

PUBLIC HOUSING — HOMELESSNESS

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

I refer to the Cook Labor government's \$2.6 billion investment in social housing and homelessness measures, the highest on record in Western Australia's history.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this significant investment is growing the community housing sector in Western Australia, particularly in the face of global market constraints?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether he is aware of any alternative proposals to deliver more housing for Western Australians?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. As the member has rightly put on the record, our government is making a record investment in social housing and homelessness programs. I have said it before and I will say again: it is \$2.6 billion over four years to deliver a new target of 4 000 homes. We said that, within the tightest construction market in our state's history, we would deliver 1 300 homes in our first two years—and we did that. We now sit at having delivered more than 1 500 social homes, with another 1 000 under contract or construction.

We understand that the community housing sector has a critical role to play. It has a critical role to play because it can also leverage additional funding for social homes. In particular, it can now leverage from the recently passed Housing Australia Future Fund, which will provide new funding for the community housing sector. At a state level, I am deeply proud that we have introduced a number of changes to facilitate and support community housing. We have provided \$150 million in grants to community housing organisations to both refurbish their ageing stock and bring new stock to the system. We are working with them on changing the procurement rules. We have also announced a new planning reform to make it easier to enable community housing to be built and developed so that a community housing proposal of any value or size can go straight to the development assessment panel rather than a local council. I also announced this week at the symposium that we are now doing a broad open call for submissions to the community housing sector. A crack team in our agency is asking them to come forward with their proposals. We will help to make them happen. We have the funding for them. We have land for them. Our message is that we are doing everything we can to boost social housing and we want to help the community housing sector.

It is interesting to note, again, the silence from the other side. Consistently, our initiatives are welcomed by industry, the Property Council of Australia, the Urban Development Institute of Australia and the social housing sector. The only silence is from the Liberal and National Parties. As I have said previously, they have made not one policy announcement on social or community housing—not one. Zero! You would think that after nearly three years they would get their act together and put something out. The only policy they have is more red tape. They are allowing the member for Cottesloe, who effectively has become the shadow minister for every portfolio, to make policy announcements on the run through his favourite newspaper—a quality paper—the *Subiaco Post*. In the newspaper he said that the opposition would oppose the government's significant pathway approvals. That would mean the creation of red tape for major housing projects in Western Australia, including community housing. There is silence from the Leader of the Nationals WA and silence from the Leader of the Liberal Party. They have nothing to say on housing. They have no policies except to increase red tape on housing development in Western Australia.