

HOUSING, MID WEST REGION

88. Hon M.J. CRIDDLE to the Minister for Housing:

This question is without notice, although the minister and I have had a brief discussion on it. Will the minister investigate and act on the urgent requirement for further quality housing in the mid west region, particularly for teaching staff at local schools?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

I thank the member for the question and for informally raising this matter with me yesterday. Since the member raised this issue, I have sent a note that is effectively in this case to the Government Employees Housing Authority, relaying to it the member's concerns about the need for government employee housing in the township of Kalbarri specifically and in the mid west more generally, as well as the needs of the Shark Bay-Denham community. Specifically, the member drew my attention to the fact that teachers are in need of government employee housing in those locations, where there is existing stock which is vacant but which is not of a standard that enables it to be occupied. I understand that stock is in good locations in Kalbarri, adjacent to the school. I have asked the chief executive officer of the Government Employees Housing Authority to look at that matter immediately. I will get back directly to the member with the information with which I am provided.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to take this role seriously. If members have concerns of this sort, they should give me the chance to have a stab at getting them tackled by government as quickly as possible. I am keen, as I am sure are all ministers, to tackle the concerns of the community as they are relayed to us by every member of this House.

I conclude my remarks by saying that in the area of government employee housing, the legacy left to this Government is a result of the strategies adopted by the previous Government. That leaves us with real challenges in determining how that business unit can continue to function without a major injection of funds. The business unit had adopted policies of the previous Government. Government employee housing has substantial flaws as a result of the strategy adopted by the previous Government, and the current Government has inherited those. As a result, we have a business unit that cannot function and respond adequately to the needs of the government employees that we currently have across this State, such as teachers and police, let alone those that we want to have in the future. It will be a real challenge for the Government to tackle those issues. I hope that it can find ways to undo the impact of the previous Government's policy on that business unit.