

**PUBLIC HOUSING — MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

*Motion*

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [5.46 pm]: On behalf of the member for Willagee, I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its failed head contractor model of public housing maintenance and its inability to adequately provide repairs and maintenance to its public housing stock.

I am not the lead speaker on this motion.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker)**: If you are moving the motion, you need to be the lead speaker.

**Dr A.D. BUTI**: I am the lead speaker.

**Mr R.F. Johnson**: Can I say that I think you will be an excellent lead speaker.

**Dr A.D. BUTI**: I thank the member very much.

This motion is an incredibly important motion to bring before the house because, as we all know, housing is of critical importance to all Western Australians. Here we are dealing with public housing, which is controlled by the Department of Housing and, therefore, under the responsibility of the Minister for Housing —

**The ACTING SPEAKER**: Members, keep the chattering down; I cannot hear what is being said. Thank you.

**Dr A.D. BUTI**: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I thank you for your protection.

Some of the key issues that need to be addressed are the issues of waste and the fact that this decision to have a head contractor model is a bad decision. The government and the minister cannot be relied on with public housing. There also is the important issue of accountability. The rationale for the head contractor model being utilised by the Department of Housing is that it will save \$20 million over three years; provide an increased level of service for repairs and maintenance on the state's public housing stock; and result in greater efficiencies. The argument has been made that under the previous system there were up to 700 different contracts across different trades and regions in WA, but this system before us will provide local employment; enable goods and materials to be sourced locally when possible; and adhere to a pay schedule for agreements with subcontractors. In various media releases by the then Minister for Housing in 2010, it was stated —

The model that WA is adopting has been running very successfully in a number of other States with significant savings and a more efficient service to tenants ...

As these contracts mature, this will lead to significant efficiencies, faster response times and better outcomes for tenants.

This evening I, and other speakers who follow me, will show how those rationales have failed. The Minister for Housing may consider this to be boring and have a yawn, but the people who live in these public houses and who are seeking maintenance are not sleeping because they cannot have their maintenance attended to in appropriate time. I would not be yawning if I were the minister. I would be ensuring that I took on board everything that is said.

**Mr T.R. Buswell**: I will send them a video of your speech—that will knock them off!

**Dr A.D. BUTI**: Stop denying there is a problem. We will get to the minister's denial later on. He may never have lived in a Department of Housing home. I do not know. He may have, but he does not now. The minister should show some empathy towards the people he is supposed to be providing a proper standard of housing for.

**Mr T.R. Buswell**: I am just saying if they cannot sleep, I will play them your speech! That will help.

**Dr A.D. BUTI**: That is so funny, minister; that is incredibly hilarious!

What do we have? We have a failure to deliver on cost savings. The minister has not once said there has been a cost saving. We have a failure on cost savings. We have a failure to improve the key performance indicators. The minister has failed to deliver better quality or value-for-money maintenance. He has failed to deliver improved efficiencies. He has failed to reduce the Department of Housing waitlist. He has failed to deliver sustainable and fair opportunities to Western Australian mum and dad small businesses, contractors and apprentices. He has failed on every measure. Yes, minister, they would fall asleep in despair if they listened to this speech and what is to follow because they are not getting any joy from the minister and his department under this maintenance contract model. The minister was supposed to deliver \$20 million in savings. Show us where that has been delivered.

**Mr T.R. Buswell**: It has not. I said that the other day on radio.

**Extract from Hansard**

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**Dr A.D. BUTI:** One of the key rationales was that the model would deliver \$20 million worth of savings. It has not. We will be interested to know what are the other rationales or justifications while the minister continues with this system. It has not delivered the savings. It certainly has not been efficient. It certainly has not led to an appropriate form of maintenance for many, many clients who use Department of Housing facilities. The minister admits today—he said he has admitted it before—that the delivery of \$20 million in savings has not been achieved. That is disappointing from a taxpayers' perspective.

