

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Motion

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its failure to address the housing crisis, resulting in a shortage of affordable homes, an increase in homelessness and a lack of long-term solutions for Western Australians.

It is quite clear after eight years of Labor in Western Australia that we have a housing crisis that is all the government's own making; it is a housing crisis that the Minister for Housing clearly owns. As a state, Western Australia has been blessed with a thriving economy fuelled by resources, innovation and expertise, but there is a glaring contradiction between the wealth that the state has generated and the basic needs of its people. It is fair to say that in a state as prosperous as ours, it is unacceptable to see such poor outcomes for families struggling to find a safe and affordable place to call home—yet this is a reality for thousands of Western Australians today and a reality that Labor has allowed to grow worse under its watch. Access to housing is a right and not a commodity, yet access to social housing, rentals, home ownership and affordable housing has never been more difficult. Western Australians have been confronted by record levels of homelessness, scarce rentals, skyrocketing rents, massive price increases and home build times stretching into years. Hundreds of thousands of once financially secure families have been plunged into mortgage stress.

However, what is astounding about these facts is that this government has had every opportunity to address these issues and provide meaningful assistance to the community. Between 2009 and 2017, the former Barnett Liberal government received \$21.7 billion in GST grants and \$30.9 billion in iron ore royalties. Since 2017, the current Labor government has received \$40.3 billion in GST grants courtesy of changes made under the federal coalition government and \$65 billion in iron ore royalties courtesy of surging global iron ore prices. That is \$52.6 billion in revenue under the former Liberal government, compared with over \$105 billion in revenue under the Labor government. What does this government have to show for its wealth? We have heard the promises and that it is pulling every lever. Time and time again, Labor has claimed that it is committed to tackling this housing crisis that it has owned under its watch. We have heard about targets for new homes. There is no shortage of press releases, programs for affordable housing and schemes to tackle homelessness, but words are not enough when you are living in your car. The reality is that Labor has had every opportunity to deliver on those promises and has failed. We continue to see sky-high rents, a lack of available properties and families being pushed further to the margins.

Let us be clear that this is not just about statistics and numbers on a page; it is about real people. It is about the single mother forced to live in her car, the young couple who work tirelessly and save diligently, yet the dream of owning their own home is slipping further and further out of reach, and seniors who should be enjoying their golden years but are instead being forced into an uncertain rental market in which security is out of reach.

Labor's record is littered with delays, bureaucratic red tape and a distinct lack of urgency. We are seeing talk of these levers being pulled only now. It has had years to address a shortfall in public and affordable housing. Instead, the waiting list for social housing continues to grow while emergency accommodation is stretched to breaking point. The government's reliance on short-term measures and half-hearted policy initiatives has left us with a crisis that is affecting every corner of our community.

In 2017, when WA Labor took office, it spent the first four years selling valuable state housing stock. In fact, in the first four years, WA Labor made more money from selling public housing than was spent on building new homes. There was \$218 million worth of public housing stock sold, while only \$148 million was invested. By comparison, that is less than Tasmania spent on new public housing in that time. Tasmania's population sits at around 570 000 people compared with almost three million people in Western Australia. I remind those on the other side of the house that in seven years—this has been recently updated—Labor added 114 homes to the social housing stock. I understand it is about 400 now. The figure of 114 was from earlier this year and was about providing 1.3 homes a month. By contrast, the previous Liberal government increased total housing stock by 4 957 dwellings from 2008 to 2017, which was an average of around 51 homes a month. That is across eight years.

Western Australia's private rental vacancy continues to sit at a decade low level. We heard the Minister for Housing boast about vacancy rates in Parliament today. It was recorded in May to be 0.5 per cent, reaching a 44-year low of 0.4 per cent in March. We understand that a balanced market is between 0.25 per cent and 3.5 per cent, which we are still well below. The cost of median rent of \$650 in Perth is up from \$450 in 2021, meaning that families are stretching their budgets to a breaking point and simply cannot afford incredibly high rental prices.

We have seen policy failures as well. G.J. Garner Homes in Perth, a brand of RPH Australia Pty Ltd, was the third builder to collapse in a week last November. This highlighted the scale of the problem that was continuing a pattern from the 2022–23 financial year in which three builders and smaller subcontractors became insolvent every week—a total of 145 companies over 12 months. That is more than twice the 60 building sector insolvencies in

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2024]

p5186b-5206a

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Mr John Carey

the 2020–21 financial year. The builders support facility announced three days into the new year took five months to get underway. The levers we hear are being pulled are certainly very slow in implementation. The mismanagement of the scheme has contributed to the demise of local building companies, including Osborne Park-based Start Right Homes, which unfortunately was put into the hands of CRS Insolvency Services in early April, leaving 24 homes unfinished. Just weeks later, Perth builders Collier Homes was placed into liquidation after more than 60 years in operation, which was devastating news.

Mr Janssen, chairman of the Home Builders Action Group, highlighted the delay in the state government policy contributing to the plight of hundreds of Western Australians who were left in limbo. In April this year Mr Janssen stated —

The No Interest Loans Scheme announced in January has still not made a single loan and unless the Government realises and acts to combat the difficulty confronting small to medium builders as a result of well intentioned but wrong-headed stimulus grants, HBAG fears there will be many more collapses impacting many more families.

As I said, this scheme announced three days into the new year took around five months to get underway. There was no urgency at all. Just 13 out of 46 home loan applications to help struggling builders to complete homes were finally approved as of 28 May, representing \$2 million worth of loans to complete 34 properties.

Then we had the saga surrounding Nicheliving. Two months later, the Leader of the Opposition highlighted that Nicheliving had left hundreds of homes unfinished and tradies had not been paid, with the company trading insolvent. Kathy Ellis was just one devastated customer who signed a contract in 2020. We have heard the story of her plight and that of many of the other 200 customers who were left in limbo, spiralling into financial hardship and emotional turmoil, with some forced to live in caravans while their dream home was unfinished and empty. We finally heard last week that the state government had stepped in to bring peace of mind to those families, but it is deeply concerning how long it has taken this government to act. It has been deeply unfair on those families and it raises questions about what they have had to endure for years before they have finally seen an end to what must have been unimaginable.

The Housing Industry Association's executive director, Michael McGowan, was reported by ABC News as welcoming the announcement, but he took aim at the government for not pursuing the directors for the cost of completing unfinished homes. He also said it damaged the integrity of builders who were doing the right thing. I have heard from many across the building industry, including clients who had mixed feelings and certainly welcomed the uncertainty being addressed by this decision, while recognising the role that Nicheliving plays and the fact that it is getting off scot-free with this sweetheart deal. I quote Mr McGowan —

Many have sold houses and other assets to keep their businesses afloat as they navigated the challenges of material and labour increases and pulled out all stops to get their customers into their new homes.

That is something we have not seen in the double standard that was provided to Nicheliving. We on this side of the house welcome the certainty that has been provided to those customers. However, why did it take the government so long? Why was there such a different approach to Nicheliving when we have seen so many builders that have done the right thing and supported the rigorous approval processes effectively go to the wall?

We have also seen a failure by the government to ensure the supply of new homes. Earlier this month the Urban Development Institute of Australia claimed in *The West Australian* that only \$110 million of the proposed \$420 million infrastructure program had been committed by the Cook Labor government. It stated that new estates were oversubscribed and were struggling to meet demand, with lot availability dropping to below the records seen in 2006. The UDIA WA report found that the state government could unlock residential land and boost housing supply by around 90 000 homes in three key areas, including the north west, north east and southern corridors. The *Growth areas infrastructure requirements report* identified the need for new wastewater pump stations and trunk mains, power substations and feeder networks, and intersection and road upgrades. Tanya Steinbeck, chief executive of UDIA, stated —

All forms of supply, in both greenfield and infill locations, are urgently needed to meet the growing and evolving needs of our population and provide relief to a market in a critical state.

Last week the Cook Labor government finally announced land on Perth's southern and northern urban fringe had been released in a last-minute attempt to look like it was boosting housing supply. I welcome the announcement of 600 hectares and 6 000 residential lots, but it is no surprise that, like everything this government does, it is too little, too late, and in this case it was announced only in response to an election. This government's record in housing is appalling. It has taken the government almost eight years to realise that there is a housing crisis. Talking about pulling every lever is not enough for Western Australians who are trying to get into their home and are living in their cars. WA has a chronic shortage of vacant land and homes. The lack of transparency and secrecy continues with the Cook government refusing to say how many people are now on the social housing waiting list. It now

claims there is double counting, and it is impossible to tell without a manual review of the files. Figures provided in March this year indicated that over 35 000 were on the waitlist; that is an increase from 34 505 in November 2023. This issue is compounded by a minister who refuses to prioritise the maintenance of stock—something all members in this place are aware of in our electorates. One of my constituents and his family have been forced to sleep in their living room for the past two years due to cracked ceilings in the bedrooms and increased challenges associated with mould in their home. I might add that this is an individual who is grateful to be able to access a Homeswest property, but he is frustrated by the lack of attention to maintenance. He is worried for his children’s health, so Mr Thern-Soe and his two children are not sleeping in their bedrooms. The minister’s response had the usual excuses and failed to acknowledge that WA Labor has been in government for almost eight years. It is the most resourced government this state has ever seen by sheer number in this house, but also through those significant royalties to this state.

Sadly, disruptive behaviour in neighbourhoods is being raised more frequently with my office, and Hon Steve Martin has raised these issues as well. The minister is burying his head in the sand if he truly believes that this is not a state problem, or a responsibility that he can have some influence over. The minister obviously does not visit neighbourhoods that experience unacceptable behaviour from tenants in state housing. I have raised several cases with the minister through letters and grievances and have received the same rhetoric. The minister always says that Communities works closely with tenants and external support agencies to manage tenancy issues and support tenants to sustain their tenancy when possible, and that disruptive behaviour complaints need to be substantiated with corroborating evidence to prove that an ongoing or unreasonable nuisance or disruption has occurred.

