

HOUSING STIMULUS PACKAGE

309. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Treasurer:

Will the Treasurer please outline how my electorate of Scarborough will benefit from the first stage of the federal housing stimulus package?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:

I thank the member for Scarborough very much. The electors in her electorate of Scarborough will benefit in many ways, as will every resident of Western Australia, from the spending of moneys under—I had better get this right—the commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, which the Parliamentary Secretary for Government Service Delivery, Senator Mark Arbib, and I announced earlier this morning. It was a really important announcement not only for people in the member for Scarborough's electorate, but also for everybody, firstly because it will help address some of the social housing issues and, secondly, significantly in the current economic climate, it will help protect Western Australian jobs. That is why we have been working so very hard to fulfil our obligations to the commonwealth, both under the housing stimulus package and under the education stimulus package that the Minister for Education just touched on. It has been an enormous job of work by officials from Western Australia and federal officials. I acknowledge and thank every single one of those officials for the effort they have put into this process.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Hang on! The other minister says the state officials weren't involved.

The SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We will talk about the Leader of the Opposition in a minute.

I will quickly tell the house, for the benefit of members opposite, the package that we have announced. This morning we announced a \$70 million package.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The \$70 million package will result in the construction in Western Australia of 286 new housing units, effectively starting immediately and finishing, hopefully, by July next year. The state is contributing approximately \$40 million worth of land to that package, bringing the first wave of stimulus to \$109 million. For the benefit of members, in this particular package that will be around 55 per cent spent in the metropolitan area and around 45 per cent in regional areas. I suspect that more will be spent in the metropolitan area next time. This package is largely reflective of where land is available for us to build on.

It should also be understood that this package is part of a broader housing stimulus package. Another \$530 million will be provided to Western Australia by the commonwealth, which will result in approximately 1 700 new homes under construction during 2009 and 2010. I also acknowledge on behalf of the member for Murray-Wellington the arrival in the house—I have been waiting patiently for them to arrive—of members of the Pinjarra ratepayers' association from the member for Murray-Wellington's electorate, no doubt many of whom will have the opportunity to benefit, or their family members will benefit, from this stimulus package.

On top of that the state has recently had approval to spend \$40 million to upgrade homes in our existing Homeswest stock. On top of that the state has contributed \$316 million, which will result in the construction of a further 1 000 homes—approximately 600 social housing dwellings and approximately 400 Government Regional Officers' Housing dwellings—across regional Western Australia. This is a massive and unprecedented economic boost for this state and it is a massive boost to the 20 000 people waiting on the social housing waiting list in Western Australia.

Mr E.S. Ripper: The more you claim credit, the more the Minister for Education has to accept blame.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am not claiming credit. I said that it is part of the federal stimulus package. Was the Leader of the Opposition not listening? Has the Leader of the Opposition got his ears on today? It is part of the federal stimulus package. It will have a significant economic benefit and it will protect Western Australian jobs

Several members interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The Australian Bureau of Statistics has estimated that the multiplier impact is about \$2.8 billion. Therefore, with the state and federal packages together—\$640 million from the commonwealth and \$316 million from the state, around \$1 billion—it will produce around \$2 billion worth of extra economic activity in Western Australia. According to commonwealth estimates, it will maintain up to 1 500 additional Western Australian workers in their jobs.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The member for Warnbro may say that we have not done anything. I will compare the package with a historical examination of what happened to social housing stocks from 2001 to June 2008. Does the member for Warnbro know that every single year during those desolate eight years in Western Australia the social housing stock went up by 256 houses! In 18 months members opposite will get from us, in partnership with the commonwealth, the equivalent of 10 years' worth of effort under the regime of members opposite. The package will benefit not only residents of Scarborough, but also residents right across Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I want to say one other thing. The delivery of these reform packages in terms of education and housing would not have been possible without the hard work of a lot of officials at state and commonwealth levels; that must be acknowledged and I am happy to do so again. However, also it would not have been possible if we had not sorted out a fundamental reform of the way the state government builds infrastructure, including housing and education, and of the former Department of Housing and Works, and increased the capacity of that Department of Housing to build public housing in Western Australia. All of a sudden the department is going out and engaging with the private sector—heaven forbid!—which it was not allowed to do for eight years. All of a sudden we are investing building capacity into the works functions of government.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Let us have a look at the previous government's track record. I will not go on for too long, Mr Speaker. Under the old regime, if a construction came in at under 50 per cent over budget and it was completed within six months of the estimated completion date, the former Department of Housing and Works got a gold star! It does not work like that any more.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Warnbro!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: These reforms, combined with the hard work of these people and the guidance of the relevant state and federal ministers, have delivered this fantastic economic stimulus package that will protect Western Australian jobs.