

**McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — HOUSING — PERFORMANCE**

*Motion*

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [4.02 pm]:** I move —

That this house condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the last five years of government, creating a housing crisis that the state has never seen before, triggering significant economic and social consequences.

The reason the opposition has moved this motion today is that over 17 000 struggling families are looking—queuing—for government housing. The government has sold 1 300 houses that it had owned. Who knows how much that was worth to the government. I would say that the government got in the order of \$300 000 or \$350 000 in its back pocket from the sale of social housing that is desperately needed by the people in Western Australia who need it most. This government has neglected the over 17 000 individuals and families in this state who are struggling. We know that over 1 000 government houses remain empty. We know that over 1 300 government houses have been sold. We know that while 17 000 struggling families are looking for housing, the government has been selling off its stock, and, more importantly, it has empty houses that are scattered right across this state.

When we look at the history of this government from 2017, we see a decrease in the number of social houses available to the people of this state. In 2017–18, the government sold 269 homes; in 2018–19, 234 homes; in 2019–20, 196 homes; and in 2020–21, 138 homes. The list goes on. The government sold 534 three-bedroom homes, 82 four-bedroom homes, 123 two-bedroom homes and 44 one-bedroom homes. When we look at this government's track record, we have to question that. We talk about the health crisis. What is contributing to the health crisis is the housing crisis, and I will go into why the two are connected.

In question time today, I asked the following question of the Minister for Housing —

I refer to the housing solutions summit held on 29 July convened by Shelter WA and attended by peak housing industry representatives and community organisations.

(1) Was the minister invited to attend the summit?

The minister said yes, he was invited. I also asked —

(2) Did the minister or any of his ministerial colleagues attend the housing solutions summit; and, if not, why not?

The minister was not there. He was away on an adventure! Where was he? He was in Kalgoorlie. When there was a housing summit to talk about the housing crisis, where was the housing minister? I know where he was. He was perched up at the Palace Hotel, sipping his bloody mary. That is what he was doing while there was a meeting to try to work out how we can come up with solutions to the housing crisis, coupled with the health crisis, that the most vulnerable people in Western Australia are suffering. I want to get this on the record. The Minister for Housing did not attend the housing solutions summit held on 29 July, convened by social housing industry leaders, because he was away at a love-in in Kalgoorlie with the rest of his Labor Party cronies. The minister is not tackling the serious housing crisis in this state and the huge waiting list for social housing, which has been caused by the government's lack of investment and its selling off of the empty houses that exist. Who is in charge of housing in this state? That is the question. It is not all the fault of the current Minister for Housing. We had a housing minister who was removed, and rightly so. The government's lack of action in the housing space over the last four and a half years has now led to a catastrophic set of circumstances in which people in Western Australia are struggling to get into any form of social housing.

I want to indulge members with some of the headlines that we have seen day in and day out and week in and week out every month over the last four and a half years. We have seen report after report about the housing crisis in this state. The state Labor government is only now starting to act under the pressure that the opposition, the media and the public have put on the Minister for Health. The minister had to be backed into a corner and is now starting to talk about the health crisis in this state, hence the government's announcement about extra health funding. There is no detail around that money or when that money will be spent, but it is a start. The government is now acknowledging that there is a health crisis in this state. We now need to do the same to get this state Labor government and the Minister for Housing to acknowledge that there is a housing crisis in this state.

The minister referred to the comments on housing from Shelter WA's CEO today. He wanted to bring me, as the local member, into the debate on building single-bed units in Carnarvon. He asked whether I support that. I think the Minister for Housing missed the point. Frustration has built up and in desperation people are looking for large parcels of land that can be developed to try to curb the housing crisis. Do I support housing being built in Carnarvon? Absolutely. Do I support single-bed housing—100 of them—on an old school site? Absolutely not. The minister

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suggested that I support or do not support housing in Carnarvon. We have a lack of housing. I will go into the needs of my electorate, the Gascoyne and greater regional Western Australia.

I have looked at and will read out a few articles over time. An opinion piece by Shelter WA CEO, Kieran Wong, published in *The West Australian* of 9 August 2021 reads —

Figures ... last month showed ... at least 56 people died while homeless in Perth in 2020 ... in the past year ... we lost ... six times as many people ... to homelessness.

...

... more than 50,000 renters ... consider their housing unaffordable.

A distressing part of the situation we are in is that not only have we tens of thousands of people on waiting lists; the government sold 1 300 houses and over 1 000 houses are empty. Also, the social housing economic recovery package for the renovation of houses is three to four years away. Reports of sex-for-rent schemes have skyrocketed. Having headlines, or comments, like that shows the desperate situation people in Western Australia are in. It is not all beer and skittles. When the Premier gets up and talks about our economy, he fails to address community needs—social, housing and health needs. People should not be confused that our economy is going well because of the resource sector, particularly iron ore keeping us well and truly afloat and doing well. But when it comes to our housing and health sectors and small business, it is not all beer and skittles; there are pressures and concerns. When we have the headline “Sex-for-rent schemes skyrocket”, it should set off alarm bells that there is a housing crisis if that is what people are having to resort to. It is outrageous. The article goes on to say that one in five people have ranked housing as their number one issue.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Did you actually do any research at all into this other than the paper?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I am glad that Minister for Police has piped up because part of the issue is the lack of housing and that there is no housing in regional WA for his own members of the Western Australia Police Force to take up. Even if he wanted to increase the number of police in regional WA, he cannot because there is no housing. It is affecting the minister’s portfolio. How about the minister finds a voice within cabinet and does what is right for his members—stand up for them and get some houses built! If not, be quiet! He should be vocal in cabinet.

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Members, here we have the peanut gallery! It is still here! They are failing to address —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** We have the report member; they do not say much in cabinet.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** No, they do not. They get told what to do in cabinet.

**Mr P. Papalia:** You are probably the worst member of Parliament in decades.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Oh my God!

**Mr P. Papalia:** The worst representative of your community.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Keep going.

**Mr P. Papalia:** People are disparaging of you to our face all the time.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Do you know what? It is funny; they say the same thing about you!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, member, can you please direct your contribution through the chair. Members, please refrain from interjecting.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** We know that when the Labor government is hurting, it resorts to personal attacks all the time—attacking the individual. The member for Armadale knows what that is like. He has been on the other side as well.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** But, members, we know how the arrogant Labor government acts towards opposition members here representing their constituencies. They are the only ones trying to make sure that the Labor government is held to account on very important issues, such as the housing crisis we face.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** If the member for Cockburn thinks that he does not have a housing crisis—do you have a housing crisis in your electorate? Member for Cockburn, do you have —

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife:** There’s a special place for people like you in the Labor Party, all right. I think that’s what the member for Armadale —

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**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, can you please have some respect for Hansard; they cannot hear what is going on.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Does the member for Cockburn have a housing crisis in his electorate?

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife:** I will say it again —

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** See—silence! He cannot answer it. He has to now learn how to personally attack those opposite. It shows the depth that the government has.

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The mediocre police minister —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, please take your seat. Minister for Police, thank you.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Let us continue on. Like I said —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, members.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** News article after news article —

*Point of Order*

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** This is a very serious issue, Madam Acting Speaker. I would like to be able to hear the member for North West Central. I am having great difficulty hearing what he has to say on behalf of his constituents and others who are being impacted in relation to this matter.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens):** Member for North West Central, please direct your contribution through the chair. Members, please stop interjecting.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I refer to a news report from the ABC of 8 August 2021 on a drop-in service for homeless people in Midland forced to turn away 6 000 families and 500 young people in the past year since the moratorium was lifted. People need more help and it is not slowing down. The centre needs more affordable housing and more funding to expand its services. A growing group is going to Midland because they feel unsafe in the CBD. The City of Swan wants to see homeless people given a seat at the table. It goes on. A news article from the ABC of 6 August 2021 states that a Geraldton youth homelessness service has recorded its highest level of demand in 10 years. Turnaround is slow because there are no tenancies to send young people to. An article in the *South Western Times* of 5 August 2021 reports 13 people sleeping in a tent city at the Graham Bricknell Memorial Music Shell in Bunbury. Housing First relies on placing people in housing and giving them wraparound support but there is a lack of housing stock. A PerthNow article of 5 August 2021 refers to a philanthropic housing developer being given the green light to build temporary homes on government-loaned land in Victoria Park. Building temporary homes—if that does not say crisis, what does? Shelter WA is very active trying to find land and throwing up suggestions because it is desperate. Perth Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas has taken it upon himself to try to deal with the homeless situation, the crisis gripping our pride and joy—that is, Perth city. He is taking it upon himself to come up with solutions and putting money where his mouth is. I think he is putting \$3.7 million of City of Perth ratepayers' money towards dealing with people who need shelter. Where is the state government? We have the local government, the City of Perth, leading the way. Well done to the Mayor of the City of Perth, Basil Zempilas, for taking on trying to fix these issues plaguing our city.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** He shouldn't have to.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** He should not have to.

The *Midwest Times* reported that 7 420 square metres of government-owned land listed for sale in Carnarvon could be converted into 157 one-bedroom units. The minister has criticised that, but I think he is missing the point—that is, that Shelter WA is trying to find available land to deal with the crisis facing people in this state and particularly in regional WA. The arrogance of the Minister for Housing and his government means that they criticise Shelter WA and do not show up to the forums it holds. The minister should be working with Shelter WA to come up with workable solutions rather than criticising and bullying these organisations. One thing that is coming out is that not-for-profit groups right around Western Australia are fearful of speaking out against the Labor government because they fear that it will cut off their funding, or that they will not have a seat at the table when the government holds a forum. This is what is growing, members—shameful acts of arrogance by the Labor government and bullying of organisations. In today's question time, the Minister for Housing snubbed the forum and then criticised Shelter WA for coming up with a potential solution to the problem. It keeps going on. In *The West Australian*, Dr Betsy Buchanan wrote —

The housing crisis is WA's emergency, and it hits First Nations families first hardest.

The article continues —

... vulnerable Aboriginal families are losing children at a rate of more than one a week because of WA's acute public housing crisis.

Overcrowding is occurring, and there is a housing crisis when it comes to our most vulnerable —

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Perhaps members might learn something or perhaps they want to get a cup of tea. They are usually there eating the scones and biscuits during afternoon tea, member for Wanneroo. Anyway, it keeps going on —

A Perth grandmother has spoken about how homelessness has torn her family apart, with her 14-year-old grandson “wandering the streets” while she and her one-year-old grandson live out of the boot of her car.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, members!

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** That was an article in *The West Australian* of 3 August 2021. Another news article from 3 August reports that the Housing First program in regional WA has been hampered by a shortage of social housing. It states that the \$9.4 million program started in Perth and Bunbury in June to fund caseworkers to help them find sustainable housing. There is money there to help try to find sustainable housing, and organisations are putting up options, but the government is very dismissive of those options.

We can look at article after article. I will read an online article for members from ABC News titled “Public housing properties sit empty in Geraldton as wait list grows”, published on 20 July 2021. It reads —

A not-for-profit social ... group in regional Western Australia says the state government's plan to boost social and public housing supply will do little to tackle homelessness in the regions.

More than 950 people in the Mid West and Gascoyne are on the public housing waitlist, with an average wait time of 94 weeks—nearly two years.

Meanwhile, more than 130 ... properties sit vacant in Geraldton alone, including 39 which are under review and may be refurbished or demolished.

When Shelter WA said that it could use the old Carnarvon high school site for 100 single beds, the minister said that there is no need for 100 beds. There may not be a need in Carnarvon, but there is a need for housing in the midwest and Gascoyne, including Geraldton, where more than 950 people are on the waitlist. I will talk about Carnarvon, for example. There are 14 boarded-up homes in Carnarvon. When there is a housing crisis with long waitlists, when people are in desperate need and are trying to find a home, and when there is overcrowding, which often leads to families being dysfunctional because of the overcrowding and unwelcome visitors that some families have to put up with, it often leads to the police being tied up with some of the antisocial behaviours that occur as a result of overcrowding. That leads to crime issues. When kids do not want to go home because of the overcrowding that is occurring, what do they do? They roam the streets. They break into properties. That causes the police and the community to be at their wit's end.