Now let us look at particular Department of Housing residents. I would say that probably most issues that come before my electorate office in Armadale relate to Homeswest houses. Leaving aside the people who are on the waiting list, these are people who are in Homeswest facilities now. Their complaints relate to maintenance. For instance, I received an email from Reta and Jimmy MacKichan from Westfield Road, Kelmscott. I also attended their premises. They sought through Homeswest, and through the contractors, to have a wall that is part of their residence fixed. This wall could collapse at any time, hurting anyone who stands nearby. The electrical system for a number of units in that facility is also attached to the wall. If the wall collapses, the whole electrical system of the various units in that facility will of course be affected. After ringing Homeswest, they were told that someone would come around. No-one came. They also talked about reticulation. I am informed that reticulation for the units is normally turned on in October each year and runs until April. This was in 2010. It was not turned on until December 2010. Between December 2010 and April 2011 contractors came out six times to fix the reticulation. During that time, water was left on every day—not just the two days allocated as a result of water restrictions. What happened? Homeswest received a fine for watering the garden on non-rostered days. Talk about a waste of money; that is an incredible waste of money.

Let us turn to the units at Anton Street in Armadale. When we talk about Homeswest tenants, we are often talking about the most vulnerable people in society. We are often looking at the senior citizens of our society. I have received representation from four residents living in a 16-unit complex on Anton Street related to security lighting. Three weeks ago a light was removed, to be repaired. At that time the rest of the lights were switched off. Residents were told it would take three days to fix. This is a senior citizens' complex with the oldest resident being 87 years of age. One resident has already fallen, another has tripped, and cars have been vandalised. If it was not so serious, one could actually laugh at what is in some of the correspondence.

This is correspondence I received from one resident in Anton Street who said he wrote to Homeswest about maintenance issues last year. He said that someone came to take photos of the roof areas that required repairing. One week later, a tiler came to fix the leak. After that, another person came to take more photos. Another week went by, then a tradesman came to fix the gutter but he needed an extension to the gutter, so more photos were taken. He returned a few days later. The leaks were fixed but not the eaves, as this was a job for another tradesperson. Surely the minister would agree that is not acceptable. As we know from leaked documents, it does not seem to matter whether a job is completed at all or is completed to a satisfactory standard. I have a leaked email which states that all job orders after 1 October 2010 must be paid as submitted without fail—despite their claim or noncompliance.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** That is not new news. What is the problem with that?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The department is paying all job orders even if they have not been complied with.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I will talk about it in my speech.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** He will talk about it in his speech; that is good. Noncompliant job orders are still being paid.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I think “were” is the term.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As 6PR refers to it, it is a pay, pay, pay email! Also I am led to believe this departmental directive states we need to ensure that we keep a running sheet of those job orders that are not compliant and the basic reason why. We wonder: are those records officially kept or are they off the record? For jobs that are not complied with, is there an off-the-record tally that the minister wants to keep away from the public?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** So we have confirmation today that the department is not keeping an off-the-record account of noncompliant jobs.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** They kept the non-electronic version of noncompliant activities —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Oh, a non-electronic version!

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** — until they got their electronic system set up. All of those job orders the member is referring to have been audited—every single one of them. I will provide details on the dollar value of job orders that are now being disputed with the contractor. There was a retrospective compliance audit, or quality assurance audit, of those job orders that were paid as a result of that directive.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Also, minister, when will we receive the KPMG audit?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** When will you receive it?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Yes. When will the minister make it public?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** It is not finished yet.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Right; it is not finished. From my understanding, that was supposed to be finished by now, was it not?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I have asked them to do some more work because there were a couple of other issues I wanted them to look at.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It was supposed to be ready by late 2012.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No, it was not. Who told you that?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** March 2012, was it not?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I received the preliminary version last week. I want to talk about this after. I had a briefing from KPMG last week. As a result of the briefing, I asked them to look at two other issues around payment in relation to job orders to make sure that that is robust, and also around quality assurance. Those instructions, I am assuming, will be issued in the not too distant future, but I can talk about that when I stand up. Again, that's all on the public record.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is on the public record. Also, the report, I think, cost \$143 000.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** All funded with no additional appropriation out of the Department of Housing internal audit budget.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** But we have a system here that this government lauded as a system that would save us \$20 million; it has not saved us \$20 million. It was going to produce efficiencies; it has not produced efficiencies. I am sure the Minister for Housing cannot point to anywhere where it has improved the system.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Similarly you won't be able to point to anywhere where it has made it worse.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That is not the issue. The issue is that the minister said that the system was going to make it better, and it has not.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** That's not to say it can't.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I am sure that these Department of Housing tenants are not going to be reassured when they hear the minister say, "Oh, well; it's not worse." The fact is that people are waiting weeks or months to have maintenance afforded to them.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** It's not a new phenomenon, unfortunately.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The point is that this minister lauded this system and said that it would produce efficiencies, and it has not done so. He is the minister under the Westminster system who is accountable for this system. It is therefore no good for him to say in this chamber, "Oh, well; it's not any worse." The fact is it is terrible.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** It's not terrible.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Obviously it is. It is terrible, and if the minister does not think it is terrible, let me also refer to some other constituents who have come to my electorate office. I have with me some comments from a senior person in Owtram Road, Armadale. At the time of the comments, the constituent had been a resident in the unit for seven years and had been awaiting existing repairs. The resident had been told by a Department of Housing inspector that the unit had been built on clay and was sinking. There was not a lot that the department could do except demolish and rebuild. The unit has no insulation but the resident was eligible for insulation on medical grounds. Until we pointed out to the department that she was entitled to insulation on medical grounds, that was not forthcoming. So an inspector came around and, although he was very polite, he was obviously incredibly inexperienced in building maintenance. For example, he found no fault with the carpet that she had asked to be replaced with vinyl. The fact is the carpet, apart from being very old and without underlay, had lifted in a number of places and had caused the lady to trip over and fall hitting her head. She attached a number of photographs which, of course, I do not have before me. She previously reported items needing repair but nothing had been done to address them. For example, the back door window frame is no longer fully attached to the building because of subsistence. This has caused the door frame to warp to the point that the back door can no longer be closed or locked in the normal manner and needs to be secured with a rope. This has serious implications for her personal safety and naturally is causing her a great deal of anxiety. The power point in the kitchen is not working. The kitchen exhaust fan was fixed but stopped working and a window frame in her

