

BROWNLIE TOWERS, HOMESWEST TENANTS

208. Hon KATE DOUST to the Minister for Housing and Works:

The minister is aware of the Homeswest apartment blocks in Bentley known as Brownlie Towers. These apartments have, for some considerable time, been blighted by a high level of antisocial behaviour, vandalism and crime, which is unacceptable to the Homeswest tenants and other residents in the vicinity. Will the minister advise what action he has planned to resolve these issues and give residents of the area hope that a resolution will be forthcoming?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

I thank the honourable member for her question. I appreciate that she has drawn these issues to my attention. In response to the issues that she has raised, I look forward to being able to work with her to make some progress with regard to Brownlie Towers. I share the member's concerns and note that the precinct consists of some 300 apartments in two 10-storey towers, which were constructed in the 1970s, 32 apartments in a two-storey complex, 104 two-storey townhouses and 20 single detached houses; a total of 456 units on one super lot. The precinct was developed with high densities to satisfy a specific need at that time. Although the initial thinking was that this area would create an attractive living environment, the social reality has been different. As a result of the high concentration of public housing, this estate now suffers from high vacancy levels, lack of privacy, crime, vandalism, poor property values and low demand.

Last year, when I was in Sydney, I saw a similar complex and asked the Department of Housing and Works if we could devise a strategy along similar lines to that which has been deployed with great success in Sydney and incorporates the concepts of the New Living program. It is my intention to have the Brownlie Towers precinct examined in the context of that program. This will include the development of a strategy to revitalise the area, similar to the successful New Living area projects at Lockridge, Kwinana, Coolbellup, Karawara and the New North program involving Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola and Westminster.

In developing the strategy, I am keen to take up the opportunity of utilising the local interest and expertise on the Brownlie Towers advisory group. As the honourable member has shown such a strong interest, I formally invite her to chair that group, which will include representatives from the City of Canning, the Brownlie Towers residents group, the DHW and possibly other stakeholders. I will write to the Mayor of the City of Canning inviting the city to participate as a partner in the project to upgrade the infrastructure and take advantage of the opportunities that will benefit the community, such as land swaps. I am keen for the Department of Housing and Works to work with the City of Canning, and I hope for a memorandum of understanding towards that end when the scope of the project has been determined.

A similar NSW Department of Housing project in the Waterloo and Redfern areas in Sydney involved the University of New South Wales school of social work and the faculty of the built environment as partners, whereby students had the opportunity to work on a live project. Arrangements are therefore to be made for the program head at the University of New South Wales, Master of Urban Development and Design, Dr Bruce Judd, to visit Perth in October to inspect our New Living projects, along with Brownlie Towers, and to conduct a workshop aimed at presenting to stakeholders his experience and knowledge gained from the Waterloo project and how it can be deployed in Brownlie Towers. This is a great opportunity, upon the completion of Dr Judd's presentation, for the department to incorporate his input and submit a proposal to the State Housing Commission board of commissioners to implement a New Living project on that site. The principles of New Living will be adopted -

Point of Order

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I draw the President's attention to the standing order that requires replies to be concise. I also draw his attention to the standing order that provides for ministers to make ministerial statements at the beginning of each day - we had four today. The information the minister is currently providing would better be given to the House by way of a ministerial statement. I ask that the minister's answer be drawn to a conclusion so that other members can ask questions.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the minister is just drawing his answer to a conclusion.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The opportunity exists for Curtin University of Technology to be involved in this project through the school of architecture, construction and planning and the school of social work and social policy together with the Department of Housing and Works and other stakeholders. I especially look forward to the involvement of Hon Kate Doust in this urban renewal project and the considerable proven benefits that will be delivered to the residents of Bentley. It is a pity that members opposite have not shown a similar positive approach to issues in their constituencies.