A good example is that the police say that they need more police officers in Carnarvon. They say, “We need nine police, but we've got nowhere to house those police officers.” The police are not the answer to the crime problem or the housing problem, but they are at the pointy end. The police say that they need more police officers, and the Minister for Police says that the government will give Carnarvon an extra five police officers—I think it originally started off as nine—but the government cannot fulfil that promise because there is no housing for the police, and so the cycle continues.

There is an issue of overcrowding due to not having enough housing stock, or adequate housing stock, and yet there are 14 boarded-up homes. Then there is the issue that government employees such as the police need to increase their presence but cannot because there is no government housing. Government Regional Officers' Housing is another issue. Regional towns such as those in the Gascoyne cannot fulfil their complement if they have FTEs available to them because there is no housing for those employees. There is no Government Regional Officers' Housing and no social housing; therefore, we start to see homelessness increasing in regional towns and family dysfunction occurring because of overcrowding in homes. We then start to see issues of domestic violence. Kids do not want to go home. They are bored and roam the streets to try to keep themselves occupied, to get food or drink. They break into businesses and homes to try to get a feed or some money because they do not want to go home. That is what transpires when there is a housing crisis, Minister for Housing. That is the cycle of issues that come from a lack of housing, which is the number-one driver of antisocial behaviour and issues of family and domestic violence. People are leaving regional towns because the rents are starting to go through the roof and they cannot get any social housing whatsoever because no social houses have been built in the Gascoyne over the last five years—not one!

Minister for Housing, this is a crisis that is gripping every part of the state. We have waiting lists and houses are being sold, and this is the department's response —

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 August 2021]

p2670b-2695a

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A department spokesperson said of the 141 homes to be built across the state under the first stage, eight will be in the Mid West and Gascoyne.

I just want to say that I hate when the midwest and Gascoyne are merged together, because the Gascoyne and the midwest are separate. When people talk about the midwest, that includes Geraldton. It is a large regional city. The article continues —

... 141 homes to be built across the state under the first stage, eight will be in the Mid West and Gascoyne.

This includes two new social housing dwellings which are managed by community housing providers and six public housing properties maintained by the department.

That is all there is to deal with the housing crisis. I have some articles to quote. It is good to see the member for Geraldton in the house because this article states —

Member for Geraldton Lara Dalton said a study last year found 40 to 50 people sleeping rough, but the true number of people experiencing housing instability was unknown.

She promised residents that she would be pushing “very hard” to get up to 60 Homeswest homes, presently out of commission, open as soon as possible.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** They are all boarded up.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** They are; they are all empty.

**Ms L. Dalton:** There are houses that are available but people do not want to take them up. It is not as clear-cut as you described.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I am glad the member brought that up. It is not that clear-cut because those houses have not been adequately done up.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, members.

**Mr P. Papalia:** When did you last visit?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Is the minister talking about Geraldton?

**Mr P. Papalia:** Yes.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Last week. I cannot remember; I think it was Saturday.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Did you go into any of those houses?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I have gone past them with the Mayor of Geraldton.

**Mr P. Papalia:** You drove past.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I have been past; I do not have keys to go in. I am not part of the government. Perhaps the minister would like to give me the keys to those houses.

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** To continue, the member for Geraldton has acknowledged that there are empty houses that have been boarded up, and that they could solve something of the huge waiting list that exists. That is only in Geraldton, in the midwest and Gascoyne, which is huge. It is getting to a point of being very difficult to ever cater for the struggling families and individuals in the midwest, the Gascoyne and the whole of Western Australia. That will move families away from regional Western Australia; they will go to the city, where a family member or someone they know might be able to put them up for a certain time or where they might have a greater chance of getting a house. We have gone through the social housing statistics and my colleagues will continue to go through the lack of housing around the state—the housing crisis that is gripping many people and communities.

A number of letters were written to the former Minister for Housing. I have one here from the former Minister for Housing Hon Peter Tinley dated January 2021, which was in response to a constituent of mine who talked about the need for housing in Exmouth. The minister’s response was —

I appreciate you sharing your observations on the current trends in the Exmouth real estate market. It is recognised that housing options in regional centres are in high demand and that smaller markets, like Exmouth, may find it difficult to respond to significant upturns in demand and that this may negatively affect the local economy.

As you may be aware the Department of Communities’ land development functions are being transferred to Development WA, accordingly the Department of Communities has forwarded your comments and suggestions to Development WA.

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That was a great response from the former Minister for Housing, to whom one of my constituents wrote expressing the dire need for land to be released so that people could build houses.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Ended up not being in the right faction, member.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Clearly. That is probably the case.

In places such as Exmouth, land needs to be released so that housing can be built. It will be built by the private sector, not so much by government. The government has dragged its feet on the ground on the release of land by DevelopmentWA. The processing of land has been delayed or not acted upon. In the past five years, the government has not put a priority on land release in a town such as Exmouth. Land is available but the government has not been able to settle native title issues. Obviously, one of DevelopmentWA's key performance indicators is based on how much it will make from a development. DevelopmentWA will therefore wait until the land reaches a certain price and then develop the land, because under its legislation it has to turn a profit. That is not what is needed in regional WA.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** We might need a new Minister for Lands as well as for housing.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** It will be interested to see what the Minister for Lands says about the housing situation and the land that needs to be released by DevelopmentWA in a town such as Exmouth, which is suffering at the moment. It has a general population of 2 500 but a visitation rate of 20 000 people. In the height of the tourist season, that puts pressure on small businesses and the like.

That leads me to some of the government commitments about workers' accommodation made prior to the election. I do not know whether workers' accommodation falls under the remit of the Minister for Housing or the Minister for Lands, but it is part of the housing crisis. At the moment, businesses everywhere in Western Australia are struggling to get employees. If they can get an employee, there is nowhere to house them, particularly in regional WA. Just before the 2021 state election, the Premier spoke about workers' accommodation. In an article headed "Land release for Kalbarri workers accommodation", the Premier was quoted as saying —

"If re-elected, we will accelerate the process to facilitate the construction of a new workers' accommodation facility."

Mr McGowan said COVID-19 had had a "significant impact" on the availability of workers' accommodation in Kalbarri, with the shortage continuing to impact tourism, hospital and small business.

The initiative came after Northampton Shire president Craig Simkin said Kalbarri employers were "screaming out" for the Shire to find a workers' accommodation provider.

It goes on.

This commitment was made on 11 March 2021, when the Premier waltzed in and announced that the government would fast-track workers' accommodation. If there was ever a need for workers' accommodation, it is now. Workers' accommodation is needed so that not only business operators have housing for their workers, but also tradies and builders can be accommodated while they repair the homes and businesses of Kalbarri residents that were damaged by cyclone Seroja, which hit a few months after the election.

Members opposite talk about commitments. One such commitment was —

"If re-elected, we will accelerate the process to facilitate the construction of a new workers' accommodation facility."

That was about Kalbarri. What is the date today, members?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** It is 11 August.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** It is 11 August and we still have not seen any movement on workers' accommodation for Kalbarri. It is critical now for the rebuild of Kalbarri so that workers can be housed and so that the tourism products that Western Australians want when they visit places such as Kalbarri can be supplied—that is, going to a cafe, getting a coffee, getting something to eat and being able to check into a hotel because the bed sheets are clean or the rooms have been cleaned because there are workers. The list goes on. It is a major issue.

I follow that up with another hotspot in my electorate, being Exmouth. This is a *Pilbara News* article titled "State Election: WA Labor reveals plan to fast-track solution to stem Exmouth staff housing shortage". Amazing! What date was this? It was 5 March, a week before its same announcement in Kalbarri. It states —

Initiatives to stem the dire shortage of worker accommodation in Exmouth will be fast-tracked under a re-elected Labor government.

The launch for expressions of interest for local companies to build much-needed workers' ...

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Several potential sites have already been identified and a future Labor lands minister —  
That is the member for Armadale.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Yes. It has it here. The Premier actually dobbed you in. He knew that the member for Armadale was going to take on that role—the future lands minister, being the member for Armadale —

would grant tenure approval for an appropriate development.

Perhaps the Minister for Lands can enlighten the house and the residents and businesses of Exmouth what actions he has taken to fast-track what the Premier said here—that is, to stem the dire shortage of worker accommodation in Exmouth. It will be interesting to see whether the Minister for Lands will get up to speak in this debate and enlighten the businesses of Exmouth on what action he will take, given that the Premier made sure that he is the minister responsible for delivering much-needed workers' accommodation.

The Exmouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry conducted its own survey and found that more than 200 employees were needed and that more than 200 beds were needed to accommodate the workers' accommodation crisis in Exmouth. The groundwork had been done. The Premier said that the government would fast-track these initiatives under a re-elected Labor government. We have a re-elected Labor government, but we are not seeing too much of that fast-tracking to alleviate the pressures that businesses are under.

I know that quite a few members have travelled up north and have seen that businesses are often closed simply because those owners needed respite. They basically work 24/7 and need a day off. They simply cannot find any employees; and, if they can, there is no accommodation to put those employees in.

That is happening from Exmouth to Coral Bay to Shark Bay to Kalbarri. That is happening inland and particularly in Broome. It is good to see the member for Kimberley here. I am sure her chamber of commerce—which I have met with—has approached her about the need to build workers' accommodation. That is what is needed. The member for Kimberley will be aware that we often hear that Broome is full. But a lot of those hotels are at only about 80 per cent capacity because they are using the other 20 per cent for staff or they cannot fulfil the other 20 per cent because they have no-one to clean the room and provide those services. I am sure the member for Kimberley has received that same feedback. Broome and other tourism hotspots are under a huge pressure. When we hear that tourism is booming, Broome is full, Exmouth is full, Kalbarri is full, Shark Bay is full and Coral Bay is full, the reality is that it is full according to the ability to be as open as one can be. That is because there is a shortage of workers. If there are workers, there is no workers' accommodation for those businesses to maximise their profits from this wonderful opportunity because no-one from Western Australia can go overseas. When the borders are open, people come here from the east coast. That is a great position to be in. We have always wanted our tourism spots to really be booming because of the number of tourists travelling around. But those businesses in those towns cannot maximise their capture of the market because they simply do not have the workers or workers' accommodation to fulfil demand and keep their businesses open. That then causes stresses and strains on our mental health. Business owners are experiencing burnout and fatigue because there is simply no workers' accommodation for employees if they are able to get those employees.

I hope the Minister for Lands can address some of those issues. Hopefully, he will stand up and talk about the worker accommodation shortages gripping our northern towns. Rents are sky high. Property market sales remain calm still because banks find it extremely hard to lend in regional areas. Not many houses are being built because banks are demanding large deposits to start the process of building a house.

I hope that the Minister for Housing and Minister for Lands work with DevelopmentWA to look at ways to make land that the state owns affordable so that people can build homes. That will be one way to deal with the crisis that comes when people want to live in regional communities but will also allow for Government Regional Officers' Housing to be built, which is a major problem. Nearly every regional town does not have adequate FTEs for government departments simply because there is no housing.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Have you spoken to the shire president?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Of?

**Dr A.D. Buti:** The shire that deals with Kalbarri.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Yes.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** What has he said? Has he said that he keeps changing his mind?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** On?

**Dr A.D. Buti:** On what he requires from DevelopmentWA.

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**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** My understanding of the need in Kalbarri—I will give an example —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** No. My question was to you. You asked me if I could explain. We have been trying to work with them but the shire president keeps changing his mind on what he wants.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I know this is not you —

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Can I answer that question?