bedroom is broken, which of course is another security issue. What I have just read out are not isolated examples. Unfortunately, it seems to be a recurring pattern that is coming before my electorate office, and I am sure will be corroborated by other speakers to follow.

I want to read from an email from one of the residents at Anton Street dated 6 July 2011. It starts off —

Dear Sir,

I am one of the lucky W.A. seniors that only had to wait 6 years for a Homeswest unit and whilst I consider the accommodation to be of a reasonable standard the actual maintenance is a disgrace and apart from being a health hazard it also concerns me that a valuable state asset is deteriorating through a lack of efficient maintenance.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April —

That is, last year —

I signed the standard tenancy agreement and about a week later the property was inspected by an officer of Homeswest and I pointed out several things that were evident;

- ... A structure crack in the lounge
- ... Cracks and flaking paint in the bathroom
- ... No security lock holder on letterbox
- ... Rotten tree in backyard needs removed
- ... No recycle bin
- ... Most important of all was the leak in the gutters and/or roof which was flooding the back yard and the front entrance

As a result several days later I received a visit from a “contractor” who inspected the roof and stated that he would now put in a report to Homeswest for approval to commence the repair, after several weeks and nothing happening I telephoned the maintenance number and was assured that the contractor had been issued the job and would attend as soon as possible and to date he still has not arrived.

The email states that item (e), the recycle bin, was delivered but that no-one attended to the other issues and that the resident attended to the removal of the tree himself. The email continues —

The flooding during rain was caused by overflow of the gutter system and in fact the downpipes front and rear were blocked, the backyard had a major decline towards the rear of the unit and a single small drain slightly bigger than a radiator cap to cope with the volume of water. I cleaned the gutters and built up the rear yard with a wood retaining wall and I have solved that problem so during the rain the water no longer gets to the front door or the rear door however a more serious problem has developed which for some unknown reason no one seems to take seriously. Ironically several weeks after cleaning the gutter the maintenance crew came by to clean it.

Water is now running down the roof and is flooding the cavity on the east wall of my unit, a gutter is also missing as well as an asbestos or cement sheet is broken this in turn has bubbled the wall in the lounge and water is now running down the wall and mildew is forming on part of the ceiling.

I have tried on several occasions to see where this roof contractor has disappeared to but to know avail so on the 21<sup>st</sup> July I approached the Homeswest office in Armadale and as usual they were very helpful and asked me to write what the problem was and they would pass it on to I think the property officer, by the 26<sup>th</sup> July the wall was getting worse so I contacted —

He mentions someone else —

... at Housing Direct and after explaining to her how serious the matter was she immediately obtained permission to have the matter rectified and informed me that this would be done within 48 hours, by the 29<sup>th</sup> I had not received any information so I once again called Housing Direct and was informed the job had been issued and the contractor would telephone me back immediately and as usual no reply so I again contacted Housing Direct on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August and again told the same thing with the same results.

