

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION — AVAILABILITY

**142. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Premier:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to boost housing supply and support renters across Western Australia.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on this government's innovative policy initiatives to help struggling renters and create more affordable housing options?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who does not support these initiatives?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I noticed the interjection from the member for Cottesloe, who actually just accused the government of rewarding the former Under Treasurer.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** That's why you like him.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Did you want to say that again, member?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I think the Liberal Party has spoken on that member's status, Madam Speaker.

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It is a very important one, because we all know that cost of living and housing are two of the most significant pressures on Western Australians to date. The pandemic followed by the war in Ukraine has created setbacks to supply chains and has had a significant impact on the cost and affordability of housing, and, of course, that is also impacted by the labour force constraints. That is why we continue to do everything we can to ensure that we create more housing stock to ease the pressures on the housing markets. Planning reforms are making it easier to build more homes or even granny flats in good locations, and incentives are attracting high-density developments and worker accommodation for strategic locations. Just yesterday, Minister Carey was in Coolbellup announcing the delivery of more social homes—16 of more than 1 900 since our \$2.6 billion investment. I have two young adult kids. One is in the early stages of house ownership; the other is deep in the housing rental market. I know how tough it is out there. We need to do everything we can to help people everywhere who are doing it tough. Every bit helps. That is why we partnered with the Western Australian Council of Social Service to assist private renters to keep a roof over their heads, and it is also why we have offered incentives for short-term accommodation owners to convert their property to the rental market.

I am very pleased to announce that I can confirm to the house that the WA rent relief program has now helped 255 households in Western Australia—that is 255 families, pensioners, single parents or individuals—to keep a roof over their heads. It has equated to more than \$1 million in assistance so far. I thank the community service organisations involved in helping to get this critical support for renters as quickly as possible.

Now, we also introduced our short-term rental accommodation incentive scheme around the same time. In fact, it was attacked by the opposition at the time. Indeed, the Nationals' Hon Louise Kingston said —

“A shrink in the supply of short-stay accommodation will adversely impact prices and send more people to Bali ...

Meanwhile, the Liberal's Hon Steve Martin claimed the opposite. He described it as —

... nothing more than a short-term shuffle that does not produce more houses ...

According to the opposition, it would do nothing and do too much all at the same time. This is on the same joint media release. They make these claims in a joint media release, and today I can report on the facts. Seventy-six new rental homes have been created as a result of the incentive scheme, of which 43 are in Perth and Mandurah and the remaining 33 are in the regions. That is 76 rentals that otherwise would not have been available. Meanwhile, further applications are being submitted and assessed. In addition to these innovative policies to help renters, we have also reformed the Residential Tenancies Act to help tenants in the community, and our reforms have been backed by the property industry. They offer renters more rights by banning rent bidding, limiting rent increases to no more than once a year and allowing minor modifications and a streamlined process for dispute resolution and bond releases. It is startling that even under these difficult conditions in the housing market, the opposition should take the opportunity to oppose them. It is a disgrace. They are hopelessly divided, but, on this, they almost appeared united.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** That's an exaggeration—come on!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Almost.

We know that the member for Roe's heart was not in it, but we know that he did the bidding of the Liberal Party on this one. At a time when renters most needed these reforms in our rental market to make sure that we can support them and give them more rights, the Liberal–National members turned their back on renters. We will not. Through our rental assistance payment scheme, our short-term rental assistance incentive scheme and our tenancy reforms, we will stand by renters and people in the housing market and make sure that we continue to grow the amount of housing in our community and put downward pressure on the cost of housing.