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Minister —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Minister, you have a chance to get up. If I can just respond to what you have just said. The only way I can respond is to the pressure that the Shire of Northampton —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** The CEO of.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** No, and councillors and the whole community. I cannot downplay this. I am not playing this in any other way.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Madam Acting Speaker, the minister has a chance to get up and speak.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Lands, excuse me.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Lands, thank you.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Not only is the member continually interjecting —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Minister! Minister!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** You are the member for Armadale. Acting Speaker, not only is he continuing to interject —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** — he continued to interject whilst you were speaking.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens):** Member for North West Central, if you do not want interjections, please do not engage in conversation.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I do respect the Minister for Lands and what he has to say, but I want to explain to this house—the Minister for Emergency Services would fully understand this as well—that the pressures that the Shire of Northampton has been under have been immense. The CEO has been criticised unfairly. I think that is just somewhat due to a lack of understanding of the magnitude of the cyclone and the effect it has had right across the Shire of Northampton and the midwest, as well as the shire president and councillors who are bearing the burden of their community which is under huge amount of pressure. Like I said, for most of yesterday Kalbarri had no power. That just adds to the fact that people do not have a roof on their house; they still have a tarp. They had no-one to complain to, so who did they complain to? They complained to the shire president, shire councillors and staff. In times of distress —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Can the minister hang on a second. It is important that we understand the pressures that people are under.

The shire is working through what is needed, but the community is constantly at it. The government needs to provide support through people on the ground helping out the shire to fully ascertain what is needed for workers accommodation. I will give the minister an example. One assessor needs 200 employees—tradies—to do that company's work. That is one company. That is the issue with workers accommodation. Like I said —



**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Can the minister hang on a second. I will let him respond.

Prior to the election a commitment was made by the Premier about workers accommodation to house workers needed by small businesses. That is one commitment that has not been forthcoming. The other issue that has now transpired is the need to house workers—tradies and builders—to rebuild places like Kalbarri and Northampton. There is basically no accommodation, and businesses are trying to survive and get tourists to come back. At the moment, it is a perfect storm of everything going wrong. We can all take on board the pressures that the CEO, councillors and president are under. They are sometimes seen as being bullish or angry, but we must respect the position they are in.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** I know the Leader of the Opposition got a bit annoyed. I was just trying to state a fact. It was not a criticism of the shire CEO. I was just stating the fact that there had been a change of mind over a period in Exmouth, and Kalbarri actually, about what they wanted, and, of course, the cyclone then changed the position again. DevelopmentWA has been trying to work with both shires to accommodate what they want, but their position has changed. That is partly a result of the cyclone, but it is not only that. It is not just an issue for DevelopmentWA; it is also an issue for the Department of Planning. Both are involved and trying to assist in very trying circumstances, but there has been a change of positions. That is not a criticism; it is just stating the fact.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I thank the Minister for Lands. I look forward to a resolution to what is now a dire situation. We are not even talking just about Kalbarri. Like I said, the population of Exmouth goes from 2 500 people to 20 000 people and that of Kalbarri goes from a couple of hundred to 5 000 or 6 000 people. That goes on right across this great state of ours. Our state is experiencing a wonderful opportunity to grow our businesses, our tourism product and our regional communities. However, they are hamstrung because of a lack of land that is allowed to be developed and built on. Those issues are due to hold-ups with the extinguishment of native title land so that those areas can be developed. There are problems with services such as sewerage, water and power. For example, sewage ponds are inhibitors. If someone wanted to build a house in Exmouth, the sewage treatment facility there would need to be upgraded in order to cater for any new houses. The list goes on. It is the same in Coral Bay.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** It is very difficult and complex.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** It is expensive, minister.

I suppose the point is that there are all these massive pressures. I am sure every member in this chamber would visit regional communities for a holiday, especially along the coast, and they know how wonderful they are, but our communities are under huge housing pressures. The lack of investment over the last five years has culminated in this massive problem that will take years to fix. We are not even seeing a plan to build social housing or to take boards off boarded-up houses and renovate and fix them up so people can live in them. We are not seeing the plan for workers accommodation. We are not seeing a plan to upgrade the sewage treatment plant. Land cannot be developed because there is no sewerage connection. Services are lacking and there is no plan from government. There is no regional development plan for our regional communities that will allow those houses to be built. The rental market does not exist in Western Australia at the moment, so where are people living? What is the government's plan? What is the plan to incorporate the private sector to be part of that problem-solving? Where is the government sitting down? Is it sitting down with Shelter WA and other community organisations? Perhaps the minister could have gone to the housing summit at which those ideas were thrown on the table. What plan does the state government have to curb this housing crisis crippling regional communities, crippling the most vulnerable, crippling businesses that cannot get any accommodation for their workers and crippling the growth of our towns and this state because no housing is forthcoming? That is the problem. That is what we need to hear from the government. The opposition will support a plan moving forward. In the absence of a plan, we will come up with one and take it to the next election. There is a housing crisis gripping every community in this state.

The government departments that the minister is responsible for are all suffering because there is no Government Regional Officers' Housing. Our communities are suffering, which leads to crime, antisocial behaviour and overcrowding. This is what we are facing, and this is what we need the government to fix. It is not just about announcing millions and millions of dollars. We need to see a time frame and a plan that does not just include a number of houses, because utilities are needed to connect to those houses. That is why the government needs a regional development plan. It needs a plan for housing in this state. Ultimately, what plugged the holes of the government in the past was royalties for regions, which provided all those services so we could grow our regional communities. That is what we need to bring back. It would make a huge difference so we could grow our regional towns and fix this housing crisis.

As I said in a speech last week, we see the Premier on the stage doing the bow with all the lights on him. We see the Minister for Health jump on the stage to get his accolades, and he suddenly trips over the curtain. The Minister for Housing comes the other way to get his accolades and also trips over the curtain, and behind the curtain we see the health crisis and the housing crisis. We see the crisis in general that this state is facing because of the smoke and

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mirrors and the failure to reinvest in our state in the last five years so that we do not have the crisis after crisis that will be the government's downfall. It will be the government's downfall because people cannot find a house. With the health system where it is at, I would watch out, government members. I would be working as much as possible to come up with a plan to fix these massive issues gripping our state. We have a massive health crisis that is stopping our growth and potential as a state. I have faith that the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Lands will work together to create the plan we need so that people have a roof over their heads.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [4.59 pm]: I, too, rise to support the motion today. I do so because of the massive and can I say unnecessary housing crisis that we have in Western Australia. We have a \$5 billion budget surplus, and we have had a budget surplus year on year. This is due to the GST fix for the state that was organised by Hon Matias Cormann, former minister for —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens)**: Thank you, members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: The federal Liberal government fixed the GST inequity for this state, delivering billions of dollars to the state government above its forecast budget.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER**: Minister for Police, can you please stop interjecting.

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: On top of that the government has had a massive windfall from royalties right through the term of this government. Therefore, there is no excuse for where we are. There is no excuse, in particular, because members of this government—the Minister for Police sitting opposite, the new Minister for Housing, the new Minister for Lands and the new Minister for Emergency Services—have sat in this Parliament and heard from this side the crisis that the state faces. I came into this Parliament in 2018 and Tony Krsticevic, the former member for Carine —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: For goodness sake—please, Acting Speaker!

**The ACTING SPEAKER**: Ministers, it is great that you are all here, but can we please just let the Leader of the Liberal Party speak.

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I would appreciate at least a few fewer needless interjections.

From the first day that I came into this chamber, Tony Krsticevic, who is the former member for Carine, raised the issue of homelessness and he raised it right in the Premier's electorate. I know because I used to be the head of the Kwinana Industries Council and my office was based down that way. I used to drive past there and see that —

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: Oh; Acting Speaker, please! Can I have some clear air?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent)**: I will get in the chair first!

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: Thank you very much.

**The ACTING SPEAKER**: Continue.

**Dr D.J. HONEY**: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I would be grateful for your support.

Tony Krsticevic, the former member for Carine, in this very place raised the homelessness problem in the Premier's own electorate in Rockingham. We had desperate people sleeping rough in the Premier's electorate, on the road that he drives past to get to Parliament from his house. The Premier was alerted to the crisis and the fact that people had died sleeping rough in that camp because they had nowhere else to go. Do members know how long it took the Premier to visit? I am not talking about the Premier of this state going to visit some far-flung place; I am talking about the Premier in his own electorate. It took the Premier two years to go to visit that camp. For all your foibles around this chamber and for all the things that we may disagree on, I am pretty sure that all of you as local members in that situation would have gone and visited those people in that community, like I visit people who are homeless in my community and discuss issues with them. I know that you would do that. It took this arrogant Premier two years to go to visit people who were homeless in his own electorate. It took some considerable time after that for the matter to be dealt with, and then only because the then member for Carine was dogged in highlighting the issue of homelessness. He highlighted the issue of homelessness not only down in Rockingham, but also right across metropolitan Perth and this state.

I have some sympathy for the new Minister for Housing. I know that the new Minister for Housing is passionate about this issue and wants to do something about it, but we are not talking about a new government. We are not talking about a government that has just come in and is trying to deal with issues from the past. We are talking about a government that is four and a half years in, and we are now hearing about plans or plans to plan. We are now hearing

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about things that might be done. This crisis sits at the feet of the Labor government. This government has simply been completely inadequate in dealing with this issue over the last four and a half years. As I say, I know that the current minister is passionate about this topic. I have had private discussions with him about the homelessness issue in my electorate. I will not go into that in detail. I do not play politics on serious issues like this. I dealt with this in the same way I did with the sports clubs in my electorate when I invited the Minister for Sport and Recreation down for a private meeting. I must say that I was a bit disturbed that the minister would then say that I tried to use that for some political pointscoring. I did not try to use that invitation to meet me to my political advantage; I invited him down to privately discuss matters in my electorate and to introduce him to people in the sporting clubs who needed some help and assistance. That is exactly the same way that I respect the current housing minister. I know that he is trying to do something.

The problem with this government is it is paralysed by an emperor who makes all the decisions. We get the reports. The thing about humans is that people talk about things, and we hear what happens in cabinet. I can tell you what government members do in cabinet: “Keep your mouth shut”; “Keep your head down; otherwise you’ll get it kicked off!” That is what we hear.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We will find out! If you are in the chosen group, you are fine; do not put your head up otherwise. Whatever this Premier’s characterisation of the former Premier was —

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Honestly! Whatever this Premier’s characterisation of the former Premier was, he clearly was enamoured with the model.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I am glad to hear from you, member for Cockburn. I am not surprised.

In my electorate of Cottesloe, one in 30 residents lives in social housing—that is 3.2 per cent. The great moral crusader, the member for Cockburn, has only 2.4 per cent social housing in his electorate.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Yes—and we know that you have a chip on your shoulder because you went to a public school and had to put up with private schoolkids at university; we have heard it all! Member, let us go on. There is only 2.4 per cent social housing in the City of Cockburn. There is 3.2 per cent social housing in my electorate, and I passionately care about those people. I go down to the loners’ lunch. I talk with them, I discuss the issues and I try to help those people with their problems. The City of Rockingham has only 3.1 per cent social housing. Armadale definitely has a bigger issue with 4.2 per cent social housing, which is one per cent more than the case in Cottesloe. This issue affects us all, and we see that right across the state.

But after four years, what is this government’s response? This government reduced social housing by 1 372. We did not make up that number. That number was in answers to a question asked by Hon Steve Martin on 17 June 2021. There were 44 087 public houses on 30 June 2017, and it is now down to 42 715. This is the party, the bleeding heart socialists, who care about those people doing it tough —

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Do you know what, member for Wanneroo? If you think you have won —

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I have a point of order, Madam Acting Speaker. I am really getting this problem on my left here; would you mind telling the member for, I think, Wanneroo to respect the member on his feet?

*Debate Resumed*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** If the member for Wanneroo thinks that the government won the election on its response to social housing, she is delusional. There is a good chance it will be one of the things that it will lose the next election on, the way it is going. For all the arrogance and hubris, in four years this government went backwards. After four and a half years, this government houses fewer people in social housing than the previous government did. Government members should be ashamed about that—all of you, because this is your government.