That is just a pattern of behaviour that is repeated. That was last year, but as I said I have received four pieces of correspondence from residents in the Anton complex in the past week. Matters have not got better, minister. What do we have? We have a situation, as the minister has admitted, in which the \$20 million has not been saved. We also have a situation in which the standard of service for repairs and maintenance of the public housing stock has not improved. That has a double negative effect, minister. Not only is it detrimental to the tenants of Department of Housing facilities, but also it is deteriorating and depreciating public assets quicker than necessary. Public dollars are being lost due to inefficient contractors and the fact that maintenance is not

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taking place so that there is a deterioration in the buildings. How the minister can continue to have confidence in a system that his government has lauded is beyond any sense of logic or rationale.

The minister talks about the system being better now than it was in the past. That is interesting, and I will just refer to this matter. The previous minister, Minister Marmion, in relation to the key performance indicators prior to the head contractor model, said —

That is the data. It is not good. The data shows that historically, even though it might have sounded like it was good, it was not that good.

That was reported in *Hansard* of 13 October 2010. The KPIs under the current system are worse. In 2009–10, under the old system, the compliance rate was 80 per cent for emergency jobs and 70 per cent for routine jobs. As of 30 September 2011, which is under the new system, the compliance rate for emergency jobs is 48.8 per cent and 67.6 per cent for routine jobs. I obtained those figures from the answer to a question on notice in *Hansard* of 22 February 2012. Therefore, the KPIs under the current system are worse. Not only are we not saving money, we are operating under a worse system. The minister has not in any logical manner or by way of a strategic planning statement told us how the situation will improve. I will be interested to hear the minister in his contribution to this debate tell us how the system has improved.

In concluding my contribution, minister, the privatisation of Homeswest housing maintenance has failed to deliver on any of the key objectives.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Just to clarify that, Department of Housing maintenance has been conducted by private contractors for at least a decade. Homeswest has not directly employed housing maintenance contractors for a long time. You are talking about the creation of a head contractor model. For as long as I can remember, the actual service delivery has been done by the private sector.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The fact is that it is worse under the current system; it has got worse under your watch.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** You can't say that it has been privatised. I mean, that is a cute word to use, but nothing has been privatised. If private sector contractors were doing the work in 2010, before the change, and in many cases the same private contractors are still doing the work, you cannot say it has been privatised because it has always been like that.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The previous minister made a song and dance about how the new head contractor model would save money.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I know!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It was going to result in efficiencies. It has not!

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I know.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It has not—it has actually got worse.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I am not sure about that.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It has. How can it be better when the government has not saved the money that it said it would and the KPIs are worse under the new system? Given the complaints coming to my office, and, I am sure, to those of members on the other side of the house—unless they want to remain mute on the issue—how can the minister say that the system is better? It is impossible to say that the system is better.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** When were you elected to Parliament?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** In 2010.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** What month?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It was October.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** So how do you know what the complaints were like under the old system when you were not a member of Parliament? You just said —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The correspondence to my office —

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** You were not even a member of Parliament.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The minister may want to say that I was elected only in October 2010, but the fact is that other members who were elected before me will speak tonight! That little defence the minister is making would not hold up very well in a court of law.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I am just trying to look at the rationality of your argument.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The minister is very quick on his feet, but he is not as quick when he is sitting down because that was an atrocious defence; it was an absolute disgrace of a defence!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The fact is that the system has not produced the \$20 million saving that the former Minister for Housing said it would. It has not improved KPIs. It has not improved efficiencies. If the minister were to speak to Homeswest tenants rather than yawning when the matter is being debated, he would hear complaint after complaint. Elderly people are falling over because security lamps are not being repaired. How atrocious! We are living in Western Australia, a resource rich state in which vulnerable elderly people cannot rely on this government to even ensure that the homes provided for them are properly maintained. Elderly people are falling over in the dark because under this government's system—you are the government—this minister is not providing adequate and timely maintenance. If the minister takes the attitude that he has expressed so far in this debate, we will have no confidence that the situation will get better. It is appalling. Homeswest tenants who may listen to this debate and who may read *Hansard*, or who in this minister's case may receive a video of these speeches—make sure you send me a copy too, minister!—will be appalled and will have no hope that this minister or this government will take their issues seriously. I find it incredible that we live in a state in which the Premier can drive down a freeway and say, "I'm going to put a football stadium there" without any modelling and without knowing the cost—a stadium that will cost way over what has been estimated—but the government cannot provide timely and efficient maintenance to Homeswest homes. The chatter on the other side of the house is really disappointing. I can understand the minister trying to defend his woeful administration of his portfolio, but to have members to my left who I am sure are receiving the same complaints that I am receiving —

