

Question on Notice
No. 550
Asked on 17 April 2008

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

QUESTION:

As he has spoken on numerous occasions about how his Homelink model is the answer to the housing affordability crisis, and in particular to the Australian Financial Review Housing Congress about the contribution he would like from the Federal Government of approximately \$17m as part of the total cost of \$31m for 1,000 properties— Now that there is a Labor Federal Government, when will we see the implementation of his Homelink concept and package for the people of Queensland?

ANSWER:

Ten years of inactivity by the Howard Government has resulted in dwelling prices and rents rising rapidly beyond the reach of thousands of hard working families, and the social housing system being neglected by allowing funding to be steadily eroded.

Therefore, I decided it was time to do something and put forward HomeLink at the Australian Financial Review Housing Congress in 2006 as a response to this decade of indifference by the former Federal Government.

The HomeLink proposal showed that it was possible to attract private investors into affordable housing and I am pleased that the Federal Labor Government has made a commitment to a scheme that enables similar outcomes to those proposed in Homelink. I am delighted to say that the Department of Housing is now embarking on a new and exciting era of collaboration to implement the National Rent Affordability Scheme with the Australian Government.

The National Rental Affordability Scheme aims to stimulate the supply of up to 100,000 new affordable rental properties across Australia over 10 years, by providing tax incentives to the private sector, with rents set at 20% below market rents. It is an ambitious scheme and has many features not previously attempted in Australia. For example, the use of tax credits in this way is new in Australia, as is stimulating private sector involvement in affordable housing. The scale of the Scheme is very exciting, and once implemented will go a long way to addressing the affordable housing crisis that is one of the legacies of the Howard Government.

This is an exciting period for housing policy in Australia and for the first time in decades, if not forever, governments across the country are now considering ways to jointly tackle the acute problems we have to face.