

HOUSING — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) informed the Assembly that she was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Liberal Party seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [2.54 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan Labor government for its policy failures and lacklustre approach to addressing the housing crisis that has happened under its watch.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member to pause for a moment. A lot of people are exiting the chamber and a lot of people are talking. I urge you to take your seats or exit if that is what you are doing.

Ms L. METTAM: Lacklustre is certainly a fair term to use, particularly when I point to the question I asked the Minister for Housing during question time today. It was a very simple question, once again asked after 11 weeks, about whether social housing stock had increased under the government's watch now that we are six years into this government. We are not only six years into a Labor government, but also six years into a McGowan Labor government that has enjoyed extraordinary windfalls to the state. This state has experienced the biggest boom of record iron ore royalties, a GST fix to the state that saw a 43 per cent increase in revenue in the government's first term of office and royalties that total over \$40 billion in the past five years. We have seen a significant mandate for this government to govern as well as extraordinary record windfalls to the state. What have we seen in the housing space? What have we seen when it comes to issues facing many Western Australians challenged by a housing crisis? We see a government that has taken Western Australians for granted on a range of matters when it comes to core areas of government delivery—and housing is just one of them.

We are seeing rental prices going through the roof, vacancies at an all-time low and an ever-expanding social housing waitlist; I have talked about the priority waitlist that has increased significantly. We are seeing a number of groups being significantly impacted. Most concerning is the demographic of the working poor in Western Australia—namely, those who have jobs but cannot find or are unable to obtain a roof over their head. These people could be those who have been on the social housing waitlist for over two years, according to 2022 figures; and the families, individuals and subcontractors who have been impacted by the 100 construction companies that have gone bust over the past 12 months or one of many industries impacted by trying to attract staff; or, what is particularly devastating, some of our most vulnerable people. This housing issue also impacts those who seek to flee dangerous family and domestic violence situations. Accommodation is intrinsically linked with that. I note the latest figures from CoreLogic that came out today that highlight the challenge of Perth having the country's highest capital city rent hikes nationally at about 13.2 per cent.

The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Cottesloe will talk on issues impacting, and the challenges facing, the construction industry. We earlier this year saw approvals tumble to historic lows when the Premier said that this is a sign of a strong economy—apparently. There are obviously multiple challenges across many areas when it comes to this key area of service delivery under this government. We have seen an absolute failure in social housing. I note the recent \$500 million announcement prior to the budget. Of course, we have learnt from this government that there is no time frame to deliver. The funds are basically sitting in a special purpose account with no time frame to deliver.

This is a clear pipeline of work, apparently, except that these funds will sit in a special purpose account. This government has failed to deliver on commitments it already made in this space. The 2021–22 state budget announced a promise of 3 300 more homes for our most vulnerable, but this government has built only 1 200 of those homes. As I pointed to today, the January 2023 figures showed that there were 43 458 homes compared with more than 44 000 in 2017. The McGowan Labor government is very good at making announcements, particularly when it comes to infrastructure, but is very poor at delivering on those announcements. We have seen the mess over the announcement of the women's and babies' hospital, and more bluff and blunder from the Minister for Health today when she said that she does not need a business case when making a decision that clinicians have said will lead to very serious outcomes. Our Minister for Health apparently knows better than to consult on such a serious matter.

Obvious concerns were raised about the announcement made by the Minister for Housing. It included a \$50 million boost to the construction workforce that will include targeting more than 1 000 overseas workers. Concerns were rightly raised by the media at that time about where these workers would be housed, and whether, as I stated, the government could deliver on these promises, given its track record. During a boom time that saw extraordinary revenue for the state, our housing stock went backwards; it did not even keep pace. The minister stated that attracting foreign workers was a "conundrum". A suggestion was made that brickies and other tradies have their own networks and could live in shared accommodation. What an extraordinary plan to address this issue! Of course, the proposal to attract overseas workers was basically a U-turn from the failed local jobs policy of the McGowan Labor

government. One of the first decisions this government made when trying to appeal to or appease the unions was when the Premier stated —

No longer can overseas workers be fast-tracked into bricklaying, tiling or electrician jobs.

