

Dear Senators,

I write regarding the National Rental Affordability Scheme Bill 2008 and National Rental Affordability Scheme (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2008 which are currently before the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

By way of introduction, my name is George Christensen and I am a councillor on the Mackay Regional Council. I hold the portfolio for Community Services and Facilities in our "civic cabinet".

One of the projects I am overseeing is the establishment of a stand-alone housing company which will tap in the National Rental Affordability Scheme in order to provide affordable housing to people in the Mackay region.

In particular, we are looking towards assisting graduate employees in essential services such as police, ambulance, fire and rescue, nurses and teachers. We have a significant problem in terms of being able to attract graduate employees from these professions due to the price of housing (both purchase and rental) in the Mackay region. (For your information the latest data from the Real Estate Institute of Queensland has the median housing price at approximately \$380,000 while rentals for adequate accommodation in Mackay are in excess of \$300 - 400 per week.

While the Mackay Regional Council is looking at ways to remedy this (through the establishment of a housing company), we have come across one major hurdle, this being the proposed income limit for single 'eligible tenants' under the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

I understand that, for single people (which is likely to be the case for most graduate employees), the current scheme only covers eligible tenants with an income of up to \$39,351. However, this amount is allowed to increase by up to 25% or \$49,189.

The problem we face is that most start up pay for employees of the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Education Queensland is above the \$39,351 threshold but well below the \$49,189 cap.

I write to ask that consideration be given to making this criteria a little more flexible. I would propose that, instead of a set initial threshold that perhaps there could be an income bracket of \$39,351 to \$49,189 established to meet the income levels for start up workers in essential services.

I thank you for the time you have taken to read this submission and I look forward to your consideration of this matter.

Kind regards,

Cr George Christensen

Portfolio Councillor for Community Services & Facilities

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