

**Question on Notice
No. 807
Asked on 24 May 2007**

Mr Lawlor asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing Information and Communication Technology (MR SCHWARTEN) –

QUESTION:

With reference to the high cost of rental accommodation which has made it harder than ever to find a suitable affordable home to rent–

What has your department done to help low income families find rental properties?

ANSWER:

The Department of Housing assists over 250,000 Queenslanders annually to access and sustain low cost affordable housing. With affordable private rental housing becoming harder to find, more people are coming to the department seeking housing assistance. Waitlists and wait times for social housing are increasing. As demand for social housing is greater than available resources, the department commenced implementation of One Social Housing System on 1 January 2006. Under this system, social housing will be targeted to people most in need, for the duration of their need.

A key element of this policy is the development of a state-wide register of need that will allow those in need of assistance streamlined access to social housing vacancies as they occur, regardless of whether they are in community or state, managed properties.

The shortage of affordable housing will continue to make it difficult for Queensland households on low-to-moderate incomes find suitable housing. Affordable housing issues are complex, and cannot be resolved by any one action or level of government. This Government's view is that a range of targeted solutions, applied and coordinated through State and Federal Government and non-Government bodies, is required to develop workable and sustainable housing solutions.

The Department of Housing has introduced several initiatives to improve the supply of affordable housing. These include the State Planning Policy for Housing and Residential Development, which became effective as at 29 January 2007. Under this initiative local governments prepare planning schemes that provide opportunities for housing options that respond to local needs. The department will support local governments by providing housing data, and assistance with analysing housing needs.

In September 2006 the State Government announced the 'Keeping the Australian Dream Alive' initiative, which will assist Queenslanders to obtain appropriate and affordable housing. As part of this package an additional \$30 million was allocated to the department over two years to deliver innovative affordable housing solutions.

Funds under this initiative will be used to acquire surplus government land to deliver social and/or affordable housing and to work with councils and providers which have specific initiatives. Discussions are underway with providers and councils in Belyando, Whitsunday and Bowen to assist with the development of affordable housing options.

In addition, the State Government is providing assistance of \$15 million to the Gold Coast Housing Company over the next three years to increase the availability of affordable housing on the Gold Coast.

Another initiative with considerable potential to increase the availability of affordable housing is the Queensland Home-link concept model. I announced this model at the Australian Financial Review Housing Congress in March 2006. Under the model, a range of subsidies would be provided to private investors to encourage the building of new residential rental housing for low-income earners for a period of 10 years. Overall, this model has the potential to alleviate the supply of affordable rental accommodation in Queensland. This model is dependent on Australian Government support, which the Department of Housing is pursuing. I have been disappointed at the lack of Australian Government interest to date.