That decision saw skilled migration decrease by 51 per cent in the first three years of this government. We also saw an impact on training, with a 17 per cent reduction over that period. As I said, this government cannot be trusted when it comes to its announcements and the promises it says it will deliver. The Common Ground facility is another example. We heard news last year of the delays, which were a massive blow to those sleeping rough in Western Australia—a state with the unenviable title of being the “rough sleeping capital” of the country. We heard last year that the government delayed plans for the 112 units announced in December 2019 because, apparently, the project was put on hold due to poor value-for-money outcomes. While poor value-for-money outcomes were the hold-up for this project, it is fair to say that this does not seem to be the case with other projects such as Metronet. That raises questions about this government’s priorities. I note that the Minister for Housing has announced that the Common Ground facility is now a commitment for after the next election, which is very convenient. This comes at a time when 34 000 individuals have been waiting for two years on the social housing waitlist. That has expanded from 15 072 households to 18 000 households. Obviously, there are real concerns about whether this government can deliver on its commitments. That is one area of concern.

Another issue I have raised relates to Western Power. This impacts the construction sector and a broad range of other sectors in the residential and commercial market. Since raising these issues—I know the shadow Minister for Energy has raised them as well—we have been inundated with calls from people who shared concerns about the significant handbrake on construction and delays to Western Power connections and design works that have blown out, in some cases, from 12 weeks to more than 12 months under this government’s watch over this state government-owned trading enterprise.

I was recently in Geraldton and heard concerns raised by Mayor Shane Van Styn about units on Bogle Way in Spalding that are otherwise ready to support people in the community, but have been let down by the inability to get a Western Power connection. I understand that they will be waiting another five months for that connection. We heard from small family business owner Rob Gherardi in Margaret River as well. He wants to subdivide his existing homestead and raised very real concerns about the implications of having to wait an extraordinary time for a power connection; I think that wait time was more than 12 months as well. This small family business is looking at bankruptcy as a result of this government’s inability to deliver these services within a reasonable time frame.

I note comments from the energy minister in response to many concerns raised. He had been assured by Western Power that it was working to overcome major constraints and would hire additional expertise from interstate and overseas. We sincerely hope that there is some urgency to that. I also heard from another developer about residential rental properties. I know this developer wrote to the Minister for Housing as well to say that these properties were ready for people to move into, except there was no power connection.

I know other people would like to speak, so I will leave my comments there. I underline the fact that this government has certainly failed in a range of areas when it comes to the housing portfolio.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [3.08 pm]: I also contribute to this motion brought forward by the member for Vasse: that this house calls into question the sincerity of the recent housing announcement from the McGowan Labor government—a commitment made with no plan or approval. We have seen from this government and minister, time after time, flashy announcements and quite theatrical displays in this chamber defending such announcements and a lack of action taken to put in place social housing solutions desperately required by many Western Australians, as outlined by the member for Vasse. This government is very good at making announcements but it does not make them with time frames. No actual delivery timetable is ever announced on any measure that the Minister for Housing puts in place. That is not just in the housing portfolio. In all the infrastructure portfolios and in health delivery, we hear announcements being made time and again. We hear announcements being made about Geraldton Health Campus, and we still see a car park there. Yes, another announcement was made but there is still a car park. This government has been in office for six years and a car park is all it has to show for that project. The government does not really expect any of its projects to be delivered on time.

Earlier today the Premier was making light of the announcement that the member for Cannington made about the Perth Mint around the time of the solar eclipse. I happen to know that the Minister for Transport was also up north for the solar eclipse. There was a bit of a joke going around that the planning for the solar eclipse is the only project that this government had delivered on time. I heard that some people who work for the government said that they should have applied for an extension of time, but there was no ability at that moment. Time and again with this government we see a complete lack of ability to deliver things on time. Look at the situation around the Bayswater bridge. The minister has the gall to come in here and talk about that, yet I know that businesses in that area have been suffering because of the length of time it has taken to build the bridge. Anybody who is familiar with that area will know of the severe impost that has been put on people as they try to get around that area at the moment.

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

We know that this government is very long on making announcements. The minister is a strong theatrical performer in the Parliament but he does not seem to be able to drive the development of housing or cure the social housing mess. The member for Vasse outlined some of those measures but it is worth going through some of them again. We know that the number of new dwellings built or purchased for social and affordable houses over the last six years is less than half the number delivered in four years by the former Liberal–National government before this government came to power. The inadequate supply of new social housing has really exacerbated some of the issues we see deepening in homelessness and the rental crisis across the state.