These residents are seeking help, and this response as an explanation of why the three-strike policy is not being enacted is a great frustration. We are hearing about residents living in nightmare situations. The minister is aware of one case in which the resident has experienced over 50 incidents, and this explanation certainly falls well short of an appropriate response, given the amount of stress suffered as a result of the behaviour that we are seeing from some disruptive neighbours.

The government is failing to act and ensure that those who are fortunate enough to be housed are being respectful and considerate. We are hearing about abusive notes being put in letterboxes, significant threats to neighbours’ safety and, obviously, real challenges with living arrangements as well. People are literally living in fear in their homes. There are homeless individuals and families living in cars, couch surfing or living on the streets who would love a roof over their heads. It is insulting to residents who simply want to live a peaceful life. They tell me how hard they have worked to own their own home. In most recent cases, the residents are retired. They have provided CCTV footage and a huge body of evidence to ensure that some action is taken. As I have said, many say that they are frightened. It is simply not good enough. One individual who raised this with me is a fly-in fly-out worker. He said that he is always very fearful when he has to go to work and leave his wife at home because of the threats that he has received. The minister is aware of that situation.

I refer to vacant properties and the issue of maintenance. My colleague in the other house asked a question and was advised that there are 22 vacant properties in my local electorate, just as an example. Again, we hear excuses about that. We know that the people working for the department of housing do an extraordinary job. We know that they are doing more with less. The local office does the best it can with a budget that is stretched to provide nothing but bandaidd measures to old properties. I will read an email that I received from a constituent who lives adjacent to state housing and endures constant disruption to his life in that neighbourhood. According to my notes, he wrote —

“I do have a question for you, if you drive along Marine Terrace from the Jetty to our house at 279 and look on the right-hand side there is a total of 7 plots of land, I believe these are all Homes West plots, 3 definitely are as the roofs got blown off. If you drive round the back of Hobson, Moylan way, Heston and Willmott there are a further 8 plots sitting there.

Why is Homes West allowed to bank land that is worth millions of dollars in the middle of a housing crisis.

If these are all homes west plots, that’s 15 plots, my neighbour’s department house has been vacant for 7 months, 16 properties, and we have two homes west houses opposite us ready for demolition, so currently, vacant that makes 18 properties available within 5 roads. If they are doing this everywhere across Perth you could solve a lot of the housing crisis immediately, It doesn’t make sense.

Especially annoying as my daughter and her partner will be homeless in a month’s time in Perth as they cannot find accommodation. This is so wrong.”

The email goes on to talk about the challenges with and observations made about vacant properties.

As I have said, WA’s private rental vacancy rate continues to sit at the lowest rate in a decade. The median rental rate in Perth is \$650 a week, up from \$450 in 2021, meaning that many families are stretching their budgets to ensure that they have a roof over their head, and they are at breaking point.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2024]

p5186b-5206a

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Mr John Carey

At the very desperate end of the housing market, Western Australians are being forced into homelessness. WA Alliance to End Homelessness data shows the number of people sleeping rough has more than doubled between January 2021 and August 2024—another stain on this government—increasing from 510 to over 1 070 individuals. The rise in working people who are seeking assistance from homelessness services is particularly concerning and is a stark indicator of the cost of the housing crisis.

In September, *The West Australian* highlighted the plight of a single mother who was given the name of Sarah and her seven-year-old daughter. Sarah, a former receptionist in a medical practice who is now unemployed, and her daughter had been turned away from Perth shelters that were either full or adult-only. Sarah was broken and issued an urgent plea, of which I am sure the minister is very well aware, for more crisis support for children. Sarah was evicted from a private rental after the owners decided to sell the property. After one night at a friend's house and several days at a motel, she secured a single room in a share house for \$250 a week with no kitchen or laundry facilities. Sarah said that her daughter's medical condition and developmental delays had worsened as a result of the unimaginable stress and poor hygiene challenges caused by this situation. Sarah has been on the public waiting list for 18 months but has been unable to get onto the priority list. Sarah said more support was needed for applicants on the public housing waitlist while they waited. As of July, the medium wait time was 122 weeks for the general waitlist and 71 weeks for the priority list. Sarah finished by saying —

“You don't have a power bill when you're homeless so a power bill credit's no help —

She said that the free zoo ticket is only going to be a distraction. She continued —

I know they're building houses, but they need to do something now ... this is the new norm and it shouldn't be.”

It absolutely should not be. We on this side of the house have been arguing that. This government has now been in power for almost eight years. It is the most resourced government that the state has ever seen and it owns a housing crisis.

I refer to homelessness in the regions, and I am sure that other members will be touching on this as well. The situation in the regions is even more dire and is being ignored by a government that is solely focused on Perth. Not-for-profit housing advocacy group Just Home Margaret River confirmed in May that it would be shutting down its information and referral service at the end of August due to a lack of funding. It had received absolutely no help from the state government in its seven years of existence and relied on funding by the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River and Lotterywest. This service is a great loss to the community, and the only support services now available to these vulnerable people are in Bunbury. Just Home Margaret River advised that it will continue to lobby for the region's housing needs and participate in the local taskforce, also working towards the same goal. No new homes have been completed and no social housing has been spot purchased in the Augusta–Margaret River shire since 2021.

I quote Shire President Julia Meldrum, who presented a regional perspective to a panel assembled by Shelter WA during this year's Homelessness Week, dedicated to raising awareness of homelessness and finding solutions. She said —

“Augusta–Margaret River is perceived to be a rich or affluent region, but the reality is quite different for some of our community members ... Within the Shire, we currently have around 150 people homeless and another 600 on the brink of homelessness and experiencing real financial stress ... Homelessness is often hidden and we're told around Australia, only 9% of homeless people sleep on the streets. I think a lot of people would be surprised how many individuals and families in our community—due to varying circumstances—are being forced to couch surf or sleeping in their cars.”

The ABC again highlighted the plight of 65-year-old Cheryl Rowe in a report this month. Cheryl has been homeless for two years. She moved from New Zealand to Western Australia's south west with her partner of 35 years, Peter. For the first five years, they lived in a rental. The house was then put on the market and they were unable to get another rental. The wet winter has taken its toll on Ms Rowe. She works as a cleaner. She has given up hope of finding an affordable rental in town, where the median rental rate for a house is \$680 a week.

Another factor of the housing crisis under the Cook Labor government is the challenge of a skilled workforce. Again, it is an issue of this government's making that there are insufficient workers in the construction industry. One of the then Premier's first decisions in 2017 was to slash the skilled migration list and remove Perth as a region for the regional sponsored migration scheme. At the time, the Premier boasted that overseas workers could no longer be fast-tracked into bricklaying, tiling or electrician jobs. What a quote! The government is not able to supply and support our skilled migration workers. The impact of that decision saw WA skilled migration fall by 51 per cent in the first three years of the WA Labor government. The reduced labour pool has contributed to a slowdown in dwelling completion rates. WA was required to build at least 24 000 homes annually under the federal government's national target of 1.2 million dwellings by 2029.

A recent Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report on the building sector found that WA will not reach this goal at current dwelling completion rates. It pointed out that between 2014 and 2016, WA exceeded this target, with 32 000 dwellings delivered in 2015 under a Liberal government. Last year, close to 17 000 homes were built across the state, up from about 15 000 the year prior. According to the BCEC, the sector's ability to respond to demand was hampered by a lack of capacity in recent years. The report states —

Rising construction costs, a financially precarious contracting model, and the sustained leakage of skilled construction trades workers have all conspired to erode the productive capacity of WA's building and construction industry ...

Industry bodies, including the Master Builders Association of Australia, estimate that WA will need up to 50 000 more construction workers by the end of 2026. Joe White, president of the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia at the time, explored the issue of housing supply-side challenges, stating —

We are not building enough new homes to meet demand.

In the year to December there were about 16,800 private dwelling completions, which is a shortfall of about 15 000 homes when compared to population growth. This is well below the 15-year average of 22,000 and the 25,000 required under the National Housing Accord.

In conclusion, the housing crisis in WA is a profound challenge. We know that it impacts every sector in this state. It impacts health, education and our ability to support businesses. Most importantly, it has a profound impact on individuals: the challenges experienced by Western Australia's working poor, who in some circumstances are living in cars; the growth in homelessness that we are seeing across the state; the vulnerable; and victims and individuals who are experiencing family and domestic violence, who are also deeply impacted by the housing crisis.

Over the past eight years, the Cook government has demonstrated a clear inability to prioritise the needs of Western Australians over bureaucracy and inefficiency. Despite record revenues, the extraordinary wealth and resources that this government has had and the ability to pull every lever and deliver on those outcomes, we have seen little delivered on the ground.

The broken promises, lack of urgency and bureaucratic roadblocks have resulted in a growing crisis that affects every aspect of people's lives—from financial stress to homelessness, from broken dreams to diminished hope. Housing is not a privilege reserved for the fortunate; it is a basic human right. It is a cornerstone of stability, security and opportunity. Without affordable housing, families cannot thrive, children do not have the chance to succeed and communities cannot grow. It is time we had leadership that recognises the importance of housing and is willing to recognise that this is an important issue. We need to see an increase in the supply of housing across all sectors—public, affordable and private. We need to cut through the red and green tape that has held back development and empower those willing to invest in Western Australia's future. We need a connection between a thriving economy and the wellbeing of its people. That is what we are committed to. We are committed to building the homes we need, to ensuring families have a safe place to live and to delivering real solutions that meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. The people of Western Australia deserve more than platitudes. They deserve more than commentary from a government that is apparently pulling every lever on the one hand but on the other quite clearly failing the people of Western Australia at a time when it has every opportunity to do more. The Cook Labor government owns the housing crisis and it has not addressed the issues.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member for Dawesville, just a couple of decibels lower please. Thank you.