Despite sitting on a massive surplus throughout this term of government, members opposite have simply not stepped up to do their job. They have forced people onto the streets by selling public houses and not replacing them. We on this side know that public housing stock has to be turned over. We know that it is part of the business and that was happening under the provisions of the previous government, but that money should not go into consolidated

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revenue; it should go into building more houses. The situation now is that, because the federal and state governments have pump-primed the construction industry so much, it will be almost impossible for this government to catch up, simply because we do not have the workers to do the work. All the available workforce is tied up in residential projects. I am told that the pipeline is probably two to three years long. It will be an enormous challenge because this government did not do anything in the last four years to properly deal with the issue. In fact, it sold houses. I feel sorry for the challenge that is being presented to the new Minister for Housing because he has been handed a suicide pass. I know he is passionate, but he has been given an enormously difficult task by a government that did nothing in the last four years.

I can compare this term of government with that of the Liberal–National government, during which 6 000 additional public houses were built. This government has run down the figures. I refer to a report called *Ending homelessness in Western Australia 2021 report: Key findings*, which was published on 3 August 2021 by the Centre for Social Justice at the University of Western Australia. The report shows the number of clients accessing specialist homelessness services in Western Australia who were homeless or on an entry to support. In July 2017, there were 2 251 people; there are now 3 099 people. That is a massive increase of 750 people seeking that support. The figures show not just what we see on the streets, but real numbers. We know that the most vulnerable people in society are victims of homelessness. The report shows that, in this state, almost 30 per cent of homeless people are Aboriginal people. That group already suffers enormous disadvantage in a number of aspects. Almost one in three homeless people is Aboriginal. They face a whole range of challenges, which I will not go through because of time restraints. More than 25 per cent of homeless people overall had an educational attainment to only year 9 or lower. These are people with real challenges in a whole range of areas—particular challenges with particular issues. Two-thirds of homeless people are male and one-third are female.

We have heard about the crisis in presentations to emergency departments. This is the government's own doing, exactly as the member for North West Central outlined very clearly earlier on. One of the root causes of stress in our hospital system is that, according to the report, 48.7 per cent of homeless people had been to an emergency department due to not feeling emotionally well or because of their nerves. More than half, 58.7 per cent, reported a diagnosis of depression, and 52.3 per cent reported anxiety. Almost one-third of these homeless people reported a diagnosis of a post-traumatic stress disorder and 26.2 per cent had been diagnosed with psychosis. The report further states that accident and emergency departments were visited an average of 3.5 times per homeless person in the six months prior to the survey. It is exactly as the member for North West Central said for these people who are living rough. There is no chicken and egg here. When people are forced out onto the streets, they suffer anxiety and depression. Their medical conditions are not treated properly. Because of that, they end up in emergency departments. These are not my statistics; they are from a respected research group based at the University of Western Australia. It reports that a substantially larger number of people are out on the streets seeking help during this term of government. These are the people who are turning up in emergency departments. If I compare the number of hospitalisations, there is a dramatic increase for people who are living rough on the streets. When we talk about the hospital crisis, we can say that it is intimately, intrinsically linked to this government's failure to deal with homelessness.

Geraldton has been a focus. Just a couple of weeks ago, I spent four days in Geraldton talking to people in the community. We had what we call our winter love-in there. We went out and spent a lot of time talking to people in the Geraldton community. Overall, Geraldton is doing well. The economy in Geraldton is doing well—certainly better than when I spent some time there about 12 months ago. Certainly, more shops are open and people are generally buoyant. However, there is another side to it. As the member for North West Central pointed out, almost 1 000 people in that area are on the streets. There are statistics and statistics, and we can talk about the houses. I went to have a look at the issues in the suburbs. I heard what the minister said today about those houses but, in Geraldton, the Australian Red Cross is giving out tents so that homeless people have somewhere to live. That is what they are doing in the great city of Geraldton, with an economy that is otherwise doing well. The Red Cross is handing out tents. I went to the old Batavia Motor Inn, which was a property deal gone wrong. The Batavia Motor Inn is like something out of a dystopian movie of some futuristic nightmare.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** In this prosperous community, we have desperate people. I saw some of the people in that area and a couple of my colleagues spoke to them. I did not want to go there as a big group because I think sometimes people in that situation feel humiliated, but I heard about their conversations and I spoke to people in the community who regularly interact with the people in the Batavia Motor Inn. The poor people have put up boards to try to make themselves secure. They have to carry bottles of water up flights of stairs in order to flush the toilets. Those people would happily live in that boarded-up house if it was available. I accept what the minister said. There may be some circumstances in which that is not possible. I went to see houses that were only five years old; they were beautiful in their external appearance. All the houses I saw were dramatically better than the house I lived in when I was a child.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I learn and I look.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Those houses that the member referred to were seriously vandalised. As a result, some of the internal materials were not appropriate for public housing tenants. They will be refurbished, but that is the point I made; on a simple assessment, you may simply say that we should just do it instantly, but sometimes there are very clear reasons.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I accept that point, minister, and I accept that this is not a trivial issue. I accept the point the minister is making, but we are four and a half years in. Those houses were not boarded-up yesterday. I spoke to people in the community and they said that they had been progressively boarded-up over years. The government has had time to do something about that. I heard the argument about the wraparound services requirement, but, again, this is no mystery. We know, as a generalisation, that probably half the people who are living in social housing have mental health and/or drug issues. It is not their fault. There are unfortunate people in the community. It is worse for them, obviously, that they have those afflictions. That is why a holistic approach is required. That is why four and a half years into government, it should have those wraparound services. The Minister for Community Services is responsible for that area. In conjunction with the Minister for Housing, that is the job of the Minister for Community Services. What do we hear from the Minister for Community Services in this place? We hear the Minister for Community Services talking about a plan and what will happen in six months, a year or two years. That minister has been the minister for four and a half years. I have heard that from this minister for the whole time she has been a minister. I know that the Minister for Community Services is a compassionate person. I do not doubt her level of compassion or that of most of the people in this room. But having compassion and saying in a great voice how much a person cares makes no difference. When in government, the government must do something about it. It actually has to go in and do something about it, and this government has not done enough about it in the last four and a half years.

There is a large population at the Batavia Motor Inn. When I visited that dwelling, I saw that they had done a pretty good job of setting up, as best they could, a secure housing apartment. I know there are periodic issues. I was talking to the mayor, who, as it transpires, is a neighbour. The mayor interacts with those people. Typically, the Batavia Motor Inn does not have horrendous problems. There are sometimes problems when people come and visit and so on, but that is why there are wraparound services in those places. It was fascinating to go there.

I have gone all over this state since I took on this leadership role. As an opposition, we do what we can in Parliament, but our job is to get out and listen to people and learn and help when we can. Mostly, our job is to make sure that we hold this government to account. I have been to Kununurra, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, through the Pilbara, Ningaloo, the Murchison, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Bunbury, Albany, Esperance and Mt Barker, near the wonderful town of Cranbrook in the south west of Western Australia. The simple fact is that in every single one of those communities, homelessness was an issue. I visited Esperance, which is a wealthy town. Any member who has been there knows that it is a beautiful town that has benefited from government expenditure on amenities and facilities. In Esperance tonight there will be at least a dozen people sleeping rough. Those people are sleeping around the town and cannot get housing. Again, I spoke to the shire and the community groups there. These are not people who cannot be housed because they cannot handle housing properly; they just cannot get houses. We cannot have that in a beautiful, wealthy community.

I see that the Minister for Community Services has announced a \$6 million program to work with the shires. That is fine, but \$6 million is 0.001 per cent of the \$5 billion surplus. The government is hardly reaching deeply into its pocket to work with the shires. Since when has providing housing been a mainstream function of the shires? The shires are desperate. I have seen that in Halls Creek, Kununurra, Broome and Fitzroy Crossing. In Fitzroy Crossing, the local prescribed body corporates have got together to build their own housing. They are desperate for housing in that community because the government cannot help. When a house comes on the market in Geraldton, it basically disappears in a day, which is incredible. I drove around the community there. There are a lot of DevelopmentWA blocks with beautiful big DevelopmentWA signs on them. Do members know what they all are? They are all bush, and have been for the term of this government. The government is big on signs, but not on developing the land that is required for housing in that town.

The tragedy of this debate is that every member on this side could speak for an hour on this topic and only scratch the surface. I hear all about the plans for the future, but the government has to accept that for four and a half years it has dealt with this issue completely inadequately. Despite the well-meaning ministers in their roles, we have seen nothing to indicate that this government is treating this problem with the seriousness that it deserves. We know that there need to be at least 3 500 new social houses just to cope with the backlog and get back to the position that the government found itself in at the start of its term, given the growth in requirements. That is the challenge before this government. As I said, despite the well-meaning nature of individuals, I have no optimism whatsoever that this government will be able to deliver this, and the government should be ashamed of its poor performance in this area.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [5.26 pm]: I back up and support the members for North West Central and Cottesloe in support of the member for North West Central's motion that this house condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the last five years of government, creating a housing crisis the state has never seen before and triggering significant economic and social consequences. I think the member for Cottesloe summed it up very well: every member in this house could quite easily talk on this topic for an hour without even blinking because all members, regional and metropolitan, have issues and are getting contacted, if not on a daily basis, at least every couple of days.

The thing that sums it up for me is the statement made by the Minister for Housing today in question time when he said that we have lost over 300 houses due to the government's decision but that it was the right decision. I have to question that. There is a question mark there.

As the member for Cottesloe said, in the government's last term, it took great pride in blaming the previous government for the financial situation. This government spent about three and a half years blaming everyone else but would not take any responsibility. Now the government is in its second term and has been in government for four and a half years. It is predicted to have a \$5 billion surplus yet the health department is in crisis and now the housing department is in crisis. It is time that these ministers took responsibility.

The first thing I want to concentrate on is the Government Regional Officers' Housing situation in the regional areas in particular. That is an important part of the housing stock in this state. Hon Colin de Grussa asked a question in the upper house on 10 August about what the total number of GROH stock was as at June 2021, just to get a handle on what is happening. The total number of housing stock is 5 040 properties, but we have 217 additional requests for GROH from client agencies. A couple of the highlights are the 88 houses for the Department of Education, which is still on the waiting list, and the 59 houses for the WA Police Force.

We have seen real examples of public services in our regional communities in real crisis. A principal in one of our schools has left. We need a replacement principal. We advertised but, lo and behold, we do not have a house for that principal. In the past, places such as Nyabing in my electorate of Roe have struggled to get principals or teachers. They have to be put up in other people's houses or in the hotel down the road and not just for a week or two, but for months on end. We are seeing a critical shortage of housing. It is starting to create problems for not only the Department of Education, but also our police force. We heard examples today. The member for Cottesloe mentioned places such as Fitzroy Crossing and Broome, which are starting to have real crime issues due to the housing situation. The problem is twofold: we have crime issues because homeless people are on the streets creating the crime and, at the same time, the Western Australia Police Force cannot find places for its officers to live in. It is a twofold situation. I am really concerned about it.

The other part of the problem is the maintenance situation. The member for North West Central has mentioned the situation relating to Pindan's housing maintenance contract many times. I am pleased to hear that that contract has now been reassigned. I believe the Minister for Housing needs to look at the whole structure of the maintenance program right around the state. I can refer to areas such as the great southern.

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The Minister for Commerce got her legislation moved through the house just as the Pindan situation was happening. There was no protection for those subcontractors, and now we are seeing the results. We have seen plenty of people left out of pocket. I do not want to focus on that.

I want to talk about these contracts. Houses in places such as Katanning, Nyabing, Kojonup and Wagin are being maintained by a company in Bunbury. Yesterday one of my constituents—a small business owner, an electrician, in one of my local towns—rang me because he is distraught about the amount of compliance and government red tape that he has to go through every week trying to sort out issues. He just wants to fix houses and do his job. He was becoming so frustrated that he rang me yesterday. He was quite distraught. We have a scenario in which big companies are located in towns three to four hours away from where they have contracts, and they try to subcontract the work to someone and pick up a bit of profit along the way. The Minister for Housing needs to look at restructuring these maintenance contracts so that local people can carry out the work on GROH properties and the like quickly and efficiently.