As well as failing to deliver new houses, the McGowan Labor government actively sold off social housing stock when it first came to power. From 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022, it sold 726 properties. In 2017–18 alone, it sold 296 properties, yet in that same year it built just 52 new dwellings and spot purchased 37. The practice of spot purchasing does not add any housing stock to the state’s inventory; it is simply taking houses from the private rental sector and putting them into the public rental sector.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The minister will have his chance. It does not actually increase the housing stock across the state. We have seen desperate housing shortages in many regional areas as well as in the city areas. I would like to talk about some of those situations. For instance, we know that stock numbers in Geraldton have remained static over the last five years. A total of 1 007 properties were available in 2019 and just 1 013 in 2023. Meanwhile, demand for housing has risen, with 525 people waiting in March 2019, and that figure is now 728. We know that properties remain vacant. In 2019, 118 properties were vacant in the greater Geraldton area. This increased to 143 in 2023— an increase of 21 per cent. Of those 143 vacant properties, 116 are either in the process of being refurbished and maintained or are still waiting to be re-let.

A report in *The Geraldton Guardian* and *The West Australian* by reporter Jamie Thannoo on 5 May stated —

The number of vacant public housing properties in Geraldton has been steadily rising at the same time the desperate demand for shelter is soaring, State Government figures reveal.

He went on to detail some of the figures I just outlined to the house. An interesting comment was made by Chris Gabelish, the operations manager at community support group Regional Alliance West. He was quoted as saying —

... the State Government was failing both people facing homelessness and the wider community by letting properties sit boarded up while demand was so high.

“It has been obvious to us at Regional Alliance West for many years that the boarded up properties not only contribute to homelessness but also negatively impact on the neighbourhoods that these properties are in,” he said.

By allowing so many properties to be vacant, while the need for housing is so high, Mr Gabelish said not only were people unnecessarily suffering, but the government was missing out on money which tenants would be paying in rent, leaving the burden on the taxpayer.

... described the process for applying for public housing as convoluted, contributing to long waits.

That is the situation in Geraldton in the midwest. Further afield in the midwest, the situation in much of the area that was impacted by cyclone Seroja is that many people would like to live in those areas but they cannot because of damage to homes. I have not been able to get to the bottom of the total housing situation in the midwest because the minister has refused to answer my questions about that matter. I know that this government made yet another announcement about worker accommodation in the town of Kalbarri, yet when the member for North West Central and I visited the alleged workers’ accommodation site, we found a scrubby little block that is actually a drain for the nearby caravan park. Announcements have been made. Apparently, contracts have been entered into. What have we seen? We have seen no progress and no delivery, which is very typical of this government. We heard yet another announcement, but again no delivery on the announcement that was made.

The government announced a headworks fund to help pay for some of these issues, but that is a pittance compared with what the opposition knows is needed to get development going in many country areas. It is not just needed in those areas I highlighted, but it is needed in so many communities, such as Dalwallinu in my electorate, a small country town in the wheatbelt that is desperately short of land. That town is growing but it cannot grow because there is no land and DevelopmentWA is not coming to the party and providing enough land in that town. We know that in all matters, whether it be social housing or putting infrastructure in place, as highlighted by the member for Vasse, talking about the Western Power issue, or whether it be DevelopmentWA, this government is not acting fast enough to ensure that the housing situation is improved. The Minister for Homelessness seems to think that homelessness is his task. His role is curing homelessness and putting people into homes, not perpetuating

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

homelessness as a permanent situation for many Western Australians. That is what the minister is achieving, and that is all he is achieving.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [3.17 pm]: I rise to support the excellent motion on housing moved by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I wish to put on the record that I like the Minister for Housing; he is a nice bloke. I think he genuinely wants to do the right thing. I do not just pin this on the minister, but the unfortunate thing is that the McGowan Labor government has consistently failed to deliver in the area of housing. As was excellently and very succinctly pointed out by the Leader of the Liberal Party, the root of that failure sits at the feet of this government. We should remember that this is the government that took metropolitan Perth out of the regional migration scheme. It reduced the categories from 118 to 18. It stopped the supply of critical unskilled labour, or semiskilled labour as it is sometimes termed, coming into the state to support it. It crippled our training, as was pointed out, because it stopped those people coming in to train in our state's institutions. Then it doubled down during COVID. It stopped everyone coming into this state. As I have said time and again in this place, I am very pleased that the government took the sensible approach to —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker, for your excellent support.

