

INDIGENOUS HOUSING

**1180. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the minister representing the Minister for Housing and Works:**

I refer to statements made by Shane Hamilton from the Department of Housing and Works to a coronial inquest in Broome in which he said that 1 000 more houses were needed across Aboriginal communities statewide to address the current situation.

- (1) Will the Minister for Housing and Works commit the necessary funding over the next four years to address this shortage, which, if funding is matched by the commonwealth, is suggested to be about \$350 million?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) What strategies are proposed by the government to address this crisis in Indigenous housing?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) More is being done to improve Indigenous housing and infrastructure, but, clearly, there is more to do. Indigenous housing in remote communities and town-based communities is provided under an agreement between the commonwealth and state governments known as the Indigenous housing and infrastructure bilateral agreement. The past commonwealth approach of just building and then walking away from Indigenous housing has contributed to the current inadequate state of some remote housing. In the 2007 federal budget, the now former commonwealth government announced the abolition of the community housing and infrastructure program - CHIP - which was the primary source of commonwealth funding for the agreement. The replacement program is the Australian remote Indigenous accommodation program - ARIA - which was announced as a \$1.6 billion program over five years with the intention that its funding from July 2008 would replace the existing bilateral funding arrangements.

A number of strategies are being pursued to improve Indigenous housing, including implementation of a rent matching scheme to increase the level of funding for housing repairs and maintenance; further development and expansion of the in-home practical support program, known as the homemaker program; development of a community education program that focuses on healthy housing; employment of Aboriginal housing agents to be located in larger permanent communities; and investigation of the development of more durable housing options.

The state government is investing more in Indigenous housing and infrastructure than it ever has before. Since July 2006, the state has allocated an additional \$74.3 million, including \$15 million for additional and improved housing in Halls Creek, \$35.5 million for housing and infrastructure in town-based communities, and \$35.3 million and \$24 million for the delivery of power, water and sewerage to remote communities. The state government is looking forward to working with the Rudd government to improve Indigenous housing.