

HOMESWEST, INCOME OF TENANTS

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Is Homeswest reviewing the current incomes of its residential tenants to reassess their eligibility for public housing?
- (2) If Homeswest tenants are found to have combined family incomes in excess of eligibility criteria, what options are available to them for their continued occupation of Homeswest housing?
- (3) In the past six months, have any Homeswest tenants been given notice to vacate their homes because their combined family incomes exceed eligibility limits?
- (4) If so, can the minister advise how many?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

- (1)-(4) As a state housing instrumentality under the terms of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, Homeswest is obliged to use those commonwealth and state funds only to provide public housing accommodation for eligible tenants. The Commonwealth is placing increased audit pressure on the States concerning the use of funds. This would seem to flow from uncertainty on the part of the Commonwealth as to whether it wants to renew the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. A review of tenants is currently being carried out.

The option exists for tenants to purchase their homes, if the department wishes to sell. Some houses are in areas in which the department wishes to thin out its housing stock, reducing the number of public houses. In this case the house would be offered for sale either to a tenant -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Is that the case in Westminster?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In reference specifically to Westminster -

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the minister will not invite supplementary questions, as other members are waiting to ask their first question.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: If a property is not available for purchase, the private market is out there and available. Keystart and other programs exist to assist people to move into their own homes. It appears that some people, in the initial response to the review being undertaken, have left their properties, and a large number of keys have been returned from properties -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: On their own initiative?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In response to the review that was conducted they said, "We were wondering when you were coming for us; we're moving on." Over time, some of those people had acquired assets, wealth and income and were looking for the right time to leave. As members can imagine, we do not want Homeswest properties full of people with Mercedes cars and boats. That is not typical, but occasionally people have acquired extra income and are no longer eligible to stay in Homeswest properties. They have the opportunity to vacate their properties and move on. I am getting congratulatory messages from some of those people who thank me for -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It surprised me, too. I did not expect to be told by some of the people who are vacating their Homeswest properties that they are pleased to be prodded into home ownership. Some youngsters in those families have also said how pleased they are to finally be prodded into doing the right thing and getting out of their Homeswest home.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: You are not advocating petty capitalists, are you?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Has the minister finished his answer?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The opportunity for some level of discretion exists. Some people aged around 60, who are approaching retirement age, anticipate change in their incomes. We do not want them to suddenly move out of public housing if their incomes are soon to diminish because of an imminent, expected or anticipated change in their financial circumstances. I hope the Department of Housing and Works handles this issue carefully and cautiously -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: And sympathetically.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: And sympathetically. If any member wants a particular case put to the department as to why a person's circumstances should be viewed more favourably, relay that information to me and I will do my

best to address the issue. I hope I can look after Hon Derrick Tomlinson's constituent, uncle or aunty or whomever it is.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: It is just a constituent; I do not have relations.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I will do my best for the member's constituent if he has a good case. However, members must recognise that according to the latest figures, which the Government received this morning, I have inherited a waiting list of 15 000 people. It is a large waiting list that is getting worse.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister might be attempting to answer a supplementary question.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: We need the help of the Commonwealth to reduce that waiting list.