A classic example occurred during the winter break. One of my constituents rang me. His daughter was visiting on holidays. She lives in the Mullewa–Morawa region. Her house was broken into when she was on holiday, seven hours away. It was not dealt with properly by the department in the first place. The department was trying to tell her that she needed to drive for seven hours to secure her house. Her father rang me because his daughter was distraught, firstly, because she had been broken into and, secondly, because the department was trying to demand that she secure her place, which had not been secured properly by it in the first place. They are the issues.

We have crime issues in the north west. We have many young teachers who are keen to work. They love coming out to the regions. They think they are making a difference, and they are on many occasions. They are becoming disillusioned because they are under threat from people breaking into their houses. They love their school and their

community, but they get to the point of not wanting to stay any longer because they are frightened. We have come to a point out on the lands at which we are really struggling for teachers. We now have the flying squadron coming in from the Department of Education and the like. Because of the situation that exists with the housing scenario, people are too frightened to stay in their own houses.

The number of GROH dwellings in the great southern fell from 274 in 2015–16 to 226 in 2020. In the south west, the figure fell from 243 houses to 188 in 2020. They are the figures we are seeing. In regional WA between 2015 and 2020, 635 GROH properties were sold. I do not know how the government can explain that. The minister was talking about social housing and the like. When we have a shortage of police officers and teachers coming out to the regions, how can the minister stand up and say, “It’s not a problem. We’ve sold 635 properties, but things are going well”?

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Member, do you know the biggest sale of GROH housing in the wheatbelt, what year that was? It was in 2015–2016, under your government.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The Labor Party is in government now. I am talking about the fact that it has been in government for four and a half years. It was well recorded by Hon Steve Martin in the other place that over 1 300 houses have gone. We have real issues with not only our policemen and our teachers, but also our doctors and other health staff. The risk of moving to a rural town is too high unless housing is affordable and secure.

As the member for Cottesloe pointed out, four properties were available for rent in Esperance on Monday at an average of \$300 a week. Up to a dozen or 15 people are homeless at any time on any night in Esperance, which is unheard of. I have looked at the situation in some of our other towns. In Narrogin today, only one house is listed for rent on the real estate website. In Katanning, there are five houses, two of which are 3-by-1, for \$650 a week. We will not find anyone there. There are no houses for rent in Lake Grace; there is one in Kojonup, Wagin and Cranbrook; two in Ravensthorpe; and none in Pingrup, Ongerup, Williams, Dumbleyung, Hopetoun, Gnowangerup and Darkan. There are 10 houses for rent in the electorate of Roe, which spans 106 000 square kilometres. This is a real issue. We have heard about the government’s solution—the WA recovery plan. In 2020, the great southern recovery plan promised \$80 million for targeted maintenance programs for regional social, remote and government worker housing properties, including 200 homes in the great southern region, and \$141.7 million to refurbish social housing across WA’s ageing housing stock, including 30 homes in the great southern region. I am looking forward to it, minister. It is great to make these announcements, we hear them all the time, but we are not seeing it on the ground. That is what I am concerned about, and I am very concerned when I have people in Esperance ringing me up to talk about how many people are homeless every night.

I refer to my favourite subject, of course. As the minister knows, it is the Katanning Regional Emergency Accommodation Centre. I will continue to persevere to get him and the Minister for Community Services to come and have a look at that situation, because it is a great model of what the government could do to fund emergency accommodation. It is a great model for those families, especially those women facing domestic violence. I certainly look forward to hosting the Minister for Housing the next time he is in the Katanning region. I nearly got him there the other week when he was in Tambellup, but it was not to be. I look forward to the minister visiting us at some stage in the not-too-distant future.

The other thing I want to briefly talk about today is the strain that homelessness is putting on the mental health system. We have seen that in the last couple of days, and I was pleased today to hear the Minister for Health recognising the mental health situation. I look forward to seeing that package come to fruition in the state budget. There are some really interesting figures. Clearly, we have a dire shortage of mental health beds in WA, and, sadly, people experiencing homelessness are among some of the very long stayers in mental health wards. A Mental Health Commission inpatient survey from 2019 pointed out something that was quite surprising to me. That survey found that of the 656 mental health inpatients occupying a bed at the time of the survey, 178, or 27.1 per cent, were deemed unable to be discharged because of a lack of suitable community-based accommodation or mental health support services. The Royal Perth Bentley Group, which keeps a history of mental health hospital admissions, found that 417 individuals accumulated 23 647 psychiatric bed days in a two-year period. The cost of this to the health system is \$35.8 million in psych bed days. That is equivalent to \$86 000 per person. Those are obviously very concerning figures. As I said, 27.1 per cent of those with mental health issues were homeless. An example given was that the cumulative healthcare costs for three individuals over a 33-month period were extreme and placed the health system under extreme pressure. We need to treat homelessness as a combined health and social issue.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It would be great to see the Ministers for Mental Health and Housing combine to work out a strategy to deal with both mental health and homelessness, because they are linked. We have seen some of the stats that the member for Cottesloe spoke about, such as 9 000 people in WA are experiencing homelessness every

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day and 1 041 people were homeless in Perth and Fremantle in May 2021. Of course, recent examples have been coming thick and fast. Foodbank Australia has seen an increase in its usual number of customers. Anglicare WA has seen the demand for emergency relief and food assistance triple in 2021, and, of course, there was the recent example of the Salvos having to pay car registrations for people to sleep in their cars. That is a short-term solution, but I think our community is in a sad state of affairs when the Salvation Army has to pay car registrations so that people who are on the street can sleep in their cars.

There have been many recent newspaper articles reporting on some of these issues. I know that we have had the COVID scenario. We are seeing a scenario involving both landlords and tenants. Some tenants do not want to pay their rent and then their landlords say, “Well, if they’re not going to pay, I would rather leave my house vacant.” I am sure that this has added to the situation. It is not really anyone’s fault; it is just a scenario that has played out, but I am really concerned.

As members of the opposition, we know that these are extraordinary times, and I know that the culmination of many factors has caused an avalanche of issues, but on this occasion we are just focusing on housing. We have identified this as probably the second-most major issue that the government has on its hands after health. But what has been missing from this Labor government is any discernible strategy to soften the blow within our communities. These individuals are in real crisis. This cannot be solved by playing the blame game, as I have said. Members opposite are in government now and have been for four and a half years. They have had time to build a strategy. The government can own the solution to these serious problems, but what we have had so far is a lot of yelling and a lot of screaming; we saw it in question time today. I look forward to this minister providing a solution.

**MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing)** [5.46 pm]: Given that we have listened to the opposition for nearly two hours, respectfully, I would like to map out our government’s agenda, and also raise plenty of the issues that the opposition has decided on for a prong of attack. I think the first issue that is really important is the opposition’s definition of a crisis. What is very clear is that the opposition’s definition of a crisis is built on the 17 000 people on the waiting list. Members will have noticed in question time today that members of the opposition said that repeatedly as one of the bases for their crisis. What is extraordinary about that is when we actually look at the statistics and the evidence, we see that the largest housing crisis was of their own making back in 2010. Let us be very clear on that: the waiting list at its height had 24 136 people. That cannot be denied. It is on the public record. Members opposite say we are at a crisis at 17 000.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I did not interject for you, member.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Your colleagues did!

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I showed you all respect and I listened attentively. That is the case.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Fair enough.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** If a waiting list of 17 000 is problematic, what was 24 000? Apparently, that was a walk in the park.

We have to understand that that was quite an extraordinary time. Actually, we also have to look at the wait times, because, under our government, the wait times have significantly reduced. Again, the peak was under the previous government, when wait times increased to nearly a year longer than they are now, peaking at 158 weeks in 2014–15. In fact, wait times were worse almost every year under the previous Liberal–National coalition government than they are now. Also, bailiff evictions were higher under the Liberal–National government in 2015–16. The opposition also likes to crow about significant investment in public housing. Again, as I said on the public record, the most significant funding commitment in Western Australia was part of the Kevin Rudd federal government commitment to fuel massive social housing expansion across Western Australia. I note that remote communities have also suffered. We faced cost pressures because the commonwealth yanked out \$146 million from the system annually. We have invested nearly \$200 million a year in remote housing, but \$147 million has been taken out of the system every year thanks to the federal government. These statistics cannot be ignored. This is the reality of the record of the previous government. We also inherited ageing stock. The average age of the public housing stock is around 30 years—a proportion are 40 years old—and that has left us with significant challenges that the state has had to deal with.

We heard the member for North West Central also make claims of bullying or threats. I want to be very clear on the public record: I have an excellent relationship with all my stakeholders. Not once have I, nor am I aware of any minister who has, made a threat or bullied any advocacy organisation in the social sector field and those that I engage with. I have disagreements, but they are respectful, and I have done that. I understand that social housing agencies have to put their best foot forward—I get that—but I have to focus on pragmatic and practical actual deliveries. I raised the proposal by Shelter WA that suggested 157 one-bedroom units in Carnarvon. I said that that



was inappropriate and not warranted. It is very easy to simply go along and say that we should pluck out any type of land, but the delivery is far more nuanced than either some advocacy groups wish to recognise or the opposition wishes to recognise.

I note that it was the previous government, the Liberal–National coalition, that began an aggressive sales program worth \$100 million because of the debt collected under the Government Regional Officers’ Housing program. We paused those sales. I note that there has been an increase in the number of GROH houses, whether leased or purchased or by other means, of around 2.6 per cent, or 129 GROH houses. As the minister, I brought together for the first time a forecasting group to predict and look at future trends, to look at eligibility requirements and to see whether we can get better outcomes from the GROH system.

The member for North West Central mentioned there was demand for an extra 200 places. That does not necessarily mean that there is that demand right now; it could mean demand in the future. We ask agencies what they need, and, of course, we go out and use a multitude of means, including spot purchasing or leasing, to meet that future demand.

Geraldton was raised repeatedly. I think that this really demonstrates the complexity of the issue at hand. I have said it before and I say it again sincerely: it is not simply a matter of plonking people in a refurbished house. There has to be good wraparound services, like the Thrive program—a \$58 million program—and not those like the opposition suggested for the First Nations homelessness project, which is a \$50 000 request. The funding of that million-dollar program was cut by the federal government. We have our own program of \$58 million that will substantially invest in wraparound services. I am very clear about Geraldton: properties were made available but people did not want to move into them. That shows that we are facing a bigger symptomatic problem—that is, particular precincts, streets and hubs are not attractive for people to live in, or there is a perception of that. That is a significant struggle. As I said, there is real complexity to this. Do we make a decision that ultimately there should be demolition or private sales, recognising the impact on the social housing stock, or do we make a decision to refurbish and work to make the suburbs more attractive so that more people will be willing to live there? I think that is being honest to the community and the public about the problems and challenges that we face in the delivery of social housing. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. As I mentioned with Brownlie Towers, I do not, as the member for Roe suggested, celebrate the closure of those 300 homes; but, ultimately, that decision was the best outcome for the local community in the area given the antisocial behaviour problems. It is not as simplistic a policy as the opposition consistently tries to paint. That is the dishonesty we have seen in this debate. I say sincerely and respectfully that it is not simply about refurbishing boarded-up houses so that we can get them back into the system and then all the problems will be fixed. I am demonstrating that it is quite nuanced and that, from street to street, it is quite complex.

