

HOUSING RENTAL MARKET — RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

203. Hon LYNN MacLAREN to the Minister for Commerce:

I refer to the recent Equal Opportunity Commission's "Report of Outcomes of the Recommendations of Accommodating Everyone".

- (1) Is the minister aware the commission found substantial evidence of racial discrimination in the private housing rental market?
- (2) Will the minister act on the report's recommendation that the Department of Commerce work with the Equal Opportunity Commission to develop equal opportunity law guidelines for owners who operate in the private residential tenancy market?
- (3) Will the minister act on the report's recommendation that the government increase funding for community groups to support culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal people to access and maintain a tenancy?
- (4) Will the minister act on the report's recommendation that the Department of Commerce investigate ways to improve the handling of tenants' complaints?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for notice of this question.

- (1) The Equal Opportunity Commission released its report titled "Accommodating Everyone" in June 2009. The latest report, titled "Report of Outcomes of the Recommendations of Accommodating Everyone", is a summary of the work that has been achieved since the 2009 report was released. I have been advised that the 2009 report found substantial evidence of racial discrimination in the private housing rental market.
- (2) The Office of Multicultural Interests established an Accommodating Everyone Working Group to work on the implementation of the commission's recommendations. The Department of Commerce has been an active member of that working group since its establishment and has acted on each of the commission's recommendations. Details of the work that the Department of Commerce has undertaken to implement the commission's recommendations are set out in the commission's latest report. The Department of Commerce and the commission have worked together to produce guidelines for landlords and tenants on the requirements of the Equal Opportunity Act and the Residential Tenancies Act. Copies of the relevant brochures are included in the commission's report.
- (3) The Department of Commerce provides funding from the rental accommodation account to 16 community-based metropolitan and regional organisations to provide tenant education and advocacy services. Although these services are not specifically targeted to culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal communities, a significant proportion of the work the organisations undertake is focused on these client groups. The department also supports community groups through the provision of tenancy information within its community education and Indigenous community education programs.
- (4) The commission's report notes the work done by the Department of Commerce on this recommendation. In addition, the department has, in consultation with the commission, committed to undertake a substantive equality needs and impact assessment of its tenancy complaints services in 2011-12.