

HOUSING — HIGH-VALUE PROPERTY STRATEGY

441. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Housing:

Minister, I am keen for —

Mr P.B. Watson: Read it out!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Member for Albany, I got to four words—four words! That is a record for him!

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I call you formally for the first time, and member for Albany, also formally for the first time. Member for Scarborough, if you are going to ask a question, just ask the question.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I formally call you for the first time as well.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: We were making some progress, member for Cannington.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Minister for Housing, I would like an update on the high-value property strategy mentioned in budget estimates. I would be pleased if the minister could inform the house of the progress of this strategy.

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Scarborough for the question. Indeed, in budget estimates there were a number of questions asked by members opposite about the high-value property strategy, and I am pleased to give the house an update. As members opposite are aware, there is increasing high demand for social housing, and it is growing from day to day. We are looking at ways of reducing this list. One of the important ways of reducing this list is to identify high-value properties; that is, those properties that are above the median house price—about double the median house price. It is a very good strategy. We are selling those properties, and we are then buying new houses. We can buy almost double the number of houses when we sell those properties. So far, we have sold 18 properties —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Gee! That's huge!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Well, it has produced \$17 million! We have got \$17 million out of those 18 properties. The average price at which we are selling these properties is around \$1 million. In fact, the last one that we sold was in the Premier's electorate—Mt Claremont—and that sold for a little over \$1 million. As at the end of July, members, we had purchased 25 properties, at a total cost of \$10.5 million. I will do the sums. The sums are fairly simple. It is early days—just early days —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Speak slowly.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Speak slowly. We have spent \$10.5 million of that money and we have purchased 25 properties. We have \$6.5 million left in the bank. So, we have seven new properties, and we have got \$6.5 million left in the bank. We have just started this program; just imagine how many properties we will have in about 12 months.

Our record on social and affordable housing stands out against that of the former Labor government. Under its watch, the cost of private housing rose dramatically. Home and unit prices virtually doubled between 2004 and 2007, and rents more than doubled between 2003 and 2008.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr W.R. MARMION: We are using our imagination. We are looking outside the box.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It is not very hard to see that a sensible strategy is to sell those expensive properties and double our portfolio of houses. The former government had eight years to think about that very simple strategy. Did it think about it? No.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I formally call you for the first time; and member for Warnbro as well. Members to my right, I would expect that you might respect what the Minister for Housing is saying and give him the opportunity of saying that. I am talking to members to my right.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Mr Speaker —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, do you want to stay in here? You do want to stay in here. I will take that as a yes.

Mr W.R. MARMION: This is a smart initiative. We are getting better value out of taxpayers' funds. I thank the member for Scarborough. I know that she has a passion about social housing in her electorate and is working strongly and supporting me in my endeavours. In fact, she has identified properties in her electorate that I might look at in the ensuing months. I thank the member for Scarborough for her question, and members can rest assured that I will be looking after the housing stock and trying to deliver greater outcomes for social housing for Western Australians.