

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 773**  
**Asked on 18 June 2004**

MS NELSON-CARR asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing (Mr Schwarten)-

QUESTION:

- (1) Is the Government making progress in its efforts to have affordable housing more readily available to low income earners?
- (2) What affordable housing initiatives are underway in Queensland?

ANSWER:

(1) In recent years the demand for affordable housing in Queensland has increased, particularly in major urban and coastal centres that are experiencing population growth pressures. Private rental housing that is affordable to very low-income and low-income households is being lost due to property market pressures and redevelopment in high growth areas, as rents increase in line with property values and demand. This problem is not just confined to the South East corner of Queensland, but is increasingly being felt in regional areas of the State

This year's Budget delivers on the Queensland Government's commitment to assist low-income families and individuals to access affordable housing. An additional \$30 million will be allocated over the next three years through capital grants to increase the supply of affordable housing in communities where there is high demand and agencies desire to work with the government to enhance the supply of affordable housing in there area. This additional investment will help meet the ongoing and growing demand for the Department of Housing's services in these areas.

In addition, over the next three years, \$20 million will be allocated through the Smart State Building Fund for the construction of boarding houses to help low-income individuals. A further \$10 million over two years will be invested in improving Public Rental Housing, building on our commitment to provide better quality housing.

Overall, the Department of Housing will allocate \$564 million to housing programs in the 2004 to 2005 financial year, representing a rise of around \$36 million over last year's Budget.

The Queensland Government has made significant inroads into addressing issues around housing affordability in recent times despite the decline particularly through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. This progress is being achieved by looking beyond traditional responses and supporting and encouraging the wider housing system to respond better to the housing needs of Queenslanders. Queensland Government changes to stamp duty for first home buyers have assisted affordability.

(2) We are also looking for new, cost-effective ways to encourage private investment in affordable housing and are forging new partnerships to boost the supply in the broader market. This is critical if we are to make meaningful inroads into the scale of the housing problem facing Queensland.

Cabinet endorsed the *Affordable Housing in Sustainable Communities Strategic Action Plan* in May 2001. This strategy identifies a new role for the Department in seeking to ensure that all stakeholders in the broader housing system work collaboratively towards affordable housing outcomes for low income households. The strategies and actions set out in the Affordable Housing Strategy have led to a number of initiatives including of a range of practical planning tools and programs that can be utilised by local governments, community organisations and private developers.

The Department of Housing has been working with the Brisbane City Council to support the development of a privately owned and managed low-cost housing development in Nundah, on Brisbane's northside, and through the Neolido project in West End.

Officers from the Department of Housing have also been working closely with the Gold Coast City Council to develop an affordable housing strategy.

The Brisbane Housing Company is an example of the department's commitment to develop new housing supply solutions in partnership with the private sector and other levels of government. Encouraging the private and community sectors to further invest in increasing the supply of affordable housing will continue to be a focus for the department.

The participation of the community sector with the shareholders and company Board members of the Brisbane Housing Company has led to a high level of awareness of the progress of the model in other regions of Queensland. Some local governments and community housing organisations have expressed interest in investigating similar structures or structures to achieve similar outcomes.

The department is also playing a significant role in responding to crises in particular sectors of housing provision in Queensland's regions. Two good examples are:

- The preparation, in collaboration with the Department of State Development, of the *Housing Action Plan for Gladstone/Calliope*. The plan is a response to the emerging need for affordable housing following the commencement of major industrial projects in the area. One initiative arising from the plan is the relocation of thirty dwellings from Amberley, recently purchased from the Commonwealth, to Department-owned service land in Gladstone City and Calliope Shire. These dwellings have boosted the supply of public rental and community-managed housing in the region.

The Department's responses to the closures of caravan parks and boarding houses. As property values rise, these traditional forms of affordable housing have come under significant threat of closure. The Department of Housing has provided leadership in responding to several closures of caravan parks and boarding houses in recent years. Closures typically mean a number of individuals and household groups require immediate re-housing or relocation assistance, in public housing, in community-managed housing or in private sector alternatives.