Ms L. METTAM: This government owns the housing crisis. It is appalling that after eight years, such incredible resources and numbers in this place and an ability to implement any measure, we just have words and promises for the future instead of deliverables and a legacy that should mean we have better outcomes for Western Australians. The figures related to the housing crisis that I pointed to today are another stain on the Cook Labor government. Western Australians quite clearly deserve much better.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.38 pm]: I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for moving this excellent motion —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its failure to address the housing crisis, resulting in a shortage of affordable homes, an increase in homelessness and a lack of long-term solutions for Western Australians.

Today in question time the Minister for Housing was asked genuine questions about housing and rent, yet managed to change the subject and give some sort of spray on anything that came to his mind. He tried to give the Leader of the Liberal Party a spray.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2024]

p5186b-5206a

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Peter Rundle; Dr David Honey; Acting Speaker; Mr John Carey

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not taking interjections, Madam Acting Speaker. I am certainly very keen to talk about housing today. A pattern has developed. As far as I am concerned, the people of Western Australia deserve genuine answers. Time after time, we hear the Minister for Housing say, “I’m pulling every lever—there’s no two ways about it.” Unfortunately, the statistics do not support that. This time a year ago, Perth was in the midst of a housing crisis with a touch more than 2 300 houses, 1 503 units and 1 403 vacant blocks for sale. In August this year, there were fewer than 2 000 houses for sale. It is even worse for renters.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I am sorry to interrupt you, but for the purposes of posterity, it would be of some assistance to provide a reference for those figures, especially to Hansard.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. These are general statistics that are well known in our community. For purposes of Hansard, I am happy to provide them.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order, Acting Speaker. The minister will have ample opportunity to raise points, rather than continually interrupting the member for Roe.

Mr J.N. Carey: Maybe he could actually cite where he is getting the statistics from.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): That might enable the minister to respond more effectively. Member for Roe, continue please.

Debate Resumed

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will certainly cite all sorts of things, including this document from 4WDL, which comprises a group of councils in my electorate—namely, the Shire of West Arthur, the Shire of Dumbleyung, the Shire of Lake Grace, the Shire of Woodanilling and the Shire of Williams. Those shires would like the minister’s attention because they have a very good housing project they would like to get up and running. This is a genuine document. If the minister says that he will pull every lever, he needs to have a meeting with this group of councils. They have a great track record; I am sure the member for Central Wheatbelt and the member for Moore are well and truly aware of it.

In what I would like to call the heyday of royalties for regions, things were delivered in the bush because the money was there to make a difference, there was local decision-making and our development commissions worked with local governments to deliver quality projects on the ground. The 4WDL, which comprises various shires, was established in 2007. It has a longstanding track record of delivering collaborative projects. For example, in mid-2010, 4WDL delivered 47 independent living units as part of a “well-aged persons’ housing strategy project”. As the member for Central Wheatbelt well and truly knows, that was replicated across the entire wheatbelt region. That is the sort of high-quality project that is of high importance to our regional constituents. The funny part about it is that these local governments have done the work on this two-year project. I am happy to leave a copy of this document with the minister so that he can see the work that these local governments have done. I hope he has a meeting with them in the not-too-distant future at which he shows genuine intent.

The minister talks about pulling every lever. This is his opportunity to shine. A lot of the work has been done for the minister. This two-year project was driven by significant inquiry and demand from various farming, industry, government and business sectors seeking access to available housing to accommodate key workers. Phase 1 of the key worker housing analysis incorporates inception, housing demand and cost data, key worker housing needs analysis, housing lease and purchase models and investment and development models. The local governments have done two years’ of work. They have provided a high-estimate dwelling demand for 2023–31, with the total number of public key worker houses required for high-estimate dwelling demand at 107. The conservative dwelling demand for the same period is 49 houses. They have done the work for the minister and his department. All they need now is a hearing and state contribution. They are prepared to put in, but they need state contribution.

Mr J.N. Carey: Have they made a request to meet me?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, they have.

Mr J.N. Carey: As you know, I’ve met with a number of you with constituents. I do that all the time and I do it respectfully. For you to bring that without any knowledge is not particularly helpful.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will happily organise for them to meet with the minister.

Mr J.N. Carey: I meet with a number, with the member of the opposition there; I have done it with a number of you across the chamber.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will happily bring that group of local governments to meet the minister; they would love that opportunity.

It is quite disappointing in a lot of ways. The Shire of Esperance has a list of priority projects. It put to the Minister for Housing a \$7.9 million project for Esperance key worker accommodation, with 20 units and potentially three Government Regional Officers' Housing sites. The shire is willing to supply the land and commit \$1.5 million, but the state does not want a bar of it. Our regional shires are crying out for assistance from the state government, which states that it is pulling every lever but does not want to take up opportunities that involve local governments contributing money and land and undertaking the earthworks. I have spoken about Munglinup GROH accommodation many times. The Shire of Ravensthorpe was keen to get principal accommodation. It was happy to help out by donating the block and doing the groundwork. These are examples of local governments that are keen to help out.

With my shadow Minister for Education hat on, I want to focus on GROH accommodation because it is key in regional areas for the likes of teachers. As I said today to the Minister for Education, I support his department's strategy to place teachers and principals from the metropolitan area into the regions, with the guarantee that they will regain their permanency in the metropolitan area. As I said today, funnily enough, sometimes teachers and principals enjoy being out in the regions, member for Albany. The member for Mirrabooka knows all about that, growing up in Broomehill.

Ms M.J. Hammat: It is the centre of the universe!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is right. Sometimes teachers, principals and their families actually enjoy being out in the bush with their kids growing up playing tennis tournaments, doing little athletics and all those things that make part of growing up in the regions such a good thing. A big part of it for teachers and aspiring principals is that if they go to the bush, they want decent housing. I am curious because the Minister for Education did not provide further information about what is going on with housing for teachers and aspiring principals and how it will work. In its recent submission to the regional education strategy, the State School Teachers' Union of WA stated that the lack of housing, poor quality housing, the high cost of housing and deficiencies in home safety and security are significant barriers to attracting and retaining teachers, school psychologists and school leaders in regional WA. Teachers and other critical workers in our regions want and deserve secure, safe, comfortable and affordable housing, especially if they are bringing their family with them, as I just pointed out. The State School Teachers' Union of WA recently surveyed its members who currently, or have in the past, lived in Government Regional Officers' Housing about their experiences with the scheme. The stories they shared about GROH included break-ins, lack of maintenance, unprofessional and disorganised treatment when dealing with the department, delays in house availability, lack of minimum security, no hot water for months, air conditioners not working in the north of the state and in summer months, broken septic systems and no floor coverings—the list goes on.

This government needs to address not only the lack of GROH properties, but when the houses are made available to our teachers or critical workers. They must be up to standard and maintenance wait times must also be addressed. There are 530 GROH properties sitting vacant in the regions and the question must be asked as to why. Why are there so many houses out there sitting vacant? I know even some of my local shire presidents and the like are mystified as to why there might be seven, eight or nine GROH properties sitting empty in their township.

From personal experience, let us say that if a teacher is dealing with a domestic violence situation or a separation, but wants to stay teaching in the community, the challenge of getting them into a GROH property is very difficult. This is not necessarily a matter for the minister's department, but it could be partially to do with the section in the Department of Education that deals with it. It is incredible that there are seven or eight empty houses out there in the town and when a teacher wants to stay in the town or move into that situation, it is a real hard yakka trying to break through the bureaucracy to actually provide a safe environment. That is the scenario. I am curious as to how many GROH properties the government has purchased in the regions in the last four years. I am curious as to how many of them have been vacant for more than a month, or more than three months. How many have been decommissioned and are no longer habitable, or being used for something other than staff housing? As I quoted before from the Department of Education's *2022–23 annual report*, there were 24 664 teaching staff in WA, including principals and deputies. As at 31 March 2024, there were 5 286 houses in the GROH portfolio. As I said, the State School Teachers' Union has identified it. The minister has identified that we need quality teachers and principals in the regions; I support him in that. I want to see this government improve the standard and availability of GROH housing.

I come to some of the young teachers who have called me over the years. I remember one in Fitzroy Crossing who was being absolutely terrorised by the locals. Some of the things that were happening to her were quite frightening. In the end, I spoke to her mother and grandmother, who said, "Get out of there." She loved the community, and teaching in that community, but the security was not up to it. The issue of safety was not being handled by the department, so she had to go. On the way out with her dad, she had to go to Port Hedland to get the smashed windows

on her Prado fixed as well. How do we expect our young teachers to go out to the regions to do the job when they fear for their safety every night? How about an example from Mullewa a few years ago. This person went home to the south west to spend the school holidays with her parents. When she got there, everything had been taken out of the house and the whole thing was smashed. These are some of the challenges we have out there. Security is also an issue for our young teaching staff.

As I wrap up, I will talk about some of our local governments, which is appropriate because, obviously, we are in the local government legislation phase at the moment. The weight of the housing crisis is sitting fairly and squarely on the shoulders of our local governments and our local community groups. Many local governments are working with their communities to improve housing in their towns with little or no help from this government. The Shire of Broomehill–Tambellup is working closely with volunteer organisations like the Tambellup Cropping Group to secure worker accommodation in their town.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The Shire of Katanning is developing a housing plan and working closely with the local abattoir to secure the construction of a worker's camp to ease the pressure on available houses and rentals across the town. I will say that Labor's announcement last week of 13 new social housing dwellings by the end of 2024 was welcomed; I make a note of that. The Shire of Kent's strategic plan comments were that increased housing of any capacity is beneficial to the community, encouraging of new residents and services, and is developing a long-term housing and accommodation strategy. The Shire of Wagin is in communication with a large windfarm project to deliver worker accommodation for more than 100 expected employees, which is something that the town can use at the end of the project.

