

Question on Notice
No. 964
Asked on 1 September 2004

MRS SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing (Mr Schwarten)-

QUESTION:

- (1) How much money has the Howard Government ripped out of public housing since 1996?
- (2) What effect has this decrease in funding had on people seeking low cost housing in Queensland, particularly the Pumicestone Electorate?

ANSWER:

It's a topical question given the Howard Government's track record is up for review as we go to the polls in a few weeks time.

Since the Howard Government came into power in 1996, there have been consistent cuts to the funding allocated to the Queensland Government for housing activities, which includes public housing.

The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement is the major source of funding to the department for its housing activities. The Commonwealth only started applying indexation to contributions this year so the real value of the Agreement has declined significantly since 1996. In addition, the Commonwealth has imposed what it euphemistically calls an efficiency dividend of one per cent each year, but is really nothing but a cut.

So the real value of the Agreement has declined consistently ever since Howard was elected. In fact Queensland has now lost more than \$400 million.

The Honourable Member asks what effect this decrease in funding has had on people seeking low cost housing in Queensland, particularly the Pumicestone Electorate.

The decrease in funding levels means that waiting times for public, community and Indigenous housing have increased. Since 2000, the waiting list for public housing across Queensland has increased by 38%. Although information for the Pumicestone area from 1996 is not readily available due to electoral boundary changes, figures from 2001 for the Bribie Island area show a more significant increase of 48%.

Without additional money, it is very difficult to increase the number of dwellings as well as upgrading and maintaining the older, existing dwellings.

Traditional ways of responding to housing need will no longer be enough unless there is a change of attitude at the federal level towards funding cuts to housing. So we have to look at other innovative ways of increasing funds to affordable housing. I have been active in working with the other State and Territory Housing Ministers to look at ways to improve the broader housing system through taking a national approach.