

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION — SHORTAGE

**99. Hon LYNN MacLAREN to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to a report on ABC News this morning concerning the critical shortage of rental accommodation in Perth, and another report in *The West Australian* today.

- (1) Is the minister aware of today's alarming reports on acute homelessness in Perth?
- (2) What swift action does the minister intend to take to alleviate the shortage of rental accommodation?

**Hon KEN BASTON** replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) In relation to homelessness, the honourable member will be aware that Western Australia is party to the current National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. Under the agreement, \$135.1 million in joint state and commonwealth funding will have been committed and spent by 30 June this year. The implementation of this agreement was the subject of a performance audit by the Office of the Auditor General in October last year. The OAG report was positive in finding that the state had met its funding commitments and all programs had been delivered as agreed in the implementation plan, with most programs meeting or exceeding clients' targets and making a positive difference to the people using them. The state government is currently considering the commonwealth government's offer for a transitional national partnership agreement on homelessness. The agreements are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks and will see an extension of the arrangement of support services to assist people in public and private rental accommodation to maintain their tenancies.

The government is also looking towards a new longer-term agreement to continually expand the good work already being done in this area. In relation to the funding obligations under this agreement, it should be noted that the government committed an additional \$8.3 million over 2011–12 and 2012–13 to not-for-profit service providers to address sector sustainability issues, including salary levels.

Regarding housing affordability in general, the Liberal–National government is strongly committed to tackling the state's affordable housing challenge, including the issues faced by homeless people. In May 2011 the government launched the "Affordable Housing Strategy 2010–2020: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing". The strategy was and remains the only whole-of-government plan for tackling affordable housing by any government in Australia. To date, the strategy has delivered more than 7 600 affordable housing opportunities. A number of key initiatives are underway that will help alleviate pressure on the private rental market in Western Australia. The government has supported the national rental affordability scheme with a commitment of 6 000 incentives in Western Australia. Around 1 350 of these properties have been delivered to date, with a further 4 650 properties to be delivered in 2016. Each of these properties will be rented to an eligible household at less than 80 per cent of the market rent.

In the 2012–13 budget, the government committed \$130 million over two years for the construction of 433 new social housing properties. In addition, the government continued to support the growth of the community housing sector. Fourteen hundred properties have been transferred to community housing growth providers since 2010 and, as a result of these transfers, growth providers will develop 448 new affordable housing dwellings for rent to low to moderate-income households by 2020.

This government has committed to working in partnership with industry and the community sector to help improve housing supply more generally and to combat homelessness specifically.