As I said today in my contribution about local government, some big renewable developments are coming up and our local governments are really challenged in dealing with some of the issues—not only environmental issues, but also housing issues, with workers coming into the town and its surrounds. From my perspective, I look forward to support from the minister. I am very happy to bring those councils of the 4WDL to meet the Minister for Housing. I congratulate the Shires of West Arthur, Dumbleyung, Lake Grace, Woodanilling and Williams. They have spent two years and lots of dollars on consultancy, putting the figures together, ascertaining what is needed in their towns, and they have a quality project. They need some support. From my perspective, I am looking to meet with the minister and his department for their support and let us see whether we can get a good outcome for those towns. That is what we need.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Is that to be tabled? No? That is okay. Thank you.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [4.58 pm]: I rise to join this excellent motion by the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is the member for Vasse. I start at the outset with something that I am sick and tired of hearing this minister say, and that I am sick and tired of hearing being parroted in this chamber, which is that this minister and this government's changes to the planning laws have done anything whatsoever to increase housing supply in Western Australia. They have done nothing whatsoever. This minister in particular, but also this government, loves spin, rhetoric and using media contacts to get its stories out. What it hates is objective facts. I have here in my hand the objective facts, and I am seeking under standing order 86 to table this graph at the end of my contribution so that other members in this place can have a look at the facts. This is not the government's puerile spin to satisfy its developer mates who make donations to it; these are actual facts—the number of residential approvals since 2000. I ask the member for Cockburn to look at that graph. It is a graph of his government's failures.

Point of Order

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I think what the member wants to do under standing order 86 is incorporate it into *Hansard*, not table it, but to do so you would need to satisfy yourself, Madam Acting Speaker, as to the source of those figures.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Thank you, member for Landsdale. I am advised by the clerks that it can be tabled for the remainder of the day.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much. Have a look at that. It is a graph of the government's failures. What a lie all government members are perpetrating on the people of Western Australia when they claim that their planning law changes have made any difference whatsoever. The simple fact is that the planning laws and approvals by local governments in this state were never, ever meaningful constraints on the number of residences approved for building. To wit, the government is yet to achieve the number of residences built as far back as 2001—that was even before the former Liberal government brought in the original limited development assessment panel powers. The government gutted the planning laws during COVID under the so-called COVID emergency powers, which the government said would be temporary. It has totally and utterly removed councils from the planning laws. What has it achieved? It is an absolute failure.

In 2013–14 there were 30 031 residential building approvals. In 2014–15, there were 31 805 approvals. That was under the old system, with all the things that this government—you people in this chamber, you people in the Labor Party—said were the things that were holding things back, the old planning laws. That is an utter and total lie. If members repeat that in this place, they are knowingly repeating an utter and total lie. Those laws were never a constraint. What is the best that the government has achieved during its time in government? In 2020–21 there were 26 886 residential building approvals, when the government had its emergency powers in place. Since then it has gone down. Last year there were 17 330 approvals. Furthermore, we have been told by the Minister for Planning and the Cook Labor government that in fact higher density housing and apartments will be the solution to the problem.

Again, I will table this graph; I invite members to have a look at it. Proportionately, fewer apartments are being built now than at almost any time since 2001. What did the government do? It changed the planning laws so that a handful of billionaires could build apartments for millionaires in the western suburbs. That is what it did.

Mr D.A.E. Scaife interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The member can laugh if he thinks his government’s performance is a laughing matter, but it is no laughing matter that this lie has been perpetrated on this Parliament and on the people of Western Australia. Members opposite may get great salve by swanning off to their fundraising functions with their developers. They will pat them on the head and say, “Thanks for being so compliant. Thanks for doing everything we wanted.” The truth is that the people who have paid the price for these are the people of Western Australia.

As I said, I seek to table that for the remainder of the day and, as was pointed out, I would like to have it incorporated into *Hansard* under standing order 86.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

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

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member referred to standing order 86, which allows incorporation by leave and your permission, Acting Speaker, for things to be included in *Hansard*. I am not sure that you have ruled on that aspect. I understand you have let him leave it on the table for the remainder of the day, but the second part of his request I would not grant leave to. But in the end, it is the Speaker’s ruling, of course.

Debate Resumed

The ACTING SPEAKER: The question is: is leave granted to incorporate this into *Hansard*? There is a dissenting voice, so unfortunately, member for Cottesloe, leave is not granted.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not mind; I am not fussed. Let me tell members, I will be distributing this far and wide and I will be making it clear.

As I said, it is an absolute lie by this government that the planning laws have anything whatsoever to do with the number of residences being approved for building in Western Australia. What I have demonstrated with that graph and that data, which came from the parliamentary library, is that in fact a vastly greater number of approvals were being granted under the old planning system. This Minister for Planning comes into this place and says that that is what is holding up approvals; it has nothing whatsoever to do with it.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do not try to justify your gutting of the planning laws by saying it will do —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do not come into this place and try to justify your gutting of the planning laws by saying that it is anything whatsoever to do with approvals. As I have proven, ipso facto, the facts speak for themselves in this matter, and the facts are that under the old system —

Mr J.N. Carey: You are bonkers!

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister can sit there and be smug about this. He comes into this chamber and says all sorts of things, but the simple fact is that there was a vastly greater number of approvals under the old system.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister, I understand that you are a failure. You are a failed minister. You have failed.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe! Because we are a little emotional, I think if the member for Cottesloe could direct all his comments through me instead of to the chamber, it would be greatly appreciated.

Dr D.J. HONEY: He is a failure of a minister who has utterly failed in his portfolio and used a ruse that is utterly and provably false. The simple fact is that all the changes he has made to the planning laws have made no difference whatsoever. He can come into this place and say that he is doing certain things, but he should not pretend that anything he has done to the planning laws will make any material difference. In fact, they have not, as I pointed out with this graph. Have a look at the ratios. In fact, there is a smaller percentage of apartments being built, so the minister should not come into this place and mislead us by saying that. It is an utter joke.

In relation to the impact of the minister's failures on the state of Western Australia, our state is a massive economy and we require employees right across the state. We have seen, in our regional areas in particular, the utter and total failure of this government to provide adequate housing for workers, so that regional economies and our whole state economy can progress. We can go through that, but the lack of accommodation in regional areas is the single greatest handbrake on the development of our regional economies and, as a consequence, on the state of Western Australia. We need that workforce in regional areas to carry out all the work that is done and that pays the bills in Perth, in large part. We need workers to build those homes and temporary housing for those workers to live in while they are building them. Without housing, we cannot have that development. We have seen this government fail completely and absolutely to provide the worker accommodation that we need across the state.

It is quite fascinating; I hear this minister talk about the various things he will do to deliver housing. We see no constraint whatsoever on other organisations such as mining companies and others building accommodation, but this minister is incapable of building accommodation. The former coalition government created the first worker accommodation village in Karratha. That was something that this government ought to have replicated, so that we had that critical workforce in the regional areas. As I have said in this place before, the biggest constraint in those regional communities, in fact on any activity, is getting the workforce there. We need workers in those areas. As I said, there does not appear to be any constraint on organisations doing this. The Onslow workers camp was built in record time. It is beautiful accommodation that was built in a short period with over 250 rooms and 500 allocated to the larger Ken's Bore project. They are beautiful residences that many Western Australians who cannot have a house to live in would dream of living in. A mining company can do that, yet this minister is completely incapable of delivering. What we get from this minister, however, is plenty of promises.

Let us look no further than the Kalbarri accommodation that was supposed to be built for workers to assist the rebuilding task after cyclone Seroja. It took this government more than a year to announce that it would build a workers' village to house the workers needed to rebuild the damaged properties in the region. Just a year after making the announcement on what was obviously required, the government announced it had chosen Petra Westkey as the successful proponent to build and operate in Kalbarri. Some months later, the Minister for Housing announced that the government had stopped those negotiations due to problems. We cannot blame the company's failure, but it seems that other organisations, and mining companies in particular, can carry out those negotiations, choose builders and get their projects done in a timely manner, and this minister cannot. It beggars belief that he could not have actually achieved that. If he had engaged one of the mining companies to manage it, perhaps we would have seen it being built. Then we saw the government walk away from its promise to deliver the workers' accommodation, with the minister hoping nobody would notice.

A press release from the minister published on 28 August 2023 states that the state government commitment was apparently not to build worker accommodation, but to make suitable land available. That is not what the minister said. In fact, the minister's press release on 16 August 2022 is titled, "Modular housing provider named as preferred proponent for workers accommodation in Kalbarri". In 2022, the minister said that the government was building workers' accommodation, and then in 2023, while trying to put some spin on the complete failure to do that, we see the minister walking away from it saying —

The state government's commitment was to make suitable land available, in consultation with local government, —

Throwing them under the bus —

for workers' accommodation in Kalbarri and we delivered on that commitment.

No, the minister did not. His commitment was to build workers' accommodation and he did not build workers' accommodation in Kalbarri. As I said, the state government issued a registration of interest and so on and got that process going. Three and a half years after the cyclone ravaged the region, there is still no village to house the workers needed to repair the damage and the minister and the government utterly failed to deliver on that commitment. Who paid the price? The people of Kalbarri and the people who live in that region.

The government needs to take responsibility for making sure that we have adequate accommodation for workers in regional areas. It needs to invest in the growth of the state beyond Perth and some of the major mining centres. The government has failed to assist regional towns with their housing problems. It is an extension of its failure on public housing. Today we heard the minister boasting that this government, in heading into eight years, has constructed almost 2 500 houses. He was boasting as though somehow "we have done it!" As I pointed out, the

previous Liberal–National government delivered a 3 500 social housing increase in its term in government. We now have a minister boasting that after almost eight years he has a 400 house increase, saying that this government is doing the job. This government has changed all the planning laws, it is pulling all the levers and doing all it can. After three years, he might have an excuse. After four years he might have an excuse. After heading into eight years and to be in a position with a net increase of 400 social housing is a complete and utter failure. That is a major contributor to our housing and rental crisis, because of the added pressure it puts on the private rental market.

There are the headlines, but I will not have a chance to go through all of these in the detail that I would like, but on 28 March this year was an article by John Flint in *The Sunday Times* headlined, “Labor’s social housing shame: New builds for homeless less than HALF the Barnett government’s last term”. That is the achievement of this government. With all the chest beating, press announcements and bluster in this chamber, and all the attacks on this side, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It is performance that counts. Members can come into this place and make all the announcements they like about all the billions of dollars, but the simple fact is that on any measure, the government has utterly failed. It has failed homeless people and people who are looking for social housing. It has failed the broader community of Western Australia, who are also looking for housing.