Sensibly —

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The government sensibly stopped people coming over for maybe the odd twenty-first birthday or engagement party, but it also stopped doctors and nurses coming to the state. It stopped all those critical people that we needed to build houses. Therefore, government members should not sit here and bleat. I am sure I will hear it from the Minister for Housing and we have heard it before in question time that I am —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Landsdale.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Members should have a chat afterwards if they want to have a chat, but I do want to get on with this.

Government members like to complain and say that the market is constrained, but, in fact, it was the government who constrained the market and stopped things from being built. The Minister for Transport is the number one person who is actively competing with the private sector for labour for her extensive Metronet project, at the expense of homes. That is the minister; the minister chose to do that. The government chose to allocate around half its capital budget to that one project. Meanwhile, ordinary Western Australians, whether old or young, cannot rent or buy a house. Of course, there is no social housing and as a consequence we see rough sleepers from one end of Perth to the other, including outside my office in Cottesloe. There are rough sleepers in Claremont and other areas where we perhaps would not expect to see rough sleepers, but that is how extensive that problem is. A school for deaf children that was abandoned by this government now has rough sleepers in it because they have nowhere else to go and cannot find housing. That is because of this government.

We have heard about delays to the Common Ground project. If the government had built 10 homes for every announcement it made, we would have thousands of homes. The government set the benchmark for announcements. All the journalists it employed when it came into power, and the extra ones it picked up for COVID communications, are doing their job—top marks to them! Maybe the government could train a few of them to build houses and get them out doing that because, as I say, if the government had built 10 homes for every announcement, we would be awash with public housing, which would deal with the critical issues highlighted by the opposition. But we have seen an unequivocal failure by this government.

Government members have again come out and asked, “How can the opposition criticise our big \$510 million announcement for houses?” Why do they think the shadow Minister for Housing said that that is a waste of time? He said that it is a waste of time because the government keeps announcing and announcing, but it does not deliver. In this term of government, which is substantial at over six years—this government is becoming old—the government should have built thousands of new homes, like we did when we were in government. Government members have not delivered a fraction of the number of homes that we delivered. When we discussed this in the last term of Parliament, I heard members on the other side say that that was because the federal government provided us with funding. Funding is not this government's problem; this government is awash —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

Dr D.J. HONEY: This government is awash with funding. It is awash with a multibillion-dollar surplus delivered by iron ore royalties and the Liberal–National GST fix. This government is awash with funding. We delivered, but this government has failed to deliver housing in all parts of Western Australia. That is why we are sceptical about the \$510 million announcement. It is meaningless. The government will not deliver a fraction of the 4 000 homes that it promised in this term of government. The government has failed again to deliver.

Stop making glossy announcements. Stop coming out and talking about the hundreds of millions of dollars as if that is doing something. For goodness' sake, rather than someone turning up to a breakfast saying that it is doing something about housing, the government should actually build homes for those young people, older people, rough sleepers and people who are struggling to get an affordable rental property. Go and do that, and release extra land to bring down the price of housing. Do that, but do not come into this chamber and make more completely meaningless announcements about homes that will never be delivered in this term of government. The way the government is going, it will not have the capacity to deliver those houses in the next term of government either.

The simple truth is that this side has a track record of delivering thousands of homes for Western Australians. That is what we did. This government has failed. As I say, the minister is a good guy, but he is not delivering.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [3.24 pm]: I will seek to clarify some of the misinformation put forward by the opposition on this matter of public interest. First, I am disappointed by the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, which can only be described as personal and nasty. I want to put on the record that I am tired of hearing from the opposition, in both social media and comments like that, that as a gay man I scream and I am theatrical.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: No. If we said this about a woman, there would be an outcry, but the Leader of the Opposition does it. He then comes in here and says, through his glib comment, that I am personally causing homelessness. I take this seriously. When any members opposite reach out to my office about someone in need, we respond immediately. My office engages with members opposite, and we try to seek a solution. For the Leader of the Liberal Party to say that I do not take this seriously is a personal affront.

Ms L. Mettam: It was not a personal attack.

Mr J.N. CAREY: It was a personal attack.

In this debate on these serious issues, we hear glib remarks from the Leader of the Nationals WA.

