

Question on Notice
No. 556
Asked on 19 May 2004

Mr HOPPER asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing (MR SCHWARTEN) –

QUESTION:

With reference to public housing stock -

For each year since 2001 and for the year to date, what is the number of public houses constructed and sold by region?

ANSWER:

Again the Shadow Minister displays his lack of understanding of modern housing solutions by his narrow and dated question which relates to public housing only. The fact is in the past six years we have developed new models to replace public housing because of his Federal Colleagues obsession with Rent Assistance.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Housing provides publicly funded housing through three main programs, Public Housing, Community Housing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing.

Since I have been the Minister for Housing there has been a **net gain of 635 properties** in the housing portfolio leased to low-income individuals and families.

I am very proud of this achievement considering the Howard Government has withdrawn more than \$400 million from Queensland through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

As a result of this shift at a national level, as the Minister I have instigated significant reform in the Department over the last six years to ensure we are better utilising our asset base and providing assistance to as many Queenslanders as possible.

For example in the Honourable Member's own electorate through the Community Housing program new seniors units were recently constructed in Bell. This is a great example of a project that would have been difficult to fund through the public housing program because there is far greater need in other areas. However, Community Housing allows us to work with community groups and local councils to meet this demand. Through this program we also regularly purchase properties when it is considered more cost effective than undertaking new construction.

In fact, the Department of Housing now assists more than 240,000 Queenslanders annually up from around 191,000 in 1998.

This has been achieved by diversifying the type of housing assistance we provide and investing in initiatives such as the Brisbane Housing Company which now leases 140 units of affordable housing in the inner-city of Brisbane.

It is also the result of the significant investment during my period as Minister, to maintain our housing stock, having approved \$888 million worth of work on upgrades and maintenance to date.

I inherited a housing portfolio where maintenance and upgrade was neglected and as a result a lot of the public housing portfolio was in poor condition and some properties were impossible to rent because people simply refused to live there. In fact, when I became Minister there were 1,876 vacant dwellings across the state. By better property management this has been drastically reduced.

Mr Speaker, this question reflects the Member's general lack of commitment to becoming better briefed on housing policy. I trust this provides a more holistic picture of the public housing portfolio for the Shadow Minister and will assist him in making more informed comment in the future.