

SOCIAL HOUSING ECONOMIC RECOVERY PACKAGE

882. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's investment in driving activity in WA's housing construction industry as the state recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how this government's \$319 million social housing economic recovery package is helping to fast-track the construction of new social and affordable housing?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this investment is supporting local jobs and local businesses, and ensuring our economy remains strong?

Mr P.C. TINLEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) COVID-19 created a range of challenges across the community and across the economy, particularly in Western Australia. Like every other jurisdiction, we have had to respond to it. The strong stance on the protection of the health of Western Australians has been a hallmark of this government, with the hard border being a key feature of that. That created the circumstances by which we could attend to the challenges in our economy. In the first three years, the McGowan government used fiscal discipline to create the ability in the books to deliver a \$5.5 billion economic recovery package. Inside that, \$319 million was allocated to the delivery of social housing, with 250 new builds and, more importantly, 1 500 refurbishments of houses, many of which would have been disposed of—either demolished and the land retained or land banked or disposed of to the market. I am very proud of that particular program, which will put 20-plus extra years on some of these houses.

A quirk, if you like, of the adverse outcome of COVID-19 was that the financial markets contracted. There were credit challenges everywhere. After listening to the industry, what we had, as we always do, were apartment buildings that were very close to being completed. They had financial commitments, presales and development application approvals—they were ready to go. The goalposts moved for some of those projects. They were within weeks of starting and it was a devastating blow to those projects. I am very proud to say that we put in place an arrangement that allowed us to go through a procurement process within government and within the Department of Communities and the housing division to assess 16 applicants, which we called for, that sought government assistance to support their projects to get them over the line. Of those 16, we ended up with four. The four projects represented some \$96 million worth of economic activity and 500 jobs. We were very clear that we wanted to focus on that. With a \$13.8 million spend, we picked up 32 of those apartments across four projects, and now, as we stand here today, those projects are underway. That means jobs for Western Australians in the construction industry and families that will have certainty about their future. That is something that the McGowan government is particularly proud of and I look forward to seeing those projects come out of the ground as we go forward.