

Question on Notice
No. 188
Asked on Wednesday 1 March 2006

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Stafford Electorate which has high demand from constituents seeking public housing –

How is his department addressing this need and what assistance, if any, is the Federal Government giving to assist in providing affordable housing to my constituents?

ANSWER:

To help address the growing demand for public housing throughout Queensland, including within the Stafford Electorate, the Department of Housing introduced the One Social Housing System on 1 January 2006.

Under this system, people in most need will be assisted with social housing, including public housing. The system will provide a more effective way of allocating social housing and other forms of housing assistance, for example bond loans. The system will also make it easier for clients to access the range of housing assistance provided or funded by the Queensland Government.

There is an increasing demand for public housing which has several causes, including the recent housing boom, increasing rents in the private market and interstate migration. Tenants are staying longer in public housing than ever before and so the number of allocations to existing public housing dwellings is decreasing, which in turn increases the waiting list and waiting times.

The Howard Government has withdrawn more than \$400 million from housing in Queensland through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Despite this the Beattie Government has more than doubled the housing budget since being elected with the state housing budget increasing from around \$330 million a year to \$668 million this year.

Within the Stafford electorate during 2004-05, the department commenced construction of 12 dwellings for public housing for an approved budget of \$3.102m. During 2005-06, the department plans to commence construction of 25 dwellings for public housing with an approved budget of \$6.697m. During the same period the department has also purchased six parcels of vacant land and 23 dwellings for public housing within a budget of \$8.220m. There has been no construction or acquisition activity during 2004-05 and 2005-06 within the Stafford electorate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing or Community Housing.

While the Queensland Government maintains and supports its public housing, the Australian Government continues to increase funding through Rent Assistance, which is paid to income support recipients renting in the private market. While this expenditure assists with the high cost of rent, it does nothing to increase the supply of affordable housing.

As the supply of public housing cannot meet demand, the Queensland Government is continuing to search for ways of encouraging private sector investment in affordable housing that will meet the needs of Queenslanders on low incomes. In this respect, the Queensland Government's work with local governments, not-for-profit organisations, developers and investors to plan, develop and design affordable housing is continuing.

I am also continuing to work with my Ministerial colleagues to seek changes to State and Government policy levers on the supply of affordable housing. We will meet later this year with the aim of seeking agreement to policy changes at the State Government and Australian Government level.