I want to put all the initiatives that we are doing on the record. But when people listen to this debate, they would think that Western Australia is isolated and that the circumstances we face are not encountered anywhere else in Australia. Every rental market in Australia is being hit by a tight vacancy rate. Research is coming out that COVID has radically reshaped the rental market. Members opposite quoted CoreLogic and I quoted CoreLogic information that said that COVID had fundamentally changed the rental market. A lot of factors have been at play.

I note that in a recent ABC story, Peter Martin, a visiting fellow at Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University, said —

What did change during COVID, according to the research department of the Reserve Bank, was the average number of people per household.

The change doesn't sound big—the average fell from a bit above 2.6 residents per household to a bit below 2.55—but applied to millions of households it meant about 140,000 more houses and apartments were needed than would have been.

This demonstrates that this issue and challenge is in not just Western Australia but across Australia, and all state governments are seeking to address this problem.

I am on the record as setting a delivery target. We said that in our first two years, despite the tightest construction market, that we would deliver 1 300 additional social homes, and we are going to do that. We set a clear target. We made it public. I repeated that in this Parliament, and we are meeting that target. To say that we are not meeting our targets is nonsense, because I have made it clear in the Parliament that we are.

We are undertaking a huge number of reforms in housing. There is the timber frame program and the modular program. We are reviewing gross stock that is surplus to need. I will come back to the spot purchasing program. We have made a range of changes to accelerate the delivery of social housing. Similarly, in homelessness, we acknowledge that we had to go back to the market with the Common Ground project, due to the tightness of the construction market. But I want to say that, in the meantime, I announced a range of homelessness reforms. We boosted homelessness outreach to seven days a week. We created a new pilot program that matches homes with rough sleepers; we have 100 homes for rough sleepers there. There are many Common Ground facilities from Perth to Bunbury. We have purchased Murray Street Lodge, which has been changed into transitional accommodation. We have opened Boorloo Bidee Mia. There has been significant investment into creating more crisis and transitional beds.

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

I find it extraordinary that the Liberal Party looks back at its social housing record but fails to mention that it was funded by the Rudd government. The Rudd government committed huge amounts as part of the stimulus package. If members remember, the construction market was very different at that time. We now have the tightest construction market in this state's history; the previous government did not face that. It is very interesting that members opposite quote the public waiting figures to me, because the peak under the previous government was 24 000. They never mention that; there were 24 000 people on the waiting list, in very different circumstances from those in which we find ourselves now, in which every rental market in Australia has been hit by the COVID pandemic.

I want to also address the issue of spot purchasing; I find it amazing that members opposite are attacking us on spot purchasing. Let me make it very clear: only last April Hon Steve Martin asked why the government had not utilised the spot purchasing program more broadly. The opposition repeatedly said that the funding for spot purchasing was an opportunity for the government to ensure that newly acquired homes go to the areas that need them the most. We have had repeated calls from the opposition to increase funding for spot purchasing, but it is clear that the Leader of the Opposition is not aware of these commitments because he criticised spot purchasing, despite his housing spokesperson asking for it. I am perplexed. Where is the consistency in policy from the opposition? Members opposite are not talking to each other.

That is actually the broader issue. Over the last six years, the opposition has not announced one social housing policy. It did not take any social housing policy to the last election and it has not announced any policy to date, despite the next state election getting closer. It has not announced any social housing policies. We know from the opposition's position that it does not support any additional funding, because it is apparently a complete waste of time. It has criticised our purchase of Murray Street Lodge and criticised the pilot program. It has criticised us for Boorloo Bidee Mia and now it is criticising us for the spot purchasing program. My question is: What does it support? What social housing or homelessness initiatives does the opposition support? I cannot tell members.

Dr D.J. Honey: Build houses!

Mr J.N. CAREY: We have, member. The member was not in the chamber, but we said we would deliver 1 300 homes in our first two years, and we will meet that target. I have repeated that in this Parliament and we will meet that target.

Let us be very clear: the opposition has no social housing policies—zilch, none. It had none at the last state election and it has none right now, yet it takes credit for Kevin Rudd's stimulus package. It was a very different story —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I note that some opposition members tried to purchase public housing; we all remember the member for Carine! That is a great story; something to be proud of.

Mr R.S. Love: Who's being nasty now?

Mr J.N. CAREY: That is on the record.

Mr R.S. Love: So why bring it up?

Mr J.N. CAREY: It is on the public record.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Perhaps I am being too theatrical, member for Moore. Wind that one out. Or maybe you can go on social media and say I am screaming again. Maybe you can go on social media from your dirt unit and say I am screaming again—because that is what gay men do, do we not?

