

COST-OF-LIVING RELIEF

837. Mr M. HUGHES to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to addressing housing supply and delivering genuine cost-of-living relief to Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government is working with the housing construction and community services sectors to increase affordable housing supply?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this government is delivering new initiatives to assist Western Australians who are doing it tough?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question and for his commitment to affordable housing in his electorate.

As I have said, COVID has radically reshaped our housing market, and there is unprecedented demand for housing. Western Australia has the highest population growth in the country, and that is a direct result of people leaving New South Wales and Victoria and coming to WA because it is a great place to live. It has a very strong economy. It has great opportunities and it still has affordable housing. But we are very cognisant of the pressures on the rental and housing market.

Let us look at the announcements we have made in the last seven days. First of all, we made one on Sunday, after our meeting with the housing and construction industry, with the builders, at a round table hosted by the Housing Industry Association. The Minister for Training announced a new package of \$21.5 million targeted at wage subsidies specifically for construction and building homes. We listened to and engaged with a range of small and medium builders, not a handful of developers, which is what the member for Cottesloe continues to smear me and this government with. Secondly, we announced a rent relief scheme of more than \$24 million to provide grants of up to \$5 000 to assist people at risk of homelessness to stay in their homes.

I note the feedback. Kath Snell from Shelter WA said —

“Shelter WA and WACOSS have been advocating tirelessly for this initiative, and we are absolutely celebrating that the State Government has heard and understood the needs of the community at such a difficult time for so many of WA's renters.

The Western Australian Council of Social Service CEO said —

“We commend the Cook Government for activating —

My favourite two words —

every lever available to make housing more affordable.”

They are two prominent, major community organisations, not the handful of developers that the member for Cottesloe is obsessed with. They are two major community and welfare organisations that we have engaged with that are responding to the program.

Then, today, the Premier and Minister for Commerce announced major reforms around regulating short-stay accommodation. There will be new regulations and planning consistency for short-stay accommodation. We recognise in the regions, where there are very particular economies, the differences from town to town, from Katanning to Busselton, and that it will be up to those local governments to set the specific schemes, while in metropolitan Western Australia, where there is one market, we will ensure consistent regulation. On top of that, in an Australian first, we are running a pilot program to help get housing back to the market, incentivised with \$10 000 grants. Hon Steve Martin says, “No, don't like it. Terrible policy. Not going to help.” That is incredible stuff. It has been nearly seven years, and the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA do not have one housing policy. As the Premier noted, the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia came out strongly in support of our policies, and I think this is critical. It noted —

“We commend the Government for encouraging property owners to return to the long-term market rather than employing punitive measures like taxes.

“We also applaud their raft of efforts to support the rental market in general, such as yesterday's announcement of the WA Rental Relief Scheme. There is no one solution to the situation we are facing, but every action taken helps.”

A range of stakeholders are endorsing our government's approach. Members opposite have no policies. I think today was extraordinary. With only three Liberal members in the house, they cannot even agree

to support major reform to accelerate the delivery of housing. We do not know the position of the member for North West Central yet. We know that David Honey, the honourable member for Cottesloe —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, members are to be referred to by their seat, not their names; it is the member for Cottesloe.

Mr J.N. CAREY: There is the member for Cottesloe with his smear campaign and his ideological hatred for medium and small builders. Then the Leader of the Liberal Party said, “We are not opposing the bill.” Member for North West Central, what is your position? We just want to clarify.

The SPEAKER: No. You are not asking questions, you are answering.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Maybe the member for North West Central will text me later like she did the Leader of the Opposition. The reality is this: we face an extraordinary situation in this state. On that side of the house they have no housing policies, and have had no social housing policies in seven years. Now they are completely and utterly divided on key planning reform, which every other state, in many different ways, is embracing as part of national cabinet’s commitment to accelerating the delivery of housing.