If we look at the previous Liberal–National government, we will see that almost half a million people came into the state during that time, yet we did not have the housing crisis or the record low rental and housing vacancies that we see now. We did not see this utterly appalling increase in the cost of housing. This legacy will echo down the generations and that is now that Australia, and Western Australia as part of it, has the least affordable housing in the world. By comparison, we have the minister and other members of the Labor Party coming into this place saying that housing in Western Australia is relatively more affordable than housing on the east coast. That is true, in Sydney and Melbourne.

[Member’s time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is only because their housing is so ludicrously expensive. Even in Western Australia, the price of houses is at least double the sustainable price based on history. Typically, the sustainable price of an average house should be around three and a half times the average household income. In Western Australia it is eight times, and it is probably even higher now. That means that we have a world of pain for people buying houses, many who will never own those homes, and many people will lose their homes because they are spending 40 per cent, 50 per cent or more of their income on housing. The minister should know that mortgage stress is defined as more than 30 per cent of a household income going on housing expense. This will resonate down generations. Here we are, we have a crisis that is utterly and totally at the feet of this state Labor government.

We have a minister who makes various announcements, with \$2.2 billion for 3 300 homes, and making various grand claims. Every time the minister comes out he makes another announcement about even more money as though announcing money delivers homes. I demonstrated through that graph tabled for the remainder of the day that it is clearly an utter failure. The government has not provided those additional homes.

We are seeing unbelievable costs in terms of the government providing houses. An announcement was made of \$2.2 billion for the 3 300 homes, which is nearly a cost of \$700 00 per home. Since then, the government has gone into complete and utter panic. I refer to apartments in Pier Street that the state and federal governments invested in. The arithmetic is pretty straightforward. Along with the federal government, this state government has invested \$129.2 million for 110 apartments. That is almost \$1.2 million per apartment when people in this state—families and people who are employed—are literally living in their cars because they cannot get a residency. This minister, because of his failures and the failures of his government, in desperation, is paying almost \$1.2 million for state housing in that block of apartments. It is clearly just wanton waste. In fact, developers are building affordable apartments in Western Australia for around \$350 000 to \$400 000. How could this minister and this government possibly get themselves into the position of such wanton squandering of public money when so many people are desperate to live in houses?

If the minister does not believe me about these costs, I have here an advertisement for apartments in Westralia Gardens in Rockingham. There is an apartment in a block for \$425 000. I do not have time to show them, but they are beautiful apartments. They are not just some squalid squat for people to live in. People can build apartments for this cost, but this government for some reason has itself on the hook to build \$1.2 million apartments on Pier Street while many people are in the desperate situation of not having housing. The minister can buy apartments in the Blackburne development at the end of Eric Street cheaper than that—those ground floor apartments are around \$800 000.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister is proud of this, is he? He thinks his government should be paying \$1.2 million per apartment when people cannot get apartments in this state and private developers can build and sell them for one-third of that cost. As I said, it is wanton waste of public money. It is sheer panic on the part of this government. It has utterly and totally failed to provide housing for Western Australians.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It has utterly and totally failed, minister, and you are part of a government that has utterly and totally failed, and you should hang your head in shame for what you have done to all those poor people in Western Australia paying massive rents and prices for housing! Even more disturbing are the many thousands who cannot even contemplate getting into housing. It is an inexcusable waste of money! The minister has made big announcements but has not even delivered on that original announcement. Now we are hearing even more grandiose announcements being made.

Mr J.N. Carey: Excuse me, member. I am sincere on this. The member said that the apartments are \$1 million each.

Dr D.J. HONEY: They are just about \$1.2 million.

Mr J.N. Carey: There are 219 apartments, and the cost is —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Only half the apartments, 110 of them, are government apartments. The other half are private. The government has entered into a private arrangement. Is the government paying for the entire lot to be built and giving half of the apartments away for private use? The announcements were very clear, minister.

Mr J.N. Carey: I say this sincerely and respectfully. It is a build-to-rent model in which a community housing provider runs all the complex and obviously gets revenue from affordable —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister, I believe I understand the nature of what it is. The simple fact is that —

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That does not answer anything, minister. The government owns only half those apartments. That is it! It owns only half the apartments. The other half is a private development.

Mr J.N. Carey: That's not true.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Well, minister, then I am intrigued by the public statements and statements released about that.

Mr J.N. Carey: All the apartments are controlled by the community housing provider.

Dr D.J. HONEY: No.

Mr J.N. Carey: It's true, member!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Minister, are those apartments owned by the government or not?

Mr J.N. Carey: The whole complex is owned by the community housing provider.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is not owned by the government. The community housing provider is completely separate, not a government organisation. The original quoted cost for that entire apartment block was, in fact, lower than the subsidy that the government is providing for half those apartments.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will move on, minister. I am happy for him to respond. Can I please move on?

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you. The member for Cottesloe is not taking any further interjections.

Mr T.J. Healy: They are also not taking facts.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Well, I do not think the member or his party like facts!

I do not accept the minister's argument, but even at half the cost, it would be massively overpriced housing for the state of Western Australia.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is interesting that the Minister for Planning appears to have undergone a change—a transition.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Point of Order

Mr J.N. CAREY: Point of order!

Dr D.J. HONEY: Knock yourself out.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance. The member for Cottesloe has misled on the costing. I ask that he correct it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Member for Cottesloe, can you sit for a second? I will just speak to the clerks.

Mr J.N. CAREY: He has deliberately misled the Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, he does not have to withdraw his comments. Member for Cottesloe, you get to have your conversation. You can clarify it during your speaking time.

Debate Resumed

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much. It is very simple. The announcements were very clear that the government is paying for only half those units, and I stand by my calculations

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am happy for the minister to try to spin his way out of his. It is interesting that when this minister was a member of local government —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake!

When the Minister for Housing was a member of local government, it appears that he had a very different view of the world. For example, I refer to an article in *The West Australian* of 10 January 2014 entitled, “Vincent branches out for cooler future”. I do not have time to go through all this in detail. The City of Vincent was going to double its amount of shade. This minister talked about all the great things that he thought were important. He thought it was important to have that urban canopy. What did we see? An article in *The West Australian* of 6 December 2014 was entitled, “Perth not ready to embrace high-density housing”. The article quoted the mayor, as he was, on issues of density around the place. When the government brought in some regulations to improve tree canopy and amenity in suburbs, developers complained, and the minister withdrew the proposal for those regulations within three days. I think they still have not seen the light of day.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am aware of —

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For goodness sake! Can I do a point of order on myself?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, the member for Cottesloe is not accepting interjections. Go ahead.

Dr D.J. HONEY: As part of that, as former mayor he was very keen on openness. An article in *The West Australian* on 16 January 2015, “Register plan for openness” reads —

... Mr Carey plans to create a public register to avoid any perception developers have influenced the planning approval process.

The reality is that, by any measure whatsoever, this government and this minister have utterly and totally failed on housing. They love announcements, they love announcing dollars and they love to make statements that somehow the old planning laws are the cause of the lack of housing. Demonstrably, the data is very clear that it has nothing whatsoever to do with that. It is purely a failure of this Cook Labor government.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [5.30 pm]: I rise to speak to this excellent motion, brought to the house by the member for Vasse, which states —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its failure to address the housing crisis, resulting in a shortage of affordable homes, an increase in homelessness and a lack of long-term solutions for Western Australians.

I thank the three members of the opposition who have spoken thus far. The spirited conversation we just heard from the member for Cottesloe was a very interesting contribution indeed. As I read through my notes, he has covered much of what I was going to talk about, which relieves me of the need to repeat a lot of what he said. However, I will repeat that we have been hearing for three and a half years—I believe that is the time this minister has had the helm here—about all these levers that are being pulled. We hear continually that the levers are being pulled. We know that the Treasurer is starting to pull various levers with the formation of the Treasury unit but we have not heard very much out of the Treasury unit since it was supposed to be ensuring levers would be pulled to ensure the housing crisis in Western Australia would be averted and people would be able to find a home, well and truly in the price range they could afford. Instead of that, rents in capital cities have skyrocketed across

Australia, but nowhere more than in the city of Perth. The cost to rent a unit in Adelaide has risen by \$10 192 but it has gone up and Perth much more than that, at \$14 508. We see that there is an extreme housing shortage right here in Western Australia. We know that for many younger people trying to get into —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Excuse me, Leader of the Opposition. Members, sorry, it is hard to hear. Thank you.

Mr R.S. LOVE: For many younger people trying to get into the housing market, it is such an issue. We know that the continual rise of house prices is leading to real distress for young people and, for many, the formation of thoughts that they are never going to be able to afford a home of their own. That is why it is so important that we address this housing situation and ensure that housing is available, and is at a price that younger people can afford to achieve. That is one of the reasons members on this side of the house are looking at stamp duty issues for young people. Both parties have announced policies in this regard. They are slightly different but they both aim to ensure there is greater assistance and more hope for young people as they seek to enter the property market. I think the government understands that it needs to do business differently. A government bill will be debated later in the week around Keystart. It will change the way that Keystart operates and will see the Country Housing Authority done away with. That particular aspect of what is in the mind of government members concerns me because there is nowhere in the Government Trading Enterprises Bill around Keystart that mentions the need for regional policy, regional housing or rural and remote housing. Those are issues I will be talking about as the lead speaker when the bill hits the chamber, possibly next week.

