

WARDERS' COTTAGES — FREMANTLE — RESTORATION

435. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Heritage:

Could the minister please update the house on the progress of restoration work on the warders' cottages in Fremantle and what the Liberal–National government is doing for state-owned heritage places?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

This is a very important issue. First of all, this goes back to an election commitment that this government made in 2013 that, if re-elected, we would establish this country's first government-initiated heritage revolving fund.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: If the member for Fremantle had listened to what I said, it is.

The fund and program take disused or underutilised government-owned heritage buildings—that is roughly around one-third of the state Register of Heritage Places—and restore them to a certain level, or de-risk them, so that they can either go out to market for a long-term lease or, alternatively, be sold, but with a heritage agreement that protects the heritage and conservation values of those buildings. Our first project and an early one to kick it off is the conservation and revitalisation of the warders' cottages in Fremantle.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will get to that, too, member for Bassendean.

Since that project first went to tender in March 2015, we have seen the restoration of some 2 000 square metres of limestone walls on those heritage-listed warders' cottages; we have replaced much of the roof sheeting, gutters and downpipes; we have overhauled all of the site drainage; we have seen the rebuilding of the second-storey verandas; we have restored the awnings, doors and windows; and, very importantly, we have now fire-separated the roof spaces. I had the opportunity to inspect the building site last Friday, which was my most recent visit, and I was impressed with not only the progress that has been made on restoring those buildings, but also the quality of craftsmanship that has been going into that restoration. Already they are presenting a far more appealing feature and facade in the heart of Fremantle.

Under this government, the Perth CBD has certainly seen a heritage renaissance. We saw that particularly with the opening of the old Treasury buildings, Brookfield Place and multiple projects that I do not have time to list.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A.P. JACOB: We also want to see that extended to other parts of the state, particularly Fremantle, which has languished behind in this area, particularly in the area of heritage adaptive re-use. That is why the state government is leading by example in restoring a significant state heritage-listed property that it owns to a suitable level so that it can go on to have a new life.

Interestingly, the opposition opposes this policy and appears to even oppose the restoration of the Fremantle warders' cottages. The member for Fremantle has described this as a bad outcome for heritage and a bad outcome for Fremantle.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Although she was perfectly happy to talk about the importance of doing something, now that we are doing it she appears to think it is a bad outcome for the electorate.