Today, I met the managers and directors from all regions across Western Australia. I have been criticised because I went to Kalgoorlie and met the regional managers and teams up there. On every regional trip, when I meet local governments, I make a real effort to engage with frontline staff to talk about what is working and what is not working. They actually show me some of the boarded-up houses. I give the example of Kalgoorlie. There was a set of group units and dwellings, and because of antisocial behaviour, they made the decision to close some of those units because it was the best social behaviour outcome that they could generate. That again shows the complexity of this issue. When we see boarded-up houses, we must remember that conscious decisions have been made by regional staff that are in the best interests of those units. The other complexity that the opposition again fails to recognise is that it is not just about plonking people into public housing; it is about getting the right mix. In Kalgoorlie, we cannot put families from different regions in the same social housing complex because it might generate significant social issues. I acknowledge those issues. We are saying that this is a complex matter and we want to have a conversation with the community. I will not gloss over it like the opposition does. There is no recognition of this. It is very simply black-and-white politics and policy from the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party.

We are trying to seriously grapple with the complexities of the delivery of public housing. We have given a commitment to move away from enclaves or high-density public towers and to move to integrated approaches across density and suburbs. Even that is difficult to achieve. Developers often flag with me that they worry about the level of public housing in joint developments. That is a serious concern too. Developers say, “If you put too much in, then we won’t be able to flog the other product.” I think that is sad. I am deeply passionate about public housing. Public housing is the most transformational experience for people. It provides people with a roof over their head. It gives them security and an opportunity to look at their lives, to focus and to be able to, perhaps, go into training and education because they no longer have to worry about not having a roof over their head. I am a passionate advocate of public housing, and this a priority, but in our first term of government we had to make some difficult decisions.

I want to address the assertion by the member for North West Central that there has been no construction in the Gascoyne. I am advised that in our five years we have completed 38 houses in the Gascoyne region, including 18 social houses and 20 key worker houses. Additionally, we have purchased another seven houses in this area. I wanted to correct some of the statements made on the public record by the opposition.

I also want to talk about the broader picture. We are in extraordinary times. That is the one thing that I can agree on with the member for Roe, and I think he acknowledged that. We have seen COVID hit. At first we brought in the moratorium on rent increases. If members remember, we were criticised for that, but I think it was the right policy decision. We were criticised by landlords. This is the other complexity of housing policy. That moratorium provided certainty for renters, but, of course, some landlords said they were mum-and-dad investors facing negative equity and the moratorium was putting off rent increases. Once the moratorium lifted, it was natural that we would see a correction in prices. We are also seeing an extraordinary increase in housing supply, but no opposition member acknowledged this. There was no reference to the statistics of housing supply. This picture is critical. We had 27 000 building approvals in the last financial year. We were told there was no plan at all, but there was an economic stimulus plan. There was a deliberate plan to boost the construction industry because of the fears about a recovery in a pandemic environment. That had a significant impact, and in the regions too. That was again ignored by the opposition. It did not refer to the statistics at all. There were extraordinary increases. There were around 4 000 new home building approvals in the regions. There was around a 118 per cent increase. In Albany, there was a 137 per cent increase. The list goes on and on. We have seen extraordinary growth in building approvals in the regions. On top of that, we had our Keystart loan. Keystart is a proud Labor program that is about giving first home owners a chance. We have seen 4 000 approvals, which is significant growth that we have not seen for a long time. There were 27 000 building approvals and 4 000 Keystart loans. These are extraordinary figures. As we saw in *The West Australian* this week, many of those were for first home buyers. For the first time in their lives, Western Australians are grasping the opportunity thanks to the state building bonus grant and the federal government grant. I will read from an article in *The West Australian* headed “Year of the First Home Buyer: First home frenzy as 71 houses selling in WA each day”, which states —

The past 12 months have shaped up as the Year of the First Home Buyer, with remarkable figures revealing more than 100 people joined the property ladder in WA every single day.

That is fantastic and shows an incredible growth in affordable homes. That will provide relief. As I have already stated, that relief has not been projected by the state government. That was done by the very credible Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, which came out with a report that clearly stipulated that because of this huge growth in building approvals, there will be an estimated 10 000 homes coming back onto the rental market. That is for the obvious reason that people will leave those homes and go into new homes, and we are starting to see that come through. That is good news for Western Australia.

We are cognisant of the other challenges of the COVID pandemic, a booming economy and WA being a safe place to live. With the state of the borders, we are obviously facing skills shortages. The Premier has had a skills summit and there are a number of new measures. Some of those are really small, but they are really tailored, down to looking at drivers’ licences for apprentices who may have fallen out of the system. Some of these are really good ideas that will help get people back into the labour market to assist with delivery of both public homes and those in the private market. As part of that, last year under the Minister for Education and Training we had quick short-term courses in bricklaying, because that was obviously a clear need. We will continue to look at other measures we can take in the future to deal with that skills shortage. But that is a reality.

I have to say this: I would rather face this scenario than what was predicted when COVID first hit. There were some quite dire projections about the state of the economy. In fact, we are in different circumstances. We have the strongest economy in Australia. We are a safe haven. People want to come back here. That is even related in the migration figures. The Australian Bureau of Statistics released data that showed that 1 639 more people moved to WA than left for interstate destinations in the first three months of this year to March, which was the biggest number for a quarter since 2013. Other states had an exodus. We are in extraordinary circumstances, and I would rather still be trying to meet the challenges we face than the alternative, which was the economic recession predicted by some economists. The state government brought in the building bonus grant. We also brought in the \$116 million regional land booster program, which is about providing discounted land in the regions; I am advised that there are currently 700 lots available in the market.

We also have three ministers—the Minister for Lands, Minister for Planning and me—who are working together as part of the residential housing and land supply committee to look at how we can further tackle the issues that have been described in the regions, which I am acutely aware of, whether it is about potentially using future land or other measures. For example, in the future we will be meeting with the alliance of major regional councils.

We are also making a significant investment of nearly \$1 billion in public housing, social housing, affordable homes and homelessness initiatives. That includes \$319 million for the social housing economic recovery package, which is part of the COVID recovery program. Like everyone, we are meeting the challenge of securing contractors because it is a heated construction market, and I have said that on the public record saying. But there is a very strong and genuine funding commitment there. We have seen significant and real investments to alleviate homelessness, with nearly \$100 million a year going into homelessness services. We have had significant new investments. We are

building two Common Ground facilities that will provide wraparound services. Last week, we opened the 100-bed Aboriginal-controlled homeless transition facility in the city. We are opening a medical respite centre for rough sleepers coming out of hospitals who may be experiencing homelessness. These are all real, tangible and meaningful actions that will change people's lives.

The member for Cottesloe said, "It's just a plan in a plan in a plan." That is not the case at all. There is real money and it is all part of the Housing First Homelessness Initiative approach, which is the approach that the previous government did not take. The previous government had an ad hoc approach, but our Housing First approach is simple. At its heart, it is about saying that we need to help people get off the streets. They may face serious mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions, but we get them into supported accommodation with intensive wraparound services. What is critical and why that is different from the old model is that previously we used to have high barriers, so people could not even get off the street, or once they got off the street and into accommodation, they fell out of the system. Therefore, the Common Ground facilities and the Housing First program are about providing intensive wraparound services, including onsite, to make sure that people do not fall out of those houses. This model has been successfully done around the world; for example, Melbourne, which is far ahead of us, has demonstrated that people have been sustained in their houses. Melbourne has some quite extraordinary figures. The previous government could have adopted the Housing First approach. It did not; it just did bits here and there. I notice that members opposite keep quoting Australian Bureau of Statistics figures that relate back to their time. The figures of 9 000 and 1 600 were actually from 2016.

I am really proud of this government in that we have taken an evidence-based approach to housing, and we are now applying that to all significant investments in not only the city, but also Geraldton and Bunbury. On top of that, we have made new commitments for Indigenous-supported accommodation in Geraldton and the city. This is significant because people can be coming into city areas for cultural reasons or health services. Sometimes those people may sleep with relatives or they are out and about, so we want to provide culturally appropriate accommodation that, again, provides a support service. That is Aboriginal-supported accommodation and we will have one facility in Geraldton and one in the city. I believe the tender is out now for Geraldton. We can see significant rolling investment in the homelessness field and in public and social housing.

I will turn back to the complexities about delivery. This example is from my electorate, and again I come back to the nuances. I was doorknocking in a public housing complex in Perth, which had about 14 tenants. I was getting a number of complaints from some of the public housing tenants and, sadly, those complaints were about a tenant who was under the Housing First program. This again demonstrates the complexity of the fact that we got someone off the street, provided support and put them into the public housing system, yet other tenants were demanding that that tenant be evicted. As a government, we do not want to see evictions. We want to have every supportive measure in place that we can to help people stay within the public system. Contrary to some of the reports by advocacy groups, the evictions prior to and post-COVID are relatively the same. This is why we have the \$58 million Thrive program, which provides support for tenants so that they can stay in the system.

The other challenge that we have faced, and the member for Roe mentioned it, was maintenance. For the future, I will look at how we can get a better bang for our buck in maintenance. Of course, I want us to always do better, but coming in as a new minister, I faced a major challenge in the midwest in dealing with the collapse of the Pindan Group. That was a serious issue for me because had we decided to terminate that contract—I say this respectfully—priority 1 and priority 2 maintenance jobs would have stopped. They would have stopped overnight and we would have had people at risk in that public housing.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Sorry, minister; will you take this interjection? My understanding was Housing were directly employing the plumber or electrician on those 1s and 2s during that period of time of uncertainty with Pindan. So, Housing were directly employing those subcontractors to do that work.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I am advised that it was through Pindan that the contract negotiations continued. The point I am making, member, and I say this sincerely, is if we had terminated that contract, we would not have seen the outcome that we see today. I appreciate that the member has his politics to make, but it is fair to say that by holding steadfast, by working through with EY Australia, we delivered the best outcome for the midwest because we were able to maintain services to those properties. These were critical-risk jobs for tenants. We were also able to keep 90 people in jobs that otherwise would not have been maintained had we terminated the contract, because there would have been no potential sale to Programmed to see the continuation of that staff.

I want to say this, member for North West Central: I have had positive approaches and I will read out one for the public record right now. It states —

Good Morning John

Wanted to personally thank you for your unwavering support recently for Pindan Asset Management continuation of the Housing Authority Head Maintenance Contract under licence agreement with Programmed.

Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Mia Davies; Acting Speaker; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Carey; Ms Sabine Winton

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I know this was a very difficult situation for you and your integral support has now secured almost 100 PAM jobs. I can assure you all personnel of PAM are extremely grateful.

I look forward to meeting you soon and thanking you in person.

I did not ask for that; it was sent to me. It demonstrates that I understand the politics in which we want theatrics and we want to get headlines in the paper, but the proven and measured approach that I took provided the best outcome for regional jobs and the services for the maintenance of public housing properties, and I think that that is the general assessment of the community.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Yes.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** No, but this is actually serious.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I am serious!

**Mr V.A. Catania:** No, I'm not talking to you; I'm talking to that member across from me.

Minister, if I can just clarify this. I think the issue with the Pindan situation was, and it has now come to light, that there is more evidence that perhaps it was known before that they were in trouble. The real issue around the Pindan situation was there was a government contract and the government, which you are a part of, said that they would legislate to protect subcontractors. That's the issue that has come about. This is where the legislation doesn't protect those who have lost money. I think that's the issue. The point that I was coming from is that you promised legislation, it wasn't delivered and we had that situation with Pindan, and now we've got another company in the same boat.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Member for North West Central, it is fair to say that it is on the public record repeatedly that you yelled across the chamber: terminate, terminate, terminate! If I had taken that approach, there is general agreement in the member's own community that it would have resulted in the loss of 90 jobs. Is anyone saying that I took the wrong course of action in sticking forth, being measured, not reacting to the politics, seeing the negotiations through—obviously, not personally—and having the department persist to get the best outcome?

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I absolutely understand the plight of contractors —

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Member for North West Central, under your scenario, there would have been no outcome because they would have lost their jobs. There would have been no sale to Programmed and no benefit for creditors. Your outcome painted the worst scenario for people!

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** No, your outcome painted the worst scenario. If I had listened to your advice and your politicking, it would have generated the worst scenario. I do not understand how you can still argue against the saving and retention of 90 jobs, including in retentions.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** That is including in retention.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** The member for North West Central continues to persist! There is a clear line —

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Minister for Housing, would you prefer not to have interjections?