Regional issues are very concerning in the sense that, once upon a time, government agencies would forward invest into regional centres and would sometimes take a loss in doing so. There used to be developments for country and regional centres across Western Australia under the previous government, but this government has changed that shape and has developed its own new entity, DevelopmentWA, which does not seem to have a charter to invest ahead of where it can make a profit. That is leading to a situation where we are not seeing development in many country or regional centres right across the state, from Kununurra all the way to the south. If members go to country towns, they will see housing stock that is probably in the main well over 50 years old. New stock is not being developed to account for the day that inevitably will occur, in a decade or two, when that stock will no longer be fit for purpose. For many regional centres at the moment, I do not see a very bright future for their housing situation because in those towns, even though rents can be very high, rents could be very attractive for people to buy existing housing stock and rent out a house. In a town like Kununurra, you could probably buy a house for well under half a million dollars and rent it out for \$800, \$900 or maybe \$1 000 a week, which is a significant return. The problem is that if someone builds a house up there, it will cost them much more to build because it is very expensive to build in those areas. Especially with the increase requirements around cyclone readiness et cetera, it has become very expensive indeed to build. If someone built a house in one of those communities, chances are that they would be that several hundred thousand dollars worse off the day they completed the build because they would lose money. They would not be able to sell the house for what it cost to build. That is a real issue, which needs to be addressed.

I think the government needs to turn its eye to these regional issues. I see some of the aspects of the Keystart Bill as being one way to do that. Once upon a time, governments had a mind to enable development. Members may remember the old R&I Bank. Those types of institutions existed in many states. They basically helped to finance the development of mostly regional Western Australia. The models have changed over the years and banks come and go. We do not have that type of facility in Australian banking any more. There needs to be a way we can somehow enable investment to occur in some of these communities where, at the moment, banks simply will not lend money at any sort of appreciable rate. Unless a person can pretty well fund the construction of their own home, they will have no home to go to.

In many of these towns, if there are available houses for rent, the trend has often been for those houses to be taken up by government employees. Instead of building houses in these communities, the government is soaking up the available rentals and causing a further problem in housing supply in these communities. In some communities where major government offices are located, they soak up most of the available rentals.

Going back in time, the Leader of the National Party, Brendon Grylls, did a great deal of work in ensuring that the city of Karratha had some different types of housing available. The Pelago development in Karratha, for instance, was pilloried for years in this chamber by members of the Labor Party. I remember the former member for Cockburn waxing on about the great disaster that those apartments were. Guess what? Those apartments are fully occupied and the major tenants of those apartments are employees of the Western Australian government. I think 70 to 80 per cent of the tenants are Western Australian government employees. It was a very wise investment. Sometimes we have to make these investments at a time that does not necessarily match the boom-and-bust cycle of our economy here in Western Australia and in many regional areas.

We need to make a bigger effort to ensure that there are developments in regional WA. I note the state government put up a paltry \$80 million headworks fund, which was split 50–50 between regional and metropolitan areas. I note

that DevelopmentWA soaked up a fair bit of it—the government giving money to the government is interesting and not that helpful. We really need meaningful investment in headworks in those areas. We have seen that before in the royalites for regions program, and previous iterations of our government spent money on headworks funds. My party has announced that it will put up \$1 billion over 10 years to assist with headwork charges. These things are necessary if we are going to break the cycle that is leading to a situation in which we are not seeing the development of housing stock in those areas.

I know the members for Central Wheatbelt and North West Central want to contribute and I understand there is an arrangement that the leader and the manager of opposition business have put in place. I conclude my remarks at that point and will let the others make their contributions.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [5.41 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution without covering topics that have already been covered. I want to touch on something that, from my perspective, is closely linked in my region. I raised it today with the Minister for Child Protection. I agree with what she said today in the sense that all these issues are closely linked. One issue is housing. In my electorate there is a large amount of antisocial behaviour. I note a minister has been cross with me in the house in the past and accused me of being—I think the word he used was “disgraceful”, because I wanted to see people made homeless. For the record, it is the complete opposite. I do not want people to be homeless; I want people in homes. I suggested that these houses—as the other members who have driven around these towns have mentioned—are absolutely trashed. There are kids living in these houses.

My point was that at some point in time we need to have some accountability for the people who are living in these homes. We need to keep them in a state in which they are not going to be regularly trashed. Tradies often say to me, “I’ve just finished a house. I’ve called the painter and he’s going to paint the doors in the morning.” By 7.30 am or 8.00 am the next morning, the house has been trashed so the painter does not paint the doors. That is what I was alluding to, for the record. I know it is difficult, but we have to make some inroads in that space.

Towns like Meekatharra and Mt Magnet, as the Leader of the Opposition said, have an ageing suite of homes, as have a lot of towns. A lot of the homes have asbestos, which kids are breaking, and some of the homes are just sitting there. My question is: Are we going to demolish those homes and rebuild them? What is the outcome for homes that are sitting there boarded up? In terms of making people homeless, that is absolutely not what we need to do. The steep rise of building costs in the north is making it difficult for people to build and get into the housing market. In some shires I go to, people have the land, but when they add up the infrastructure costs in terms of connection with water and power, people struggle to be able to build, which is something we need to try to foster in the regions. Local governments are plugging the gaps in many cases but, again, in some cases the cost of headworks is prohibitive for them, which I am sure the minister is well aware of.

Many children are struggling and living in houses that are beyond repair. There is a lot of overcrowding. Some of the antisocial behaviour we see is a case of overcrowding. There is one family in Meekatharra who said they have 16 people living in or couch surfing through their house. This is the environment that kids are enduring. Coupled with that is Government Regional Officers’ Housing. I spoke with a teacher in Mount Magnet and I think that incentivising teachers for the regions is positive. However, when they get to these towns, they are looking for houses that are comfortable. Sometimes they have arduous days and they need comfortable modern homes to return to at the end of the day, or their “sanctuary”, as they call it. There is a need for modern GROH houses throughout our regions. We need to start investing in that space.

I have already touched upon sewerage, power and water in new lots. It is an issue because the cost of headworks is enormous. The heart of our children’s issues are around these homes. There are no homes coming online and there is a lack of maintenance on current homes. We need to start looking at social housing. Surely there are inspections and surely there are regular updates and maintenance programs that are being undertaken; however, driving through these towns one would think that was not the case. The GROH houses are ageing so some of them are not modern homes. They are deteriorating.

I know the member for Central Wheatbelt wants to speak, so in closing I mention the cost of insurance in the regions. I am constantly called by people who say, “I would invest in the regions but the cost of insurance is beyond my capability.” On top of that, a lot of insurers in the north west say that they will not insure for cyclones or floods. It is becoming increasingly difficult for private investors and people who want to build homes to get into that space because they cannot. If they cannot get insurance, they cannot get a loan. It is a catch 22 in that space. It is an issue. Some people’s homes are underinsured and it is leaving them vulnerable if there are disasters. Rising insurance costs coupled with inflated home prices is reducing people’s ability to get into the housing market.

If we look at building costs in the north west, people are saying that there are many hurdles to jump through to get approvals and find efficient ways to get headworks hooked up. It is becoming a problem for some people. We are at a critical point at which we have to take action. In summary, we need to remove asbestos from a lot of homes in these towns. I know it is an issue across the regions. We either need to rebuild or remove derelict properties and the ones that are being destroyed and vandalised. It is causing harm to families across regional towns and it is

aesthetically not good for the people who live there. It is not nice to live in a street in which there are half a dozen smashed-up houses. It is important to ensure that amenities are available and that people are living in an area that is aesthetically pleasing. I will finish there because we are running out of time and I will leave it for the next speaker.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [5.48 pm]: I rise to finish the debate raised by the Leader of the Liberal Party. I will add some short comments that relate, in particular, to the electorate of Central Wheatbelt. There are pressures on the entire pipeline in the housing industry. That is very well understood by everyone—land assembly, headworks, social housing, first home buyers, aged and seniors' housing in particular.

Acting Speaker, can I do without the running commentary or whatever is dribbling out from the Minister for Police? He is literally sitting there making comments that no-one can hear. It is very frustrating.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Thank you, member for Central Wheatbelt. Minister, if we just could —

Mr P. Papalia: If no-one can hear, then it doesn't really —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I can hear a drone. It is a dribble. It is irritating.

Mr P. Papalia: I wasn't talking to you.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister. Member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This minister is big on rhetoric and announcements, and we see them very regularly. There are piles of media statements and a flurry of activity into —

Mr P. Papalia: Do you want me to interject?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Wow!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am pretty sure that it was clear from the tone I was just using that I am not taking interjections, and certainly not from the minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, the member for Central Wheatbelt has made it clear that there are to be no interjections.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have 10 minutes, minister!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Perhaps the Minister for Housing thinks that if he continues to keep announcing initiatives, no-one will actually go back and look at what has been delivered. I think that is probably the strategy. But the opposition actually does pay attention, as do the people who have been listening to these promises from this government for the last eight years and have failed to see any change in their housing security or in the government's capacity to actually deliver or, particularly in my electorate, even a willingness to engage. In the last six months, I visited nearly all my shires individually. I have seen them all at zone meetings. I have 28 of them, so it does take a little bit to get around. Without question, at the top of everyone's list is a shortage of housing. The reason I mentioned local governments is that in my part of the world they are the developer of last resort. Apart from maybe developers in and around Wundowie as we go down the hills to where the Mauravillo Estate is, unless it is a state government or individual private investment, the local governments are the ones building houses for their communities. When we were in government, we understood that really well. There were streams of funding to allow local governments to partner with the private sector to deliver aged care, seniors care and workers' accommodation and to deliver housing that meant we could attract and retain people who work in our small businesses who, particularly in the north, are not on major salaries. Those are the small businesses that make our communities tick along and make them enjoyable places to live—the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. In my part of the world, it is simply being able to put someone into a house. One of my local businesses, Avon Valley Toyota, is in dire need of more mechanics and workers for its workshop. It has never had a problem before; it has always just advertised and been able to attract workers. It now cannot find a house anywhere in Northam to put its workers into. As a consequence, it is having to knock back really great applicants, because they have to bring their own housing to the table if they want the job. That is limiting the growth in my community, and it is replicated right across the electorate. The challenge we have here is that the government is not willing to address the inhibitors to the local governments in my part of the world—in my electorate—to unlock that potential.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the headworks program. I have yet to see any substantial investment flowing into any of the projects that my local governments have underway, and I suspect that is because most of them are seeking support for three to four houses—maybe up to 10. We are not talking big amounts; we are not big towns. Most of my communities sit at around 350 to 500 people, and that is being generous, outside of Northam, York and Merredin. These are smaller communities, but every house makes a difference. They have land, they are

willing to partner, but they need assistance for headworks. I refer to the Avon Community Development Foundation, which this minister will be very familiar with, because we went toe to toe with his department for well over a year trying to get it to remove a caveat over a piece of land adjacent to a very successful development by a community foundation that has already delivered housing so that it could unlock stage 2, and this lever was not being pulled. I can assure members that the lever to release stage 2 was not being pulled unless there was—and there was—significant pressure from the community, the shire and myself, and finally the minister managed to convince his department that this was actually worth pursuing. That foundation is already in the process of building four additional houses; it can probably put another 20 on there, but it will need support for headworks so that it can then invest its own money. We are not even talking about government money. The foundation is not asking for government money to build the houses so that it can invest community foundation funding to build more housing in Northam. I would have thought that this government would come at a model like that with all flags flying. It is very frustrating that it has taken this long just to remove the caveat. We could have been having a conversation about actually opening the houses, giving the minister an opportunity to stand with a shovel or even open the front door of one of the new houses, but that opportunity has been missed because the lever that we needed to be pulled over a year ago has not been pulled. It had not been pulled; it has been pulled now.