Mr R.S. Love: I never said you did.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Under your Liberal social media they used to do that. Very proud of them. Great stuff.

The figures show that the state was shafted on social housing. They show that under the previous federal Liberal–National government, Western Australia was shafted for funding. Compare the difference: in the Rudd era, funding was pumped into the WA state Liberal government, which enjoyed an easy construction market, whereas we faced a scenario in which the federal Liberal–National government did not bother with social housing. In fact, the federal minister never reached out and there were no ministerial meetings. I remember a New South Wales Liberal member remarking how great it was under a federal Labor government to be able to bring together state housing ministers from across the nation.

It is very clear that we have instituted a large number of different reforms to accelerate the delivery of social housing—some that I have not yet touched upon, but the Minister for Planning will. It is very clear that we are using every lever we can to boost that supply to help the most vulnerable people in need.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning) [3.35 pm]: I want to say from the outset that I think the Leader of the Opposition crossed the line in his contribution to this debate, and I also think the Leader of the

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 May 2023]

p1942b-1951a

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

Liberal Party crossed the line. Instead of acknowledging that, they are doubling down on some of the comments they made. I have been in Parliament a long time and I have seen that when members opposite believe we have crossed the line, they run off to the media and immediately call for apologies. Today we are seeing the Leader of the Opposition double down on what I think were personal attacks that crossed the line. That is very, very clear. We will see whether he is adult and mature enough to recognise that in his further commentary. As I said, I have seen members opposite rush off to the media to claim what the Labor Party has or has not said, but now it is up to them, and this is a test of maturity for the Liberal Party and the National Party—particularly for the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party—in respect of the comments they have made about the Minister for Housing.

I put it on the record that I think everyone in this place understands the Minister for Housing's absolute commitment to and passion for housing in this state—particularly, his commitment to protecting and helping the most vulnerable. Members opposite have made claims about the Minister for Housing who, as I have said, is 100 per cent committed to ensuring that people in WA have a safe place to live and to sleep, and he is leaving no stone unturned in pursuit of that.

In respect of the other comments made by members opposite, it was the federal Kevin Rudd government that made an incredible investment into social housing in Western Australia. That was at a time when, to be honest, not much was happening in this state. I remember the state of housing at that time, and the fact that tradies were looking for work. There was actually the capacity to build both quickly and affordably, given the state of the housing market in Western Australia at that time. Yes, houses were delivered, but they were primarily funded by the federal government at a time when construction was much easier than it is now. The Minister for Housing made the point that the former federal Liberal government was not interested in social housing. In our first years in government there was no partnership with Canberra to help deliver social housing in Western Australia. The federal government simply was not interested. I put that all on the record.

I want to outline some of the challenges that currently exist. I am not sure where the Liberal and National Parties have been, other than in their bubble of negativity. When they leave this place, they move into a bubble of negativity. Everyone in WA understands the facts, and the facts are that COVID brought with it economic circumstances that we could not have predicted. The idea that anyone could have predicted a worldwide pandemic and its economic consequences is absolutely false. No-one could have predicted that Russia would invade Ukraine, and all the supply chain interruptions that that invasion brought with it. No-one could have predicted that WA would emerge from that era with such strength and having many people wanting to come to WA and make it their new home because of the many opportunities here in WA. We had hoped that would be the case, but we are now seeing it in reality. Those circumstances are unique in the state's history and the world's history. To again highlight the point made by the Minister for Housing, WA is not Robinson Crusoe on this issue. The challenges that we face are the challenges faced by the other states and territories. When I talk to builders and developers, they acknowledge the efforts made by the state government to improve things to deliver more housing, and that is what we are trying to do. As I said, Liberal and National Party members think that the people of WA are not smart. They underestimate their intelligence all the time. They underestimated their intelligence during COVID and they are underestimating their intelligence now. People understand that costs have increased and that there have been labour shortages because of the unique circumstances. The Liberal Party still maintains today, years and years after the impact, that our border should have been open while COVID was running rampant throughout the world. That is what it still maintains. Imagine what the impact of that would have been. Liberal Party members have learnt nothing in this place for many, many years. They cannot even begrudgingly accept that the government's management of COVID helped save lives and helped save the Western Australian economy and the national economy. I want to put those points on the record initially.

