Question on Notice
No. 355
Asked on 12 March 2008

MS STRUTHERS asked the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology (MR SCHWARTEN)—

QUESTION:

As housing stress is a significant problem for many families in my local area, and with reference to the upcoming ministerial council meeting on housing in which I encourage the Minister in his bid to get a fair share of new federal housing initiatives for Queensland—
Will he report on any new housing support initiatives that may be available to residents in Brisbane South?

ANSWER:

The State Government acknowledges the difficulties some Queenslanders face in accessing affordable and appropriate housing, particularly in an environment of ever-increasing interest rates and rising rents in the private market.

The Department of Housing works with a range of Government and non-Government stakeholders to deliver a social housing system that provides safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing to eligible Queenslanders.

Since 1998, the State Government, through the Department of Housing, has invested almost $43.5 million to assist people in housing need in the Algester electorate. This includes over $1 million through the Community Renewal program.

The impacts on residents in the Brisbane South region are similar to those affecting other communities throughout Queensland. As at 29 February 2008, across the State, the department is assisting over 60,000 households through social housing, and approximately 136,160 Queenslanders to access or remain in the private market. This includes over 7,500 households in the Brisbane South region with social housing.

The election of the new Australian Government in November last year represented a turning point for the provision of housing assistance in Australia. The Australian Government has signalled its intention to work collaboratively with the States and Territories to develop a broad based National Affordable Housing Agreement that will consolidate all forms of housing assistance, secure the viability of the social housing system, and promote housing affordability in the private housing market. Key strategies include:

- A Housing Affordability Fund – to invest up to $500 million over five years to reduce infrastructure development and holding cost burdens for up to 50,000 new home buyers.
- A National Rental Affordability Scheme – to invest over $600 million in rental housing for low and moderate income households in housing stress, at 20% below market rents.
- A National Housing Supply Council – to analyse the adequacy of construction and land supply for the next 20 years.

- A Commonwealth Land audit – to expedite the release of surplus Commonwealth land by revamping the Commonwealth Property Disposals Policy.
- ‘A Place to Call Home Homeless initiative’ – to halve the number of homeless people turned away from shelters within five years, based on spending of $150 million to construct 600 additional dwellings.

The Queensland Government is working with the Australian Government under the auspices of the recently formed Council of Australian Governments’ Housing Working Group to finalise these initiatives. When implemented, a National Affordable Housing Agreement will complement the Queensland Government’s ongoing efforts to improve housing affordability.

The Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy was released by the Premier in June 2007 to ensure that land and housing can be brought to the market quickly and at the lowest cost by significantly reducing the timelines and associated holding costs of residential development. Priority actions that are underway include:

- The establishment of an Urban Land Development Authority, within the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, to fast track residential development in locations throughout the State.
- Increasing the supply of land ready for development in urban and regional areas of high demand.
- Improving the planning and development assessment process that govern residential development.
- Regulating infrastructure charging plans across Queensland to ensure that the contributions levied on new development are fair and reasonable.
- Identifying and developing appropriate surplus government land.
- Allowing local governments to facilitate private sector financing of infrastructure.

The actions taken to date by the Queensland Government to address the structural and regulatory issues that impact on housing affordability will ensure that Queensland is well placed to benefit from the important initiatives being considered by the Australian, State and Territory Governments.