That is one project. Certainly, if this government is not considering providing some funding for the community development foundation for headworks—I believe it is looking for funding in the vicinity of \$1 million—that will be something that we will take seriously going into the next state and federal elections, because I have great confidence in this organisation to deliver quality projects and address a real need in that community. It has done many other projects like that in the community and has created a long-lasting legacy. We expect this or any government to be prioritising these sorts of things, looking for community foundations and local governments to partner with, because for every dollar that we give a local government, particularly in my area—it may be the case for others; I just know mine first—it will take that dollar and make it stretch to \$3, because it gets so little funding and knows how important it is to make that money go far.

Another thing I would urge this government to think about is this. Local governments across various zones in the central wheatbelt have put in funding applications at both a federal and state level for a number of programs to deliver workers' accommodation or seniors housing. From my perspective, there is nothing more important than making sure that we have appropriate housing for the seniors in our communities—those people who have helped build those communities, who want to stay close to their family and friends in an area they are familiar with so that they can age healthily and continue to contribute to the lives of their families, friends and communities. When we have appropriate housing for someone who wants to downsize into a smaller accommodation, it solves a problem, because it frees up another property. When we look at the whole pipeline of issues that we face, we see that investment from the state and federal governments into either headworks or actual funding to partner with local governments to deliver these projects would deliver a really important outcome for all these communities. I know that Tammin, Trayning, Merredin, Wyalkatchem and Bencubbin have all been part of collectives that have put forward projects and have been unsuccessful. I urge them to keep putting them forward. We know in the wheatbelt that we have to do things collectively, because state and federal governments do not like small projects in front of them. They like to think that we can think in a collective nature. There are projects of that nature that have been put forward and successfully funded by previous governments of the coalition or Liberal–National alliance persuasion. It is proving to be far more difficult under the current Albanese government and this state government to get those projects off the ground. There are fewer people there. I have been a minister; I know that Treasury comes to the table, puts a line through it and says that the cost–benefit analysis probably does not stack up compared with a bigger project somewhere in the metropolitan area where there is higher density, but they are still worthy of consideration; in fact, they are probably more so, because the commercial reality is that they will never get done unless the government helps them to be delivered. We have a responsibility to everyone in this state because they all pay taxes and they all deserve to have some of the largesse that this government has at its disposal, given that it has such significant surpluses. I would have thought that housing as a primary responsibility and an essential and foundational part of all our communities should be the conversation that is being had across all those local governments. It is disappointing to me that for probably the last three or four years, that has been the number one priority that has been raised by my local governments, and that dial does not seem to have shifted.

I have a couple of minutes. As I have been travelling around, I have become aware of some really innovative projects. I met with the Shire of Mundaring the other day. I am sure that the local member there is aware of its plans to put in a cultural hub, which is premised on the fact that the shire can free up land within the Mundaring town centre and potentially put some denser housing on areas that have already been cleared. Obviously, most of the community in the Perth hills has an issue with large-scale clearing for developments, so the cultural hub precinct that the Shire of Mundaring has made one of its key priorities is really interesting. It will deliver community infrastructure but also free up land to ensure that people can continue to live in the hills and the Avon Valley and those areas outside the Perth metropolitan area and the foothills.

I am looking forward to working collaboratively with all my local governments in the central wheatbelt. I am interested in projects across the state like the Pelago development in Karratha, which the opposition leader mentioned, which was developed when we were previously in government. As he pointed out, that development has been continuously at 100 per cent capacity, despite the criticisms that came from the opposition at the time, now the government. We need to put all those models on the table.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 6.30 pm

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [6.30 pm]: I will be the lead speaker for the government responding to this debate today. As I have said before in this chamber, our government takes the current pressures in the housing and rental markets very seriously. Of course, we are not alone in that. Every state, whether blue or red, is facing a similar scenario. There has been a radical reshaping of housing and rental markets. In fact, we are seeing extraordinary circumstances around the world. I have to say that there is a unity across all states and a sense of purpose about boosting social and affordable housing supply. As the Minister for Housing, I am honoured to have attended a number of housing ministerial meetings at which a range of critical policies were discussed, particularly around the Housing Australia Future Fund created by the federal government, which is leveraging major dollars and investment in community and social housing.

We have left no stone unturned in terms of the policies we have developed. As the responsible minister, my approach is not to assume, as a leader, that I am the smartest person in the room. We look to industry, stakeholders and a range of different organisations for their input on policy. I have an open-door policy and meet with people from an array of not-for-profits, local governments and community organisations. We have developed some innovative programs from that. I am deeply proud of one on homelessness, which I will come back to.

The opposition has stated a number of things that are just plainly wrong, and I will address some of them. Some of the stats are just wrong. Of course, the member for Roe made claims without providing any substantial stats. I suspect it was better than his previous quoting of Facebook pages, so it is an improvement.

Before I do that, I want to go through the avalanche of reforms that we have put in place. We heard the Leader of the Liberal Party say that there is no practical impact of our housing policy. As of today, we have delivered just over 2 500 social homes into the system. We came to government at a critical time. The previous government left a number of archaic social housing complexes. Members may remember the story about the Bentley tower. It was a large tower of homes that were vacant. This was happening across Western Australia. There were issues with ageing and archaic stock in places like Smith Street and Court Place in Subiaco that needed fixing. As Minister for Housing; Planning; Lands; Homelessness, my agencies have been systematically going through those projects to bring them forward to renewal.

We have made massive changes. As part of our reform program, we have created a new small and medium-sized builders panel, which includes builders from across the state pre-approved for government work. We are using alternative construction methods including timber and steel-framed, modular and prefab construction. We have allocated more than \$200 million in grants to the community housing sector to deliver new builds and refurbish existing housing. Of course, we also boosted the call-for-submissions program by creating a \$50 million program for the community housing sector and local governments to deliver social or community housing in regional Western Australia. We have driven leading national planning reforms—I will come back to that topic. We brought in spot-purchasing programs. We created and have provided additional funding for the social and affordable housing fund. We have provided significant investments in the maintenance and refurbishment of housing stock and a \$140 million uplift in more than 120 homelessness services. We made changes to the Keystart policy settings and lifted home loan limits. We reviewed the product settings and created a new urban connect product and changed the way that the interest rate is created, which has provided financial relief to thousands of Western Australians.

We also brought in significant tax measures, including the 50 per cent land tax for eligible build-to-rent developments and stamp duty concessions that taper out at a certain level for affordable apartments. Of course, we lifted the stamp duty exemption threshold for first home buyers, assisting almost 5 000 home buyers a year and increasing total stamp duty savings to up to \$15 390. We brought in incentive payments for Airbnb owners, which has brought 300 homes back into the rental market and a cash incentive to get owners of vacant homes to get their properties back in the market. We have the \$80 million infrastructure development fund, which provides \$40 million for infill developments and \$40 million to regional communities to fund critical headworks for workers accommodation.

We have also worked on land supply. The Premier and I announced last week that we have resolved planning investigation areas. The last two planning investigation areas late last year opened a further 835 hectares for future urban development, including 600 hectares in Jandakot–Treeby and 235 hectares in north Ballajura. They are expected to deliver 9 000 dwellings. Across the 15 former investigation areas, approximately 6 400 hectares will become available, delivering about 85 000 additional dwellings into the future. We also have the housing diversity pipeline. This is an ongoing program through which we audit landholdings. Land can come and go, but we make it available for a range of housing purposes. Of course, just last week we announced the housing diversity pipeline

project in Tulloch Way. It is a Metronet site in Canning Vale for 49 townhouses and apartments. Of course, we have the Pier Street and Smith Street developments and hope to soon make further announcements.

I have been on the record that these projects take time because the model, which involves a community housing provider, can be complex and involves negotiation and agreement, whether it is leased or freehold.

Before I address some of the criticisms, I want to talk about homelessness. As I said, there has been unprecedented investment. There was \$140 million to boost 120 services. We have expanded and provided an extra \$6 million for Entrypoint Perth, which is a referral service. We have provided a further \$15.7 million for Housing First Support Services, which deals with case work and management. We have also provided additional funds to expand the Housing First Support Service in Geraldton, establish a service in Albany and undertake planning and service design in Kalgoorlie. That work is being done for the supported landlord model, which first started in Bunbury. We have first of all expanded the program from Perth to Peel. In that regard, we have provided funding for a unit to be purchased, with the landlord being Housing Choices Western Australia, which will support the rough sleeper referred straight from a rough sleeper group into that housing. Then the tenant will have access to support services. As part of that pilot program, more than 80 homes are now supporting more than 160 people who were previously sleeping rough. As a result of the success of this program, we are providing another \$49 million to extend the program into the regions. That is a housing first approach. It is changing lives and it is giving rough sleepers a safe and secure home.

