

**Question on Notice
No. 645
Asked on 30 April 2008**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the constant queries my office receives regarding housing (both public and private)—

What public housing is currently available and what is under construction or in the planning stage to overcome the need for more affordable housing in the Maryborough electorate?

ANSWER:

The Department of Housing owns almost 600 dwellings in the Maryborough electorate and as such is the biggest landlord in the city.

The department's commitment to social housing in the Maryborough area is demonstrated by the development of 22 studio units at 499 Alice Street, Maryborough which will be managed by a community housing organisation upon completion of upgrade works in mid-2008.

The department also has a nine-bedroom men's shelter under construction in the Maryborough electorate, with completion forecast for October 2008.

Further, in 2007-08, the department plans to commence construction of two additional projects, one of seven, two-bedroom apartments and the other of six, two-bedroom apartments.

Additionally, from January 2008 to April 2008, over 280 households in the Maryborough electorate were provided with other housing assistance totalling nearly \$235,000 such as bond loans and rental grants. This assistance is targeted at helping people maintain tenancies in the private rental market and is becoming more and more important in an environment of increasing private rental costs, which in turn is putting more and more pressure on the social housing sector.

Unfortunately, the construction of social housing alone will not overcome the need for affordable housing in Maryborough. The housing crisis is affecting many low to moderate income earners, not just those traditionally considered in need for social housing.

After a decade of disgraceful neglect of the issue of housing rental affordability by the Liberal/National Howard Government it is pleasing to see the Rudd Labor Governments budget announcement of \$2.2 billion over the

next four years on boosting rental stocks, new homes for the homeless, helping people save for their first home and lowering housing construction costs.

The approach of the Rudd Government to work collaboratively with the States and Territories to develop a broad based National Affordable Housing Agreement to secure the viability of the social housing system and to promote housing affordability in the private housing market is a refreshing change.

The Federal budget also includes \$150 million in funding for the Federal Government's 'A Place to Call Home' homelessness initiative. The aim of this initiative is to halve the number of homeless people turned away from shelters within five years.

Six hundred additional dwellings will be built across Australia, of which 143 will be built in Queensland.

I particularly welcome the \$623 million over four years allocated for the National Rental Affordability Scheme. This scheme will add 50,000 affordable dwellings to a newly regulated private market in Australia by leveraging significant new institutional investment.

Around 10,000 of these new dwellings could, potentially, be built in Queensland, giving a substantial boost to the local rental market and relieving pressure on the state's stock of social housing.