

HOUSING — LONG-TERM RENTAL INCENTIVE

831. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Mount Lawley I welcome students from Mount Lawley Primary School and their awesome deputy principal, Mrs Ashkenazy, to Parliament.

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to deliver more affordable housing options across Western Australia. Can the Premier please outline to the house how this government's reforms to short-term rental accommodation will boost housing supply while balancing the needs of the community and how this government's latest reforms take an innovative approach to increasing rental supply?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question; it is an important one. Members will recall that yesterday we announced our policy to help tenants struggling to keep up with their rent. Today we have another great announcement from my government for an innovative scheme to attract more rental homes into the market. We have seen across the world a tightening of rental and housing markets. From students to families to retirees, it is hard to find a home to rent, and much is being invested into accelerating the delivery of housing stock. Quite simply, more supply is the solution to our housing challenges. I am sure most members would agree that short-term rental accommodation is an important part of our overall tourism product and has become a very popular option for holidaymakers. It has become a staple part of our tourism offering; however, it is impossible to ignore the impact it has had on long-term rental markets in some neighbourhoods and communities. The proliferation of short-term rental accommodation over the years has to some degree impacted the availability of long-term rentals. At times like these, we need as many rental homes as possible—every bit counts. We want to make sure that whatever we put in place will attract the opportunity for even a single new home in the rental market. From today the government is initiating an Australian first. We are offering \$10 000 to incentivise owners of short-term accommodation to switch their homes to the long-term rental market. The new \$10 000 incentive will be in place for six months. To qualify for payment, home owners must transfer their property to the long-term rental market for at least 12 months and agree to charging an affordable rent. There is no silver bullet in relation to housing supply. There is no simple solution; however, every bit counts. This is the government's innovative approach to creating incentive. This is about carrot, not stick. It is due to our responsible management of finances that we have the opportunity to do this.

I note that Hon Steve Martin critiqued this innovative scheme in the media, saying that it would not help at all and would not create even one single new home. We disagree, and the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia disagrees with him too. To quote REIWA chief executive officer Cath Hart —

If short-stay incentive puts a roof over one family's head, that's a positive.

We could not agree more. We are doing everything we can to create more availability of long-term rental stock. That comes in addition to our regulation of short-term rental accommodation. The reforms respond to a parliamentary inquiry in 2019 into this matter, establishing a statewide registration scheme and updates to planning guidance for short-term rental accommodations. This is an important opportunity to make sure we create more balance in the system and ensure that we give people a fair chance to enter the rental market. This comes on top of a range of measures the government has put in place to increase the availability of housing, including our nation-leading planning reform legislation, which I thought would have enjoyed the support of everyone in this chamber because we know how important it is to make sure we bring stock onstream as quickly as possible. I thought the Leader of the Liberal Party would have been able to bring her whole party with her.

Ms A. Sanderson: Well, two of them.

Ms S.F. McGurk: There's not many of them.

Mr R.H. COOK: There are not many, Madam Speaker. Even on this basic issue, the member for Vasse has failed the test of leadership and cannot even bring the two other members in this chamber with her. When it comes to the Liberal Party, it is policy lucky dip. These people cannot be trusted. They create uncertainty for industry and they create uncertainty for the community. I thought that on this basic issue of increasing housing supply through common sense, nation-leading planning reform, we would have had everyone in this chamber welcoming those changes and making sure that those laws went through without challenge. Today's announcement is an important one to produce balance in the system. The short-term rental accommodation policies we have launched today continue to place regulations where it should be in place to ensure that we do not see an over proliferation of supply and more balance in the market. Most importantly, it will produce an incentive for people to move into the long-term rental market. Even if we provide one family with the opportunity for a roof over their head, that is what I call a successful policy.