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Yes, I am fine without interjections.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Okay; go on, minister.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** It is very clear that we made the right decision on this. It was a prudent approach and I stand by that decision. It is clear that the workers directly affected agree that it was the best outcome and that we protected jobs in the regions. I am very cognisant that it was the right direction.

On future policy, I am working through the budget process but I have been looking at particular issues and trends. The opposition raised the issue of vacant houses. Again, I have been looking at the churn rate for vacant houses. I want to be very clear that the opposition is misleading again. There is always going to be a percentage of houses in the public system that are vacant. That makes sense. If someone wants to leave the public housing system, their property becomes vacant and refurbishment works have to be undertaken. That is entirely normal. As minister, I am

working through ways to accelerate that churn rate. The other factor that the opposition ignores is that we also need to make significant investment in refurbishment. I have put in the public arena that there has to be significant investment in vacant properties. It varies, but there is significant investment across the board in maintenance and refurbishment of properties as part of that churn rate. We are working through how we can better get through the churn rate. To suggest that there will ever be no vacancies in the public housing system is simply nonsense. It is dishonest and it fails to recognise the churn rate.

As I have also said on the public record, I am also looking at modular homes. I understand that we have a very strong construction market and, accordingly, the agency and I are looking at modular homes. We are looking at how we can use them to accelerate public housing delivery or increase housing, particularly in regional areas, because it is an obvious fit. It is potentially a way of growing the sector in the industry, which will create jobs in those areas and add to the overall public and social housing stock.

Overall, we have a very strong investment program of nearly \$1 billion. Our building bonus grant has delivered for Western Australians. It has been extraordinary, with 27 000 building approvals. That will create private rental relief across Western Australia. We have seen extraordinary building approvals in the regions. All those homes will provide relief for people in the regions. We have seen 4 000 Keystart homes, as a huge number of first home buyers are entering the market. We have a nearly \$1 billion program. We are investing \$100 million in homelessness initiatives. New initiatives were opened last week, including the two Common Ground facilities that are part of the Housing First approach. We are making a very significant investment and also being up-front with the community about the complexities of public housing delivery and how we want to move to a more integrated approach across suburbs and towns because that will deliver better social outcomes. We have had to make some tough decisions on high-density social housing areas, but we are strongly committed to public housing in Western Australia. We want to do it in a better way that delivers better outcomes for all Western Australians. That is our strong commitment.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [6.25 pm]: I thank the minister for his response to this motion. From an opposition perspective, the motion that was brought to the house by the member for North West Central on the matters canvassed by members who have already spoken, and what we will follow-up from the minister's contribution, is very timely. I think the Minister for Health has been given a reprieve this Wednesday night because a significant amount of funds was announced, but we are yet to see the detail on timing and how it will be rolled out. This is a crisis of a similar scale in another portfolio that has come about under this government's watch. This government likes to refer to the previous Liberal–National government but the Labor Party has been in power for four and a half years. It is time to own the fact that decisions made in the first term of this government are now coming home to roost. The people of Western Australia are the ones suffering for them.

I have been in the Minister for Housing's position. I have stood on that side of the chamber and had to respond to private members' business, matters of public interest and suspensions of standing orders in my portfolio areas. One tries to reasonably rollout the reasons why it is difficult to provide a response that the community desires and to assist in providing basic government services. It is difficult to do that in government because there are many moving parts. I think all members here acknowledge that. None of us came to this house and said it was a simplistic problem. I know that is what the minister said, but that is not what we came to the house to say. We acknowledge that it requires a whole-of-government response. It requires a complex mix of departments and also the private sector. Although everything that the minister said seemed sensible, it will not provide any comfort to those many people already sleeping rough or without a fixed address, or who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless. This creates stress and pressure for not only the individuals and their families, but also all government services and community organisations that come into play. All I can say is that this has come about because of the lack of investment, lack of planning and lack of prioritisation in the sector by this government four and a half years in. We cannot keep hearing ministers come to this place and say this is something that can be sheeted home to the previous government.

From a local perspective, I found it interesting when the Minister for Housing raised the issue of the sale of assets in the wheatbelt. One of the reasons given by the housing minister for having started to sell houses—although the government has not been able to replace them, so we are in this deficit—is that the government wants a different mix of housing in communities across the state. I was personally involved in some of these issues in the wheatbelt. For instance, I know that the community of Goomalling, which is just outside Northam, back in the time that the minister referred to, was one of the towns—if not the town—with the highest proportion of public housing in the wheatbelt. That town does not have access to wraparound services or public transport and there are no Centrelink offices within cooe. There is no way that a family with serious or complex needs can have them addressed there, yet it had the highest proportion of public housing, in terms of population. There were moves from a wheatbelt perspective. I am aware of that because at that time I was working with the then Minister for Housing, Hon Colin Holt, and prior to that Terry Redman, to try to address some of those concerns. It is not a new issue but there was a plan at the time to invest, and that investment occurred. We invested significantly in public housing in regional centres—

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I am talking from a regional perspective and certainly from my electorate's perspective at this stage—where those services were made available. I cannot tell members the number of times that people turned up to my office in either Merredin or Northam and, through sheer desperation, had taken a house in Hyden, Mukinbudin, Goomalling or Wyalkatchem. Although those communities are amazing places to live and the community will provide an enormous amount of support if a family or individual has complex needs, they will not be able to access the services they require in some of those smaller communities. The percentage in Goomalling in particular sticks in my mind because I went to many, many meetings. I sympathise with what the minister is trying to do. We reinvested in and had a significant housing program for right across the continuum of not only public housing, but also community housing and workers' accommodation, as the member for North West Central said, and in Government Regional Officers' Housing. The member for Roe talked about GROH and the 217 houses identified in response to a question asked in the Legislative Council. Worryingly, the departments that are in most need of these houses are the police department and the Department of Education.

Another issue the Minister for Housing raised was about working with the community to try to address some of these issues. I know from my own experience in my electorate—other members have also experienced it—that the Department of Housing places an extraordinary amount of pressure on our local governments to be the provider of this type of housing. The Department of Housing has ceased to build its own houses through the Government Regional Officers' Housing program. It relies on local governments to fill that gap. That is okay—it is probably not okay; that is a generalisation. If a town has the capacity to fund that, like the City of Karratha or some of our bigger regional centres with a bigger rate base, perhaps the local government can fit that into its budget, but when the Department of Housing says to the Shire of Wyalkatchem or Narembeen or any of the smaller communities that the department has a proposition to build a GROH house and the department will give the town a contract, the small towns are stuck between a rock and a hard place because they know that if they do not agree to it, the potential to secure the next police officer or education individual, whether it is a teacher or principal, will be put at risk. I do not think it is right that our communities are now being asked to provide a solution to a problem that, regardless of whether it has compounded over many years, has come to roost right now four and a half years into this government's tenure. We see many of our communities fronting up and stumping up ratepayers' dollars because they are fearful that they will not be able to attract and retain the workers that they so desperately need for their kids to get a decent education and for the hospital to have a nurse or to house a doctor. Again, this government needs to attend to that. If the minister is truthful that everything is on the table and he is looking for innovative solutions, I put on the table now that some of the smaller councils do not have the ability to continue to do this. In the north of the state, when we add the cost of insurance and the development costs of the land, it is simply out of reach of some of these communities to do that. There is no way they will ever get their money back, even with a contract with the Department of Communities or through Government Regional Officers' Housing. We have local governments that are faced with that every day. I think if the minister is genuine, he will look at that issue and stop using our local governments as an external bank for the government to build houses and actually get on with the job of building them and expanding our housing options in regional Western Australia, particularly for GROH.

Whether or not the 217 GROH houses is a wish list, I can promise the minister that houses throughout regional Western Australia are in desperate need of refurbishment. Having spoken recently to a number of police officers in my own electorate, I know that none of them will complain publicly, but they all know where the good houses are in the state. The first question they ask when they have been recruited or asked to move to another place in regional Western Australia is: What is the housing like? Am I bringing my family into something that was built in 1972 and has not been upgraded since then, or was it built in 2010 and looks pretty good? In some of these communities, that is absolutely one of the major attractions for retaining a workforce. Members need only to talk to those staff to understand just how important it is.

If we want to talk about records in government, when we came to government in 2008, one of our first programs of investment back into regional Western Australia after years of neglect under the previous Labor government was to actually do just that—to go through the GROH stock and make sure that we either refurbished, rebuilt or added to that housing stock. The difficulty at the time, and I think it still exists, is that the Department of Housing manages its own housing stock. The funding that we were providing went through the Department of Housing and so there was a whole raft of health housing that did not get that investment. I can tell members that there was investment in police and teachers in particular and other key service workers right across the state as a result of our focus in government.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** During the boom.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That is right, member for North West Central. The minister talked about 2010. At the peak of the construction boom in 2010, we saw almost the population of Tasmania move to Western Australia. We did not have a booming royalty rate at that point. In fact, it was one of the lowest rates we had ever seen in the state. We had the major mining companies in a race to the bottom to get their costs right down. We had called on every construction

worker we could get our hands on, so it was a very difficult environment in which to work. There was certainly no solution to the GST on the table at that time. We invested even within those constraints because we knew that we would be constraining the future growth of our state if we did not make that investment. That is one part of the housing continuum, but it is very, very important. Workers' accommodation is part of the continuum. Again, that is very important. That funding stream was made available and possible by royalties for regions, because at the time the opening of land to allow for that development had been neglected, and there was no way to get that work done in time to accommodate those workers and retain all the business and service workers who make a community a community in places such as Karratha, Port Hedland and Exmouth. There might be criticism about the workers' accommodation projects run under the previous government, but I tell members what—they are all full. Every community we go to says, "Can we have another one? Build us some more."

When that type of pressure comes on and our state is subject to the swings from the mining sector, we need to be able to maintain those business that are the heart and soul of our communities. We need to make sure that we have hairdressers, butchers and people who work in coffee shops and all our key critical workers in our government services. In some places in the north of the state, that is incredibly difficult without some sort of intervention from the state government. That is the role of the state government, without a doubt, partnered with the private sector. Do not shy away from using the private sector's expertise, because at this point if the minister is genuine in his statements that everything is on the table when looking at trying to address these problems by thinking outside the square, he should not discount things done by previous governments out of sheer bloody mindedness. Do not look back and say, "We're not going to do that. We don't want to go anywhere near it because the previous government did that; we'll come up with our own solution." We will cheer the government on because every one of our communities is saying that they need assistance. That housing continuum, when talking about workers' accommodation, is not just restricted to the north west. We had conversations like this in the midwest the other day with the member for Moore about significant roadworks. Federal and state funding is going into major projects through that area. A number of mining projects in the midwest are drawing workers from all over the place. For example, the towns of Toodyay, Moora and Dandaragan, and communities in and around the midwest, are at capacity; there is not a rental to be had. Yet businesses such as AGRIFresh, Moora Citrus and Northern Valley Packers, which are cutting edge from an agricultural perspective with the technology they are employing and the quality of the produce they are supplying to the domestic and export market, cannot find places for their workers to live. We have a lack of joined-up thinking on land release—looking at how we can mitigate some of the costs of developing land in regional communities, given the cost of connecting power and water. There is a disincentive for local governments to do it. Quite frankly, I do not think it should be left to them, but history says that that is exactly what happens in these smaller communities when the market does not work. That is the kind of joined-up forward thinking that we want this minister to address.