**Mr F.A. Alban:** No we are not—strangely enough!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The member would not know! He would not know anything that came through to his office! I mean—good God!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** People on the opposite side of the house are in denial.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Maylands!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** They are in denial and they are not prepared to take this issue seriously.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Swan Hills!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** They are not prepared to take this issue seriously.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The *Hansard* reporter will not be able to make head or tail of what the member for Armadale is saying. I call the member for Wanneroo for the first time.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I place on record that the member for Swan Hills has not received any complaints in his office about Homeswest maintenance.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** He did not say that.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The members for Wanneroo and Swan Hills have not received any Homeswest maintenance complaints.

Several members interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I wonder whether we have a whiteboard! Do members remember the minister in the Keating Labor government who gave special grants to certain areas? I wonder whether the minister is fobbing off money to certain Homeswest areas. I wonder! I find it incredibly strange that the members for Swan Hills and Wanneroo —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Swan Hills.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I want once again to ensure that *Hansard* has this: the member for Swan Hills and the member for Wanneroo have not received any Homeswest maintenance complaints in their electorate office.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** They did not say that. They did not say that at all!

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**Dr A.D. BUTI:** If they have received some, they should take the matter seriously. They were not taking this seriously a minute ago. They have either not received a complaint or they have not taken seriously the complaints that they have received.

**Mr P.T. Miles:** You are misleading.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** You are charged and condemned!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member for Armadale.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I have not finished yet.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale, will you please now direct your comments to the Chair and stop goading the two members.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

What is it, member for Wanneroo? Has he received complaints or has he not received complaints?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have asked you to address your comments through the Chair!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Hopefully we will hear a contribution from the member for Wanneroo. He does not make much of a contribution in this place. All he ever does is snip, snip and snap. The member for Swan Hills would not know if his office had received any complaints. I probably know more about his electorate than he does!

To get back to the Department of Housing issue, the minister stands condemned because the system that his government has lauded has not saved the money that it said it would save, and has not produced the efficiencies that it said it would, and the minister has not shown us in any manner or form that the system will get better.

**MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Minister for Housing)** [6.19 pm]: I thought I would take this opportunity to respond, because we will run out of time soon and the member for Armadale has asked me to respond. I feel compelled to respond, but I will take only 10 or 15 minutes. The member for Collie–Preston could easily fill half an hour when he gets on a roll, so I thought I would jump up quickly to make a few comments.

Firstly, I will clarify for the record of the Parliament that I did not hear either the member for Swan Hills or the member for Wanneroo say that they had any Department of Housing complaints in their office. I think what I heard them say —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They don't take it seriously.

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Do you take it seriously?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale!

**Mr P.T. Miles:** Of course we take it seriously.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am going to ask the member for Wanneroo and the member for Armadale to stop this cross banter. Let the minister speak. Other people here want to speak as well.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I clearly heard them insinuate that their offices had not been flooded with complaints, which I think was the point the member for Armadale —

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

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** — in his loud, unique style was trying to make.

The member for Armadale made some emotive comments about old people falling over and, if that happens, that is, of course, unfortunate and is an indicator that the current maintenance system has failed. I will give the member for Armadale another example of a very clear indicator that the former system failed dramatically and completely. It is a case that is well known to me of a young boy called Cassius Norman. He was a young toddler—I cannot remember how old he was, but he was young—who was electrocuted in a house in Harding Street, Roebourne, a few years ago—I think, in 2009. I do not mean to be disrespectful to the family if I have got that wrong. Cassius was crawling through a hole in the wall and there was a cable involved and a few other things. But that is not really the point. It was a tragic circumstance. In that house under the old contractor model that the member for Armadale lauds, the Department of Housing had paid an electrician who had supposedly installed an RCD device. I am not going to say that if the RCD device had been there Cassius Norman would not have tragically died, but there is absolutely no doubt that the chances of his survival would have been a lot greater. Under the old model not only did the department pay the contractor to install it, but also from time to

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time other people had been paid to inspect that property and had also reported that an RCD had been installed. Clearly that system failed because no RCD had been installed. That electrical contractor had submitted an invoice, been paid for the invoice and put the money in his bank account. He had not installed an RCD in a house that was supposed to have one installed.