On the issue of housing, again where do the Liberal and National Parties stand? They opposed planning reform, they opposed infill and they opposed housing diversity. They do not want people to rent one-bedroom apartments near schools because they believe that everyone who lives in apartments are bad people. The Liberal and National Parties oppose new ways to bring on housing. I want to go through the suite of policies that we have to help support new housing.

Planning reform is the first one. Planning reform is all about making sure that there is a clearer and more transparent pathway for development approvals and for how we develop schemes and prepare suburbs for infill. It is about making sure that the community is aware of and involved in helping identify where the infill and density is compared with what was done in the past. It is about ensuring that there is a better pathway for approvals. The Liberal Party of this state does not support that. It does not support a better approvals system to decrease costs and support new developments. How can we support homes if we do not support new developments? Of course we have to support new developments to get new homes. The Liberal Party opposed the planning reforms. The government has the housing diversity pipeline; that is, lazy government-owned land that is being sent out to the market to create new public housing and get new housing proposals. We will make further announcements on that. We also have the infrastructure fund. We are reforming the planning system to create a better pathway.

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

We also acknowledge that the cost of providing infill is sometimes too great to put those new products into the market. Unlike the greenfields projects—the new housing suburbs where there is a very long established process about how we provide new housing—we know that for infill projects we sometimes have to ensure that the existing landowners are dealt with fairly. Infill also has higher costs, unlike new suburbs, where all the housing is developed at the same time and the cost can be evenly spread. Sometimes for infill projects, whether developing precincts or apartment buildings, a very significant up-front cost cannot be apportioned to all the developers because there is only one developer. As a result, we need to create a system that supports improving the infrastructure. Normally, that infrastructure on a new development would help the entire suburb. That is why we have an infrastructure fund to support new housing and new housing diversity.

Last week the Minister for Water and I announced an infill sewerage program. Again, that acknowledges that in some areas such as Kenwick and Thornlie, where there is no infill sewerage program, we need to put infill sewerage infrastructure in place and support good development and make sure that it is actually economically feasible, because we need to encourage new developments in those types of areas. Over the next week, we will continue to make more announcements about how we will support new housing diversity and new homes throughout the state.

Every initiative is very much geared to supporting new homes. In WA, we need more builders out there developing infill products. The Minister for Housing and I have very much concentrated on that. If members look at the state of the market currently, they will see that we still have a lot of new house-and-land packages being delivered. In a sense, the market is still heated and is delivering house-and-land packages, but the front-end trades are starting to free up a bit, and it is the end trades—the finishing trades—that are very occupied at the moment. Again, that will change and more product will become available and new homes will be built to release the pressure.

We need to convert a lot of development approvals into builds, and that is very much what our effort is focused on. Whether it is the initiatives in this budget through projects such as the infrastructure fund to support the development approvals into builds or whether there are other concessions, we are looking at what we can do to support new residential developments. We are doing everything we can.

As I said, the Minister for Housing is 100 per cent committed. He has gone to Canberra to meet with the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation to see what other forms of assistance we can get to support affordable housing. No stone is being left unturned by this minister in identifying ways to deliver more housing. He has looked at different types of housing builds—whether it be modular or the more traditional forms—and at all types of housing builds. He has looked at government-owned land and receiving federal government support through NHFIC for some of the infrastructure costs. He has also looked at spot purchases and buying existing hotels—everything. We are introducing projects and programs that did not exist before to try to address the problem. I know that each week opposition members have to find a matter of public interest to debate, but can they please do some proper research when they do? Do not come in here and make ludicrous personal attacks and sit down. Do some proper work and go for the facts; do not play the person.

MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.48 pm]: That was a demonstration from opposition members of just how incoherent and conflicted they are. On the one hand, the member for Vasse said that the Minister for Housing is lacklustre and does not care about housing and homelessness—that he does not take it seriously, sorry. On the other hand, the Leader of the Opposition used bullyboy tactics and said that the minister's responses were theatrical. Which is it? Is he lacklustre or theatrical?

Ms A. Sanderson: What is the subtext here?

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: That is a very good point, minister. What is the subtext? I believe this is just an opportunity for opposition members to attack the minister because they do not understand him. I understand that for the Leader of the Opposition, being boring and uninspiring, it is hard to relate to the Minister for Housing because he is neither of those things. He is unapologetically passionate about all his portfolio areas, including housing and homelessness. I find it ridiculous. As I said, the Leader of the Opposition used bullyboy tactics to try to link the minister's sexuality to the way that he —

Mr R.S. Love: I did no such thing.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: That was the subtext—"theatrical". I am theatrical. He is theatrical.

