



NEWS

Queensland System is the best in Australia

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Queensland's residential building laws and home warranty insurance scheme were the envy of other states according to the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing, Robert Swarten.

Mr Swarten cited a variety of sources which endorsed this view, including the Consumer Association Magazine, Choice which said in its August 2004 edition: "A Queensland style system offers much higher levels of protection for consumers as well as being easy to access for builders. But if you live outside Queensland, there's very little you can do about this - short of moving to the sunshine state."

The Financial Review reported on August 3 2004 that Phil Dwyer, the national president of the Builder's Collective of Australia said Victoria should adopt the building insurance scheme used already in Queensland.

"There is a model in Queensland that works perfectly and it's got a 96 percent consumer approval rating and the builders are 100 percent happy with it."

Only last month on the 17 February 2005, The Australian reported that all state governments had been urged to adopt Queensland's government-run home building warranty scheme.

Mr Swarten also accused The Courier-Mail of sloppy reporting on the issue.

"Saturday's Courier-Mail story attacks the BSA unfairly in that all of the cases raised had been dealt with appropriately and according to the law," he said.

"None of the consumers featured in Saturday's Courier-Mail had lodged an appeal of BSA decisions in the Consumer and Commercial Tribunal.

"What the Courier-Mail reporter Tuck Thompson did was to simply accept the word of the complainant at face value without bothering to find out the facts or the other side of the story, which is pretty shabby investigative journalism."

Mr Swarten, who set the record straight in relation to Saturday's Courier-Mail complaints in Parliament today, said he would be happy to investigate each of the complaints made in today's Courier-Mail.

"What we have here is the same journalist Mr Thompson merely relaying one side of the story without ever identifying these cases to my office," he said.

"While I know Mr Thompson is only interested in one side of the story, The Courier-Mail readers deserve better."

Mr Swarten dismissed National Party Leader Lawrence Springborg's criticism of the BSA as 'ranting out of ignorance'.

"Clearly Mr Springborg has no idea what the BSA does," he said.

"Mr Springborg obviously does not know that the BSA banned 270 builders over the last two years and the dispute satisfaction rate had increased from four out of 10 when he was a Minister in the Borbidge Government to seven out of 10 under my ministry."

Mr Swarten also rejected the Liberal Party view of putting taxpayer's money into the BSA.

"Under the Coalition there were only 161 employees at the BSA, today there are now 234 and we have doubled the compliance section since 2002," he said.

"This is an industry regulating authority and we will not be taking money away from schools or the homeless to fund it."

Mr Swarten also blasted Solicitor Tim O'Dwyer for his ill-informed and childish statements on radio this morning.

"Mr O'Dwyer seems to be confusing the BSA with the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal when he talked about mediating on radio today," he said.

"The BSA does not mediate it rules on matters of non-compliance and non completion and defective building work.

"The BSA has the toughest laws of any regulatory authority in Australia and is banning builders from the industry at a rate of three a week. So it is hardly a watchdog with no teeth."

Mr Swarten said the Beattie Government had continued to legislate to protect consumers and regulate builders' behaviour.

"My predecessor Judy Spence started the reform process and I have continued to toughen laws and we are still the only state to have bans to exclude builders from the industry for life," he said.

"This is a law which came into effect in 2003 which has resulted in seven builders being banned for life from working in Queensland."

Mr Swarten said the Statutory Insurance Scheme was the envy of every other Australian state.

"The Borbidge Government was leading Queensland down the privatisation path just like every other state had done but Judy Spence halted that and we now, according to many independent sources, have the best building insurance scheme in Australia.""

Mr Swarten said he would leave no stone unturned to get to the bottom of any issue where the BSA is accused of wrong doing.

"Over \$7.4 billion worth of building works was completed during the last financial year and the BSA has a dispute rate of 6.3 percent which is down from 10 per cent when the Coalition ran the BSA but even though this is a satisfying result we cannot rest on our laurels and if there are problems they will be fixed."

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