

HOUSING — LANDSLIDE RISK — MIRA MAR

890. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Lands:

My question of which some notice has been given is to the Minister for Lands. I refer to the Mira Mar landslide in Albany and the torturous journey those householders have been on.

- (1) How is the government determining which houses it wants to voluntarily acquire?
- (2) Where is the government up to in the potential acquisition process, and are the offers being made at a realistic market and replacement value?
- (3) What criteria is being used for demolition and therefore determination of which houses to acquire?
- (4) Can the minister outline the time line and process for road and site remediation?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

(1)–(4) I thank the member for his question.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He has acknowledged this government has no liability.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes. I have to say that the member for Roe just flagged I was getting a question on Mira Mar but did not provide the actual detail of the question.

We take this issue very seriously. I acknowledge the work of the Great Southern Development Commission; the local member, Rebecca Stephens; and my own agency, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. First of all—I think the member behind me noted this—the state does not have an obligation to purchase these homes but it has stepped in to provide support to the impacted landowners and to find a pathway forward in this situation that, I think it is fair to say, had reached an impasse. The state government, via the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, is assisting landowners by negotiating the purchase of certain properties affected by the landslip. The agency has been working very hard, and it is important to put this on the public record. The department is liaising closely and is in regular contact with those impacted landowners. Representatives from the department have travelled to Albany and made themselves available to meet those impacted landowners. For landowners unable to meet, later meetings were offered.

To progress the purchase negotiations, the department—rightly so—sought valuations on each of the properties from the Valuer-General. Those valuations were calculated on the basis that the landslide had not occurred and did not impact the property values, and were provided as a range. After that, the department made offers to purchase the impacted properties at the highest end of the valuation range. It did the right thing, went to the Valuer-General, got the valuations and offered prices at the highest end of the range. In an effort to keep the negotiations open and transparent, the department provided copies of those valuation reports to the landowners. As a result, a number of properties are now being purchased, so the landowners have agreed and the department is working through the paperwork for those offers.

Ownership of these properties by the state is necessary if we are to proceed, as we are, given the quantum and the scale of remediation works in the area, because the most current advice is—we take this seriously—that the slip continues to move forward. This is the other point to make: the department has offered landowners who do not agree with the valuation of the Valuer-General the option to commission their own private valuation from a licensed valuer to support a counter offer, and the department has offered to reimburse those landowners for the cost of obtaining that private valuation report. There is no cost to the landowners to obtain that private valuation. That is transparent, that is open and that goes well beyond any expectation to assist those landowners in these negotiations. Any fair-minded person would agree.

The purchase of these properties is just the first step. The department will continue to work with the City of Albany on the long-term solution. Concurrently with these negotiations, the department is progressing the current geotechnical report from a concept design to a detailed design specification and implementation strategy. In the event that the remaining voluntary purchase negotiations are not successful, the state government will need to consider what the next steps will be, given the potential risk to public safety.