

PLANNING APPROVALS — EFFICIENCIES

579. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Planning:

Since the Liberal–National government took office it has been strongly committed to improving the efficiency of the approvals system. Can the minister please outline how these improvements have affected the planning portfolio?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

As the member stated in his question, one of the primary aims of the government since we had the good fortune of coming into office two years ago has been to improve and streamline the approvals process so that the system is efficient and timely. That is important for land supply for not only residential development, but also industrial land development and other purposes. It is important for the further growth of the economy and for job creation. Last week I provided information that indicated how the Department of Planning, as it is now called after it was separated from the previous Department for Planning and Infrastructure that existed under the previous government, has resulted in significant improvements in the timeliness of the consideration of subdivision applications and planning scheme amendments. The improvements extend outside simply the Department of Planning. From my own point of view, and that of my office, I am pleased to say that we have been making very good progress in considering planning scheme amendments. In the first 23 months that this government has been in office and since I have had responsibility for this portfolio, more than 800 planning decisions have been made on statutory matters. That compares with just over 500 in the equivalent period under the previous government.

Mr B.J. Grylls: More than one a day! When do you sleep?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I do not sleep a lot. So far in 2010, for example, there has been an average decision-making turnaround time for scheme amendments of only 17.5 days. That is a substantial effort that has been achieved through a very strong team approach between me, my office and the Department of Planning and the WA Planning Commission. I will consider another 18 planning scheme amendments later this afternoon, including several in the Shire of Mundaring. The Shire of Mundaring's local planning scheme 4 is due for consideration. I note that some people have been waiting for those scheme amendments for quite some time. Although these issues might not be important to some members of the opposition, they are certainly important to the wider community and many landowners, developers and people who are looking to build and own houses in Western Australia. This has been achieved by actually considering issues, making decisions and getting on with the job.

This government has dealt with a range of issues that the previous government either put into the too-hard basket or ideologically opposed, such as the James Point private port proposal that languished for years under the previous government because, I suspect, of the government's ideological reasons. That was determined some time ago. Amendment 458 in Scarborough facilitates substantial development and improvement to the amenity in Scarborough. Planning guidelines for holiday homes in the Shire of Busselton, for example, were sent off into the never–never land of consideration by a committee under the previous government. The approval of the Augusta – Margaret River local planning scheme 1 provides certainty to the landowners in the Shire of Augusta – Margaret River.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: There is more: the Bush Forever metropolitan region scheme amendment was advertised in 2004 and consideration was completed in 2006 under the previous government. Nothing happened for another two years until we came into government. That issue has now been finalised and is providing certainty to landowners whose land is reserved, and it will ensure that they can be compensated. It is also an important environmental protection and conservation measure.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Lest there be any suggestions from the opposition of obstacles in the system in the way of land supply or other issues in the planning portfolio, let them compare the record of this government with that of the previous government.