The member for Armadale needs to be careful if he wants to come into this place and reflect on some of the extreme cases of the present system and claim the moral high ground on the basis of how good or bad a system is performing. There were many faults in the former system. The Auditor General conducted an inquiry in 2003, which clearly showed there were a lot of problems with Homeswest's maintenance. I am the first to acknowledge that not every Homeswest tenant gets their maintenance issues dealt with as promptly as they would like and perhaps of the quality they would like. That is a matter we need to do a lot more work around. It existed under the old system; it exists under this system. Part of that are process issues and a maintenance budget issue. At the end of the day we have a budget for maintenance this year of around \$106 million, and we have to manage within that. That is a requirement in a range of government areas.

I refer now to the head contractor model. I do not want to hog the time of members opposite, but I want to make a couple of points. I want to put into context the environment that the Department of Housing has been operating under. There have been a lot of changes in the department. I was minister until 2010. I have been the minister again for 12 or 14 months now. A lot of what the department has been doing is very, very good. But there have been problems with the head contractor model and I will talk about them. A lot of the reforms have been very good. We have fundamentally shifted the focus of that agency from being a purely social housing provider to being an agency focused far more broadly on the agendas of affordability, a much better role for the Department of Housing. Notwithstanding some issues we have had along the way—this has been one of them, the death of Mr Roll was another, and the RCD inspection regime was another—I think the executive of the department has done a great job in driving reform. It is not easy, particularly in an agency like this department. There has been reform around procurement and around our involvement with the national rental affordability scheme. We have built record numbers of social housing units. We are one of the few states that delivered on our commitments funded by the commonwealth in remote Aboriginal communities. We have fundamentally changed the way we provide housing support for people with disabilities and mental health. We are heavily focused on supporting the community housing and NGO sectors and trying to play a role in keeping affordable land supply on the market as well as innovative schemes like the shared-equity program.

Without trying to labour the point, it is my humble view that the Department of Housing has been going through a major period of reform. When we look at that change and the challenges that would have presented for management, we could argue that the change in procurement model to the head contractor model in early 2010 was probably a step too far for the department. Certainly, the preliminary advice I have received from the audit team I met last week is that that was the case. There were major issues with the implementation. I have spoken about this publicly and went through it in some detail on a radio show earlier this week. Fundamentally, the Department of Housing saw this as a procurement process. But it was much bigger than a procurement process. This is a transformational project that should have been managed as a transformational project, not as a new form of procurement. That brought with it a whole lot of issues: lack of management oversight, very poor implementation in the first instance and very poor management of risk. As a result, work was not being done, so the number of customer complaints went up. They have subsequently come right back down again. Contractors were not getting paid and, as the member for Armadale rightly pointed out and as I have pointed out many times, in my view there is no way the cost savings that were discussed in the early days of the program have been realised. It is very hard, almost impossible, to quantify but on the balance of probabilities we can argue that there is no way the cost savings could have accrued at that rate. The question for me going forward is simply this: have enough changes been made to that model to make it robust enough and are there enough advantages within that model to keep it in place? I am getting more work done around that. I have to say that I am much more comfortable now with the model than I was a while ago.

The member for Armadale was right: I asked KPMG to conduct an audit of the head model in, I think, July or August last year. We worked on the terms of reference and got them engaged and I got the brief on the report last week. I got them involved because I hear what members opposite hear, particularly in regional areas, mainly from older contractors. I am sure the member for Collie–Preston will reflect on some of that. I gave an undertaking to some of those contractors that we would look at the model. I still think there are some issues, particularly in country areas. That ought to happen.

I should say that as a result of my conversations with the auditors last week, I have asked them to do two more jobs of work. One is to make sure the quality assurance system around payments is robust and that there is enough of a focus in that quality assurance process on quality. If we look at the value we deliver to our client—that is, the Homeswest tenant—there are three components to the value triangle: timeliness, price and quality. The KPIs that are set up at the moment focus only on timeliness. We need to review those KPIs. In other



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jurisdictions in Australia there is focus on timeliness, price and quality. We are too heavily skewed towards the timeliness aspect. Yes, there are significant problems in the implementation. I am disappointed that that was the outcome, but I put it in the context that the Department of Housing was driving some major reforms that will deliver long-term benefits in WA.

