

PUBLIC AND SOCIAL HOUSING — AVAILABILITY

240. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the minister's comment in this place yesterday that —

Across the board, we are driving large numbers of measures to boost social and affordable housing and to boost housing supply.

- (1) If the government is doing such a sterling job boosting social housing, why has the number of people on the public housing waitlist now reached 35 924, a 21 per cent increase on the number of people waiting in 2017?
- (2) Does the minister honestly believe that a net increase of 114 social dwellings in seven years is addressing the issues plaguing WA?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. As we know, COVID radically reshaped our housing market. There are enormous pressures in both housing and rent. I say this: every Western Australian knows that we are not alone and that every state in this country is facing the same critical issues relating to housing and rental markets. Let me be very clear about that: we are not alone in this scenario.

We also face another significant pressure—that is, Western Australia is a preferred place to be for Australians and people from around the world. We have a very strong economy, as the Premier talked about, with 300 000 new jobs and an incredible lifestyle. Also, of course, in comparison with Sydney and Melbourne, our housing prices are still affordable—they are half that of Sydney. We are seeing 220 people coming to Western Australia each day. These extraordinary circumstances that mean there is more pressure on our rental market and more pressure on our housing market.

I do multiple media conferences. I go on radio constantly and talk about the challenges that we are presented with. I know that the opposition works by being black and white, but we know that the pressures will continue. There is no silver bullet or magical solution. These pressures will continue over the next few years. I want to assure Western Australians that this government is doing everything it can to boost the social housing supply, to boost affordable housing and to boost the wider supply in Western Australia through our infrastructure fund, through our planning reforms that the Liberals oppose and through our record investment in social housing and homelessness measures.

We know that when there are tight rental markets, people seek assurance in the public housing system. Even the opposition and the shadow housing minister have recognised that the majority of people on the public housing waitlist are actually housed or have accommodation. It is natural that when people are uncertain about the rental market, they register for the waiting list. I was asked today whether it was a record number. No, it is not a record. The record rests with the previous Barnett government. Back in 2010, when the population was of course far less, there were 24 000 people on the waiting list. I again say to Western Australians that we take this very seriously. We are throwing everything at it through a range of measures in both housing and homelessness.