, arguing there was already a substantial oversupply of established homes in rural and regional Queensland which could become more affordable to first home owners with the help of the grant.

"That way we could reduce this negative market saturation, help rural people own their own homes and stimulate local economies by making these houses more affordable. With a saving of \$15,000 through the grant, that money could go towards the building industry through homeowners having savings available for renovation works or extensions to their property," he said.

"It's a common sense solution to a prevalent problem and I can't see why the government hasn't got an appetite to help regional Queensland, especially after the recent drought and flooding events. If you live outside of Queensland's major cities, you would be hard pressed to find expanding communities in regional Queensland where there is a large, new housing market. There isn't any new housing development popping up in these areas. Expanding the grant would also help attract families and young people to the regions that are seeing a reduction in population over recent years.

"The government needs to understand that regional towns are different to metro centres."

Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) Townsville chair Wayne Nicholson said the government was "out of touch" in its refusal to expand the grant, which was previously available to existing homes up until 2012.

"The ongoing reluctance of the State Government to re-introduce the First Home Owners Grant for second-hand homes and particularly in regional Queensland is just another example of a Brisbane-centric government being so totally out of touch with regional Queensland," he said.

"As the real estate peak body, the REIQ has been lobbying this government over many years on this very issue and will continue to fight for this discriminatory injustice to be reversed. The grant, as it stands, is for new homes only and whereas that may be a viable proposition for the government in the south-east corner, it does not resonate with regional buyers who want to get into the market with entry-level property priced between \$180,000 and \$300,000.

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"The arguments being put forward by the government in rejecting the re-instatement of the grant are simply not based on logical argument. Rather, they are based on a tight-fisted government totally out of touch with the bush.

"Make no mistake, sitting members in regional areas will feel the heat on this and other issues at the ballot box as there is only so much that the regions can take when it comes to poor policy. I believe second-hand buyers are being discriminated against by not affording them some form of grant to purchase their new home."

Mr Dametto vowed to continue lobbying the government to expand the grant in next year's Budget.

"2020 is an election year and voters should think carefully about who is backing policies like this, which look to stimulate regional and rural Queensland," he said.

"Katter's Australian Party will always fight for a better deal for rural and regional Queensland."

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Media Enquiries

Michael Serenc – 0423 108 848