There are a couple of points to note in and around criticisms made of the head contractor model. I am sorry that the shadow Minister for Housing is not in the chamber; I understand he is ill today. I am assuming this motion will not come on for debate again, as is the nature of this place, so I thought I would put this information on the public record. Last week the shadow Minister for Housing asserted that the maintenance budget had been spent for the year because the Department of Housing was starting to manage non-urgent work. That is not true.

As at the end of February, approximately \$82 million of the \$106 million budget had been spent. It is not unusual during the course of the year for the department to manage its maintenance work so that it lives within its budget. What does that mean? Non-urgent work is often deferred, but emergency and priority work is done. There is absolutely no truth to any suggestion that the maintenance budget has been spent. I also refer to the comment about overdue jobs in the system. I will give members a snapshot from about a week ago. In March this year there were 24 434 jobs in the system and, of those, 12 410 were listed as overdue. That number sounds high, but if we look at 2007, there were 24 000 jobs in the system, of which nearly 11 000 were overdue. I understand there is some volatility around those numbers; however, the point I make again is that there have always been overdue jobs in the system, either because of issues in getting the work done or in reporting that the work has been done. We need to look at that figure as well. I was asked on the radio what I think that figure should be. I do not know at this stage, but it is something that we need to look at. There is money in the budget, although we have to manage that and the jobs in the system.

I will quickly touch on a couple of things before I sit down. Members opposite raised an issue about an instruction to pay that was given by the department. It is correct that the instruction to pay was issued for a period of time in 2010. The instruction was to clear the backlog of unpaid job orders. The other thing that was said was that we would come back at a later stage and audit those job orders. That approach was a concern to me and was a clear indication that the system at the time was failing. We had a lot of complaints, and the member for Willagee raised the issue at that time about contractors not being paid for work, so they were paid. I should point out that I have been advised that at that time all jobs over \$1 000 were checked. Subsequent to that time, all those jobs from June to December have been checked. For example, about \$25.3 million of maintenance money was paid to Transfield. I understand that as a result of those audits, around \$1.1 million is in dispute. Yes, there would have been jobs which were paid and for which money needs to be refunded to the government. The one benefit of the head contractor model is that it gives us the capacity to go back and conduct that quality assurance in a very rigorous way. I point out that the installation of the residual current device in Harding Street, Roebourne was paid for; the cheque was banked but it was never audited.

Importantly, moving forward, we need to make sure that we have a robust quality assurance system in place. One of the things I have asked KPMG to look at relates to the basic QA system. As it stands at the moment, if the job is worth over \$1 000, it is checked before it is paid, otherwise there is a quality assurance process. A percentage of jobs are quality assured. Somewhere between 10 and 40 per cent of jobs in one month will be desktop audited, and 10 per cent of jobs across the state in any one month will now be physically audited. If through this process staff think there are some issues, there is now an online system by which they can log those issues. My advice is that so far there have been 4 270 referrals made to that online process, which the QA team then follows up. About half of them have so far been followed up and resolved and there is still half to go. Staff now have an online logging mechanism. The member asked me before whether these records were kept informally. I understand that previously it was a paper-based system. I do not think that was to hide anything; I just do not think they had the systems in place to deal with that. In addition, high-risk work, such as licensed gas and electrical work, is given close attention by the quality assurance team.

The December 2011 audit—the audits are conducted at a time after the end of the month—identified around \$158 000 worth of noncompliant work. I do not know how much money was paid out in December; I was not provided with that advice, but if the overall maintenance budget is around \$106 million, the monthly average would be about \$8 million or \$9 million, although it could have moved. I have asked KPMG to have another look at that particular QA system to make sure that it is robust and to look at the quality assurance system generally. Have there been issues? Yes. Am I more confident that the system offers the potential to deliver savings? Yes, I am. Do I need additional reassurances in a couple of areas? Yes, I do, and I am seeking that. That is entirely appropriate as a minister.

The member for Willagee last week made a couple of comments about a meeting I had with the auditors without the Director General of the Department of Housing in attendance. My personal view is that I think that is entirely appropriate. I wanted to have a full and frank conversation with those auditors. Auditors talk in a certain polite turn of phrase, as they seem to be professionally trained to do; however, I thought that was important. I

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subsequently had another meeting with the director general. The member for Willagee then went on to say that he doubted whether the director general had seen the report. That is an absolute lie. The thing that bothers me sometimes is that people do not check the facts. The Director General of the Department of Housing sits on the Department of Housing's internal audit committee. That committee was provided with a draