

EMERGENCY HOUSING

5 March 2008

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I refer to the matter raised by my colleague the Hon. Mr Hood yesterday regarding a homeless lady named Sam, who had been living in her car with her five year old daughter. The question was centred around what could be done for her.

When members of the public do not have anywhere else to live and have exhausted all possibilities they often call this place. My office has received many calls from homeless constituents who need a place to live, and I am aware that other members of this place have gone out of their way to help homeless men and women in the past who have contacted their offices.

In 1991-92, Housing Trust stock peaked at 63,022 houses. Between 1992 and 2007, the Housing Trust reduced its low-cost rental stock by around 18,802 houses (30 per cent) to 44,220 houses through house sales to private buyers. In 2007, the proceeds of these sales totalled about \$1.7 billion.

Over the same period, the Housing Trust also received grants from the state under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. In 2007, it received \$1.1 billion from the commonwealth government and \$751 million from the state government. Between 1991-92 and 2006-07, the South Australian Housing Trust received a total of \$3.5 billion in capital injections.

Since 1992, the South Australian Housing Trust has consumed the \$3.5 billion in capital injections but, nevertheless, has 18,802 fewer houses to manage, yet it still showed an operating loss of \$55 million in June 2007. The interest cost is a staggering \$33.8 million per year on the current \$747 million debt.

The government response has been to sell off a further 8,000 houses (18 per cent of its remaining low-cost rental stock) and shift the responsibility for expanding low-cost rental housing to the Affordable Housing Trust. This financial year, the Affordable Housing Trust will provide \$20 million for joint ventures with NGOs, which may result in 200 to 300 new low-cost rental houses. However, at this rate it will take 30 to 40 years just to recover the loss of the 8,000 houses and reinstate the current level.

My questions to the minister are:

1. Of what use is the Housing Trust now if it cannot even give someone in such a dire situation as Sam a place to stay with her child?
2. Is Sam in this predicament because the government has sold off so many trust properties that there will now be in South Australia an emergency housing crisis that may take 30 to 40 years to recover?
3. Is the Housing Trust in such a predicament because of inefficiencies in its administration, and would Sam now have accommodation if her case could have been handled by a government-supported and far more efficient community housing organisation?

The Hon. CARMEL ZOLLO (Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Correctional Services, Minister for Road Safety, Minister Assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:54): I thank the honourable member for his question in relation to housing and emergency housing, in particular. Perhaps I should commence by saying that I have checked with the Hon. Dennis Hood, and I understand that the case of the constituent that he raised yesterday has now been looked at and that person has been accommodated.

As I am not the minister responsible, it is rather difficult—without knowing the full details and without knowing the other side—to actually make any further comment. Nonetheless, I am extremely pleased that the constituent's case which was raised yesterday has now been properly assessed.

The honourable member made quite a few comments and asked several questions, but I place on record that clearly the problems the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Housing has is because of the excessive cut backs by the federal government under the Howard regime for many years. I am certain that would not have been of any assistance to us in this state, but nonetheless I will forward the honourable member's questions to my colleague in another place and bring back a response.