Substantial work is being done, and that does not include the other things that we have done. Boorloo Bidee Mia on Wellington Street is the first Aboriginal-run homelessness support accommodation. We have the Murray Street lodge, which is new supported accommodation for rough sleepers. We have Koort Boodja. There has been really significant investment in supported accommodation. Of course, we also do targeted regional responses. When I was in Kalgoorlie earlier this month—I want to recognise the advocacy of Ali Kent—I announced that the government was providing a nearly \$2 million boost to expand and extend assertive outreach services in Kalgoorlie, and the local Kalgoorlie service provider, Bega Garnbirringu Health Services, has been engaged to deliver a dedicated service, including a return to country. I was recently in Albany to announce the opening of an expressions of interest process for Housing First Support Services as part of a \$15.7 million investment for community housing providers, which I have talked about. We also provided a \$700 000 grant to a consortium including Advance Housing to convert five holiday homes managed by the Country Women's Association into supported accommodation for families at risk of homelessness.

In terms of regional land supply, which I think is important, there has been extraordinary investment. We have the Regional Land Booster program, through which 778 lots have been contracted across 99 projects in 83 regional towns with a combined value of \$183 million. In the last budget, as we have done in previous budgets, we provided additional money to fast-track the development of land in Kalgoorlie. An amount of \$16.8 million has been provided to unlock further residential lots. We also provided \$13 million in the budget to unlock 51 lots in Karratha. On top of that, we did a deal with Perdaman to unlock additional lots to facilitate Perdaman to build homes for workers so that workers can remain in the town. That is a \$122 million project. Of course, we also provided \$5 million in this year's budget to unlock 26 development-ready lots in stage 13 of an estate in Broome. This is significant work with practical and real outcomes.

I will deal with some of the issues that were flowing out. I do not understand what the member for Cottesloe was trying to achieve by looking at previous markets and then tying that to the planning system. Across Australia, there is a national cabinet and there is a commitment to a planning blueprint for reform. I note that a critical Liberal senator, Senator Andrew Bragg, is one of the strongest champions for planning reform across every state. The member for Cottesloe has bizarrely just looked at current market conditions—we know that a large number of factors are at play—and then equated that to be the direct result of the planning system at the time. That is a false analysis. Anyone can understand that a huge number of different factors affect the market. What has been disappointing—I hear this from a range of different stakeholders—is the lack of basic market economics for apartment construction for a significant time in our state's history. We have fewer large-tier builders in Western Australia than elsewhere; that is a historical fact, but it is because of the massive cost escalations. We have seen an increase of 30 to 40 per cent for single homes, but it has been much higher for apartment projects, which has meant that many are non-viable. The only apartment projects that we are seeing currently are in the western suburbs, because that is where the market is still viable, and I will come back to that point in a second.

I want to see density across Perth near transit-oriented developments and train stations to the north, east and south. The member for Cottesloe is, bizarrely, peddling the conspiracy theory that the Labor Party wants density only in the western suburbs. That is false. That is false in the demonstration that because of market failure, the state government is now entering the market to build social, affordable and rental products, and I will come back to Pier Street in a second. We are doing it at Smith Street, where a community housing provider will be given a 50-year lease. We are doing it in other projects. There are opportunities for a community housing provider through our Metronet apartment project.

Pier Street is also an example of that in which the state and federal governments make an investment and the provider also makes an investment, whether that is through the management of the facility, and the provider will own this complex in full. It was made very clear in the media statement. We saw the member for Cottesloe falsely claim that the apartments would cost \$1 million each. That cannot be extracted from the sums, because we know that in the community housing model, there is social, affordable and general rental housing. That combination makes it viable for the community housing sector to run and manage housing. This model was endorsed by the previous Liberal state government. The member for Cottesloe, firstly, put out an incorrect figure of \$1 million for each apartment and, secondly, attacked a model which the former Liberal–National government endorsed and which both sides of politics have had bipartisan support for. I note that a range of former New South Wales governments of different political persuasions have supported the community model. The state’s contribution to social and affordable rentals is \$369 000 for each dwelling. That is actually a good investment by the state. It will be run and owned by a community housing provider. I want to put to bed the idea that the Pier Street model is costing WA taxpayers \$1 million an apartment. That is false.

Dr D.J. Honey: I didn’t say that. I said it was a combination of state and federal funding. Let’s be clear. I said it’s a combination of state and federal funding.

Mr J.N. CAREY: The state contributes \$369 000. Does the member understand the model now?

Dr D.J. Honey: It is double that by the feds. That’s what adds up to \$1.2 million. Minister, I’m happy for you to go through this discussion and respond, but I’m also happy to talk to you afterwards to clarify.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, sure. Respectfully, this is the model that works. It is always better for a community housing provider to run large complexes. As we know, no-one endorses a tower of 219 social houses. The model works because it has three layers to it. The private rentals and the affordable rentals provide revenue through commonwealth rent assistance to the community housing provider to run the model.

In terms of planning approvals and time, every state is focused on planning reform. We have a national cabinet that has agreed to that position and we are driving it. I have recognised good local governments. There are some rippers in regional Western Australia that try their best to facilitate new housing development. Overall, we are working to streamline the approvals so that there are no blockages and so that the holding costs do not destroy viable products. We have heard from the other side that it is very costly to finance regional projects. I agree with that, particularly around headworks. Another cost is approvals.

The member for Cottesloe previously quoted the Western Australian Local Government Association report. That report records average timeframes measured from 2011 when development assessment panels were introduced to 30 June 2020. The quoted average timeframe was 145 days. These processing times—I want to put this on the record—mainly occurred during the previous Liberal–National government and pre-dates our government’s planning reforms that are streamlined since the first tranche. I want to put on the record that over the last three years—2021, 2022 and 2023—the median time for DAP applications was as follows. For an application that did not require advertising, the median timeframe was 60 days. For an application that required public advertising, the median time was 89 days; however, that included 2021, in which timeframes and processes for everything was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am saying that the planning reforms are critical to ensure that holding costs do not delay significant projects. We know that it is make or break in the market.

In August, we heard the member for Roe talk about 2 000 homes being for sale. He said that general statistics are well known. My office has provided me with the September Real Estate Institute of Western Australia numbers as at 16 September. They show that 2 993 houses were for sale, 1 114 units were for sale and 540 land plots were for sale. I have a good relationship with the member for Roe, but he should not come into this place and quote statistics when he will not cite the data source. He cannot come into this place and say that Facebook said this and this was quoted from somewhere else.

The other point I want to make is that the opposition criticise all the initiatives that we have introduced. Hon Steve Martin said that my granny flat reforms would not have any impact, even though we have seen an incredible uplift by industry, as reported in *The West Australian*, of \$500 million. We brought in the rental relief program and Steve Martin called it another “bad joke” from the Cook Labor government. My advice is that it has assisted more than 1 000 households to stay in their homes. Hon Steve Martin said that the builders support facility would do nothing for the hundreds of people who built houses because the builder has already gone broke. Well, we know that the stats show it is assisting to complete homes. He criticised the short-term rental accommodation subsidies as nothing more than a “short-term shuffle that does not produce more houses”. We know now that it has provided 300 homes to the rental market. He has criticised me on spot purchasing. In April 2022, he said that the government should be utilising the spot purchasing program more. Then in March 2023, he said, and I paraphrase, that the spot purchasing program is shifting buildings from private to public ownership and is not easing the problem.

What I am highlighting there is that the opposition has criticised every policy measure that we have introduced, and yet all of them have delivered outcomes. Of course, there is no single bullet; it is the accumulation of a number of measures that are working to assist the housing market. What is really interesting, and I need to put this on the record, is that they do not quote all the stakeholders that have endorsed our policy measures and programs from across the sector. I note that whenever I make a housing announcement, it generally has universal endorsement from stakeholders. It is only the opposition that is the negative voice.

I think one of the most critical voices—we talked about the aspirations of the national housing accord—was from Master Builders WA. Only recently in September, Master Builders CEO Matthew Pollock said —

... Western Australia and South Australia are the only two states to move closer to their targets, which is a testament to the state government's efforts.

Of course, we also got recognition from the Housing Industry Association. It states —

Our assessment has WA's planning system as one of the best in the country. Many of the changes led by the State Government and Minister **John Carey MLA** over the last two years have reduced the time that houses and developments spend in the planning process. Expanded DAP thresholds, delegated single dwelling determinations and Medium Density reforms are examples of the steps that have put WA ahead of the nation ...

If we are looking at the organisations and bodies that are responsible and the builders and companies that are delivering, they say our planning reforms and measures work.

I want to end on this. The member for Cottesloe started by going back to a theme he has used before—the slur—that we are doing stuff for developer's mates, and he mentioned donations. I will just say this on the record. I conduct myself with the utmost integrity. I have an open-door policy. I meet not just developers, but not-for-profits, stakeholders, homelessness groups, organisations and residents who oppose developers or are against proponents. Similarly, our Western Australian Planning Commission, which we have strengthened, is an independent planning organisation. What we are seeing from particular candidates in the WA Liberals is a deliberate campaign to undermine confidence in the Western Australian Planning Commission and to also create fear and untruths about the planning system and its integrity. Unlike other states, as the Minister for Planning, I actually have limited intervention in planning developments. I do not approve major projects.

I want to put on the record that it is very easy to do a slur and to come up with the stereotype that is being peddled by the WA Liberals, but I take this role as the Minister for Planning very seriously, and I take integrity very seriously. Every decision I make on planning is with the lens to boost housing supply in Western Australia. It has to be, because every day my focus is on providing a home to vulnerable Western Australians. I understand that a safe and secure home changes lives. In fact, only this week a local resident named Dick went onto my Facebook page and said, "I'd been homeless for a significant amount of time. I'm living with a disability. Eighteen months ago, I got a social home. I am thankful that others are getting that opportunity."

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.