

HOUSING SUPPLY UNIT

744. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I refer to the eleventh-hour creation of the housing supply unit within WA Treasury, a desperate move that highlights the WA Labor government's failure to address the rental and housing affordability meltdown.

With Perth's median rental price for a house soaring to \$595 a week, up from \$360 pre-pandemic, and a worrisomely low rental vacancy rate of 0.7 per cent, does the introduction of this new initiative indicate that the Minister for Housing has failed in his responsibility to address the housing crisis?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. Obviously, as the member would be aware, housing is a challenge right across this nation. What distinguishes us from other states is that we have kept our finances strong, after the opposition destroyed them, and are now in a position to create investments and initiatives to make sure that we can address this particular challenge in our community at the moment.

I am often quoting the Minister for Housing when I say that we are throwing everything at it. We are doing a range of initiatives. Today's announcement is another example of how we are throwing everything at this problem. The state government has a range of reforms to address homelessness, and that includes a \$2.6-billion record investment over the next four years. We can do that because we have kept the finances strong. We have the opportunity now to back Western Australians and assist them to get into a home. Our investments have already delivered more than 1 300 social homes, and that is freeing up other housing stock to make sure that we can continue to address this situation. A further 1 100 social homes are currently under contract or under construction. We are seeing my government's significant push, led by the Minister for Housing, to continue to improve the situation.

At the moment, all jurisdictions in Australia are struggling with housing. We have another problem, and that is everyone wants to come to Western Australia to be a part of our great economy and our great state. That will continue to put pressure on the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Planning—oh! It is the same person! We know he is up for it; he has done a great job to continue to make sure that we have the land available, that we are supporting our housing construction industry and that we are looking at new ways to develop housing stock. In addition to that, we are doing things in government that will continue to make it easier for people to find a home, and that includes changes to Keystart loans, making them more accessible and increasing the threshold for Keystart eligibility.

In addition to that, we are making sure that everything we do as a government is coordinated. We are working with the commonwealth government to ensure that we can get the best possible outcomes, and that is where the team inside the Departments of Treasury and Finance is taking up the role. It will work with the commonwealth to make sure that we stand as part of the National Housing Australia Future fund plan, which we have agreed to with the federal government. It will continue to make sure that that work does a range of things. Firstly, it will make sure that we get federal money on the table and that the federal government is part of the solution as well. It also means that we will have a central unit, which means that we will have coordination within the departments so they can work together more efficiently to get better outcomes.

In addition to that, we want to be a constructive and important part of the AUKUS partnership, which means that we will need to continue to work with the Department of Defence to ensure that we will have housing available for the big teams of Australian and US defence personnel who will be located in Western Australia as part of that program. A whole range of activities come with a growing and diversifying economy, and this is one of the challenges.

I want to commend the Minister for Housing for the work he has been doing with the Deputy Premier; Treasurer.