Mr R.S. Love: I absolutely refute that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: All I am saying is that the minister is unapologetically passionate about all his portfolio areas, and particularly housing. For the member for Vasse to say that he is lacklustre is completely misleading.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Let us go to the substantive issue. The member for Cottesloe is constantly bleating that we are not delivering when he is one of the biggest —

Dr D.J. Honey: You haven't delivered.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: We have delivered.

Several members interjected.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: I did not interject on you guys; do not interject on me.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: You are bleating that we are not delivering and yet this minister has done more in the housing portfolio than you guys ever did!

Several members interjected.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: It is true! He has created a suite of housing opportunities using different levers. He is using modular housing. He is using wooden-framed housing. He is using new technology. He is purchasing old hotels to deliver housing and homelessness services. The member for Cottesloe is one of the biggest problems for housing. Every single time a new development is proposed, if it comes anywhere near —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: I have already said that I am not taking interjections!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Dr D.J. Honey: What's high density in your electorate?

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Member for Cottesloe —

Dr D.J. Honey: It is 48 per cent in mine. I bet it's 20 per cent in yours!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member!

Ms S.F. McGurk: You didn't like interjections when you were talking.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You were interjected upon, but let the member finish, please. Carry on, member.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: The member for Cottesloe is the biggest problem when it comes to —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Ms S.F. McGurk: You're a hypocrite. You're a hypocrite.

Dr D.J. Honey: Who's a hypocrite?

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: You are a hypocrite! You are absolutely a hypocrite. You sat there bleating: "Build houses, minister."

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Every time a development goes up for a decision, whether it is at council level or joint development assessment panel level, you are the one who always argues, "This shouldn't go there." We are trying to build houses and you are the problem. Every time a developer puts up something and we approve it, you are the one who has a problem with it. You are the one who gets up and bleats about it, not us! We are the ones who are actually trying to deliver housing. Oh, yes, talk behind your paper; that is good!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: You are the one who used the word "bleat", not me.

Dr D.J. Honey: You did!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Go back and read *Hansard* tomorrow, mate.

Dr D.J. Honey: You repeated it several times.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Anyway, the pandemic hit in 2020. Let us take it back there. We all thought that our economy was going to fall off a cliff, so one of the things the government did was to put in place some things so that people were able to build and keep our construction industry going. That was successful. We were able to put in place

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr John Carey; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski

opportunities for people who up until that point had not had an opportunity to purchase a house in Western Australia. We had our building bonus grant, which resulted in 41 000 building approvals in 2021 and 2022. Many of those building approvals were for first home buyers who currently rent in our rental market. Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre's report *Housing affordability in Western Australia 2023: Building for the future* stated that it expected that once these houses were built, it would release up to 10 000 rental properties onto our market—10 000! We are in a really tight situation at the moment, but we are working through it because another 10 000 rental properties will come onto the market.

The opposition seems to think that we live in a little bubble in Western Australia and that we are orphans in this housing crisis. Look outside for five seconds and understand that we are not the only ones, in not only Australia but also the world. Take a look at London, San Francisco or any of the states on the west coast of America—they are in a far deeper housing crisis than we are. If members opposite looked up from Twitter for five seconds, they would see that we are not orphaned in this. What we have that is very different from what those places have is a housing minister who is committed and passionate and who comes up with things that members opposite could not think of in their wildest dreams to try to alleviate the housing issues that we have in Western Australia. I seriously hope that when we put up other options for alleviating the housing shortage, the opposition abandons its mindset of opposing everything because it did not come up with it. This housing minister has come up with the most innovative and interesting ways to address the housing crisis in Western Australia and he should be commended. Really, members opposite have picked on the wrong guy, because he is the one who is delivering.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Ms M.J. Davies
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle
Ms M. Beard (*Teller*)

Noes (45)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Mr G. Baker
Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L. Dalton
Ms D.G. D'Anna
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms E.L. Hamilton

Ms M.J. Hammat
Ms J.L. Hanns
Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr H.T. Jones
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms E.J. Kelsbie
Ms A.E. Kent
Mr P. Lilburne
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael
Mr K.J.J. Michel

Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson
Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Ms J.J. Shaw

Ms R.S. Stephens
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.