Then we get to the very vulnerable end of the housing issue. That has been canvassed very well in this place on a number of occasions. I asked a question of the Minister for Community Services today relating to a housing support service. The minister pointed out that the program was previously funded by the federal government. There were four years of commonwealth funding for what is essentially a state government program. We would argue for housing support every day of the week. The minister went on and explained what was invested in other programs. It is clearly the state government's responsibility. This program has been funded at \$1 million a year since 2017. Unfortunately, that funding has come to an end. The proponents of the project have asked that the Minister for Community Services consider funding of \$50 000 a year—in a state with a \$5 billion surplus! The information that we have is that the program has helped keep more than 1 500 children off the streets and kept at-risk vulnerable Aboriginal families together. It was launched as a volunteer organisation.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Its staff includes psychosocial counsellors, social workers, health practitioners and mentors to help resolve issues with both the Department of Housing and the Department of Communities. It is regrettable that the federal government has not sought to renew that program. There is an opportunity for the state to step in. For \$50 000 a year, we would have the endorsement of very well-known and respected community members here in WA who have significant expertise in children's wellbeing and services, including Dr Fiona Stanley, the program managers that the state government funds, Outcare, and its Thrive program. It uses the program and the services that are provided by the First Nations Homelessness Project. It would see it as hugely beneficial to be funded. The minister agreed that it was a good project, but she said that no funding for it is available from the state government. As I said, at the time the funding was coming to an end, Fiona Stanley was reported to have directly intervened and written to the Minister for Community Services to ask her to save the program. She said that there was no comparable service. She stated in an article —

"It is successful because it assesses each family and wraps around them the support and services they need to survive ...

She continued —

“Supporting people to stay in their home and helping them to manage their budgets, health and social issues etc prevents later costly problems—costly for the people concerned and costly for government services.

If we have a housing problem and we already have people in homes and there is a program that would cost \$50 000 a year to support people to stay in their homes so the Minister for Housing does not have to build additional homes, that would be a no-brainer. Instead, the minister chose to play politics and do the finger-pointing. She had an opportunity to step up and say, “Yes, that’s something that I’ll reconsider. We will make sure that we reach out and have that conversation again.” There is a \$5 billion surplus in the state budget. We need to help prevent the evictions that result in homelessness and help prevent some of the crises that are burgeoning onto our streets in every community in Western Australia. I know it will be cold comfort for the team at the First Nations Homelessness Project, but I have had the same conversation with the Minister for Community Services about local housing support projects.

This is what I do not understand, because I have raised in this place and directly with the minister on a number of occasions the Avon Community Services program. This program supports young people in the wheatbelt to put a roof over their head and to give them some life skills to get them back on track and into sustainable and stable housing. I would have thought that would be right up the minister’s alley. However, despite every request made, we do not have funding in the budget for that. I wonder why we are not putting everything on the table to try to keep people in the homes they have. Avon Community Services has a home in which it can look after these young people who just need a helping hand. The alternative is that they are homeless, street present or are couch surfing in our communities. There is only one program in Northam for the whole of the wheatbelt, yet we can get no traction.

From our perspective, we have had a very disappointing response from the minister on the issue that was raised today. I urge the minister to reconsider this and to reach out and have that conversation again. Surely, in a state with a \$5 billion projected surplus, we can find \$50 000 a year to support the work that this community does. Do not take the opposition’s word for it, many eminent people support that program. I have gone on record that it is regrettable that the federal government has ceased to fund this program. But I consider that the program received four years of commonwealth funding, when, really, it should have been a state government-funded program.

**Ms A. Sanderson** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is a housing support program. Housing support programs are funded at a state level. The federal government provided \$1 million of funding over four years. The program is asking the state government for \$50 000. It is not an unreasonable request.

The government continues to fail the people of Western Australia on every front. We could not get the Minister for Health to say the word “crisis”—six little letters! Now, we have a minister who will not acknowledge that public housing is at crisis levels with a lack of public housing across the board. As a result of the government’s failure to invest in public housing and also selling off properties, we do not have housing options for workers who are desperately needed in the regions, not least in Kalbarri, Northampton and across the midwest area. That needs urgent attention.

We do not have solutions for shortages of Government Regional Officers’ Housing properties, and I do not see a program of refurbishment for some of those very rundown government-owned facilities. I welcome the minister’s commentary, either in this place or offline, as to how we might try to stem requests to local governments to become the bank for the state government to build houses to attract and retain nurses, teachers and the like. That is the feedback I get as I travel across the state. It is not good enough.

The Minister for Lands is the about to walk out the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, but I will not go there; it is fine.

We have seen the hugely tragic circumstance of people losing their lives on the streets because they have not had the support they need. On the steps of Parliament House last week, a number of sleeping bags were laid out to demonstrate the number of people who have lost their lives from exposure or succumbing to myriad complex issues they face by being street present, homeless and unable to access the services they deserve.

The first thing that the government should do is admit that there is a crisis. Then it should get on with doing what it has managed to do after consistent pressure from the unions, the workforce, the media and the opposition in relation to the health crisis that we are experiencing—again, of this government’s own making—and come up with a package that comprehensively deals with all those issues and brings all the government agencies together. That goes to the issue that the member for North West Central was talking about when we are dealing with people under pressure, like the CEO of the Shire of Northampton. We understand that we need the government’s firepower sitting behind people to support them to come up with these solutions and to wrap around them. It is too much to expect someone in that position to manage that and to deal with multiple agencies and multiple departments. Although the government may say that a coordinator has been appointed, I can promise members that it is unrelenting for CEOs in situations like that. We just need to be a bit careful, because those issues will change and new ones will



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emerge. But if we cannot get appropriate housing and support services and work with the people who are elected and very well supported in their communities, we will fail those communities. That is our great fear.

I thoroughly support the motion that has been brought to the house today by the member for North West Central. I note that on the notice paper the title is “Public Housing”, but the motion —

... condemns the Labor government for its failure to prioritise housing in the past five years of government, creating a housing crisis the state has never seen before, triggering significant economic and social consequences.

I think all members have touched on areas not only in their own electorates, but also across that housing continuum that we talk about. We really urge this government to make sure that there is an appropriate response in this upcoming budget so that we are not having this conversation in another six or 12 months. There needs to be a plan, and we need to understand what that plan is. The private sector should be engaged. We should include the private sector in the conversations about how we might best solve some of these wicked problems. Certainly, I thought that the minister would be in attendance at the forum that was held the other day. It was disappointing that he was not. I do not think there was an answer to the question about whether any of his ministerial colleagues or other colleagues attended that meeting. I understand a department representative was there. These were some of the peak bodies in the sector and, given the severity of the situation that we face here in Western Australia, I thought we would have someone from the government sitting there and paying respect to those who are on the frontline dealing with these issues —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Do you agree with the member for North West Central’s assessment that we are bullying people in the sector? Do you agree with that assessment?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Do you want me to answer that?

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Yes.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I absolutely do.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Based on what?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is because I get that feedback from community groups. Constructive criticism —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** That is nonsense.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The minister does not like the answer, does he?

**Mr J.N. Carey:** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Would the minister like me to continue the answer? The minister asked me the question. I hear feedback from people who would —

**Mr P. Papalia:** I hear feedback about you guys too, but I don’t say it in here.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The minister asked me a direct question and the Minister for Police has just walked into the chamber and has no idea what we are talking about. As per usual he has no idea. He just chimes in with some inane comment. The Minister for Housing asked me a genuine question and I am telling him that there are people who would consider themselves friends of the Labor Party who say that when they provide constructive criticism to a number of ministers—some are not in the chamber at the moment—if they do not seem to agree with the agenda and the priority of this government, they are blocked out of the conversation and told that things will get very, very difficult for them. Whether that is the minister or someone sitting around his cabinet table —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** He said specifically the social housing sector and me. He’s misled Parliament.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I tell you what; I have heard it more than once! And you do not want to get like that, because arrogant governments lose government. They lose government, so just tread very carefully because that is the word on the street.

Several members interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The word on the street is that if you do not agree with this government, you will not be welcome in those ministers’ offices.

Several members interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** You asked the question. I am hardly going to list the people who have said —

**Mr J.N. Carey:** Substantiate it! Put it on the public record!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** So you can go and victimise them further? I do not think so, minister.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Actually, I was not directing the comments at the minister, but his indignation makes me think that perhaps there is something to hide. Anyway, he invited the assessment, and, yes, I absolutely endorse the comments by the member for North West Central.

**Mr J.N. Carey:** You're making it up!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** You should not have asked the question if you did not like the answer, minister. This entire sector is in crisis.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It has come about under this government's watch. Four and a half years and we find ourselves —

**Mr J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, that is enough.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Four and a half years and we find ourselves in a dire situation in not only health but also housing and accommodation right across this state.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary)** [6.55 pm]: I wish I had more than five minutes. Since the member for North West Central's contribution, I have a lot to say.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for North West Central.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I have a lot to say, but I think I will do him first, if that is all right. I will do him first. I need to correct the record from when I interjected and suggested that the member lost the booth of Exmouth. I was incorrect; he actually won that booth. Well done, member. But I want to add that he lost the booths of Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Onslow, Pannawonica, Paraburdoo and Tom Price. In fact, it was one of Scott Morrison's miracles —

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Point of order, Madam Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Go ahead.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The Labor Party did not win the seat of North West Central; the National Party did. I think the member is misleading the people in this chamber.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for North West Central. That is not a point of order. Continue, member for Wanneroo.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** The member for North West Central and everybody well knows that he lost that election on a primary count.

*Point of Order*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Madam Acting Speaker, the member for Wanneroo is clearly not speaking to the motion that is before the house. If you could ask her to get back to the actual motion, the relevance.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Thank you, member for North West Central. There is no point of order. Go again, member for Wanneroo.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Thank you. I am sorry; I had to do the member first since he interjected straightaway.

I have only five minutes left. I want to highlight a couple of arguments that seem to keep coming up whenever the opposition jumps up, whether we are talking about health or housing. Next, I suppose crime will come up as the theme. On the one hand, members opposite are at great pains to remind us all that the only reason that many of us are in this place is because of the COVID pandemic. The election was all about COVID. We did not win because of any of our policies or any of the work we did over the last four years; we got here only because of COVID. That is all we ever hear, yet members opposite do not apply that logic when talking about important issues such as health or housing and acknowledge that we have been in the middle of a pandemic for the past 18 months and that that factors into the issues around housing or health. Members cannot have it both ways and say that we are here only because of COVID, but not acknowledge that COVID is impacting severely on our health system and housing sector. There is a skills shortage. That is directly because of the COVID pandemic. There is increased migration

to Western Australia. That is exactly because of COVID. Those two factors impact on the housing issues that the government is facing. Members of the opposition cannot have it both ways.

Politics is all about the art of taking credit for other people's work. I think that the efforts of the member for Cottesloe yesterday were breathtaking. He suggested that because of his opposition and his pressure on the Minister for Health that somehow \$1.9 billion was brought into the health system. It was because of his strong advocacy as an opposition spokesperson. I reckon that members opposite have a cunning plan. I think they are targeting housing this week because at some time in the future when they know that the work that our Minister for Housing is doing will pay dividends, they will somehow try to also take credit for it.

I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition suggested that we should not mention the previous government's performance. But we have to do that because —

**Mr P. Papalia:** Because they are arrogant.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** No; not because they are arrogant, but because the punters out there need to make a choice between the government and the opposition, so they see members opposite as an alternative.

**Mr R.R. Whitby:** No; they don't.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** No; they do not, but they have to make a clear choice. They made that decision. Whenever I prepare for debates, I look at the issues the opposition raises. Let us look at housing and how members opposite did when they were previously in government. I am going to talk only about the people who were in charge. For about 12 months, there was Troy Buswell as Minister for Housing, then Bill Marmion for less than a year, then it went back to Troy Buswell, then it went to Terry Redman for less than a year, then it went back to Bill Marmion, then it went to Colin Holt and then it went to Brendon Grylls. None of the housing ministers in the previous Liberal–National government served more than one year and seven months in the housing portfolio. That is how much of a priority it was for the Liberal–National government. However, members of the National and Liberal Parties tried a little bit harder post-2017 in opposition. The opposition started with Peter Collier as the shadow Minister for Housing for a little while, then it swung to Sean L'Estrange as the shadow housing minister and then it came up with the idea that the member for Carine should be the shadow minister for homelessness and housing.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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