

HOUSING — REGIONS — AVAILABILITY

4. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) With rental housing vacancies at record lows around the state, especially across the South West Region, and with state-owned homes sitting vacant, what is the government doing to increase the supply of housing in the regions?
- (2) Does the government think it is acceptable for those in priority situations to be forced to wait an average of 51 weeks for help from the government; and, if not, what is the government doing about reducing this wait time?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The state government has introduced a range of measures to improve housing supply across the state, including in regional Western Australia. The \$20 000 building bonus grant is incentivising new home construction, with recently released Australian Bureau of Statistics data showing the highest year-on-year increase in building approvals in 31 years. In the 12 months to February this year there were more than 21 500 new home building approvals across Western Australia. The state government also increased the borrowing limit for Keystart by \$243 million and eased the eligibility criteria, ensuring lower income Western Australians will have greater access to affordable home ownership. Through the \$116 million Regional Land Booster program, the state government is also providing cheaper residential land across regional Western Australia, which includes lots in a range of regional towns.
- (2) On coming to government in March 2017, the average waitlist times for public housing in the South West Region for the priority waiting list was 30 weeks and the wait-turn waiting list was 160 weeks. As at March 2021, the average wait time for the priority waiting list in the South West Region has reduced to 21 weeks, and for the wait-turn waiting list it is 96 weeks. Additionally, the McGowan state government is delivering a number of investment packages and other initiatives to increase public housing stock and, consequently, to reduce wait times. These include investing \$541 million into new public housing stock, refurbishment of existing stock and homeless support services through the social housing economic recovery package and the housing and homelessness investment package; suspending the sale of stock to retain as public housing stock; reviewing all current policies and procedures regarding vacant social housing stock to best minimise the number of vacancies; and reviewing public housing stock due to be decommissioned, or not in use due to being at the end of its working life or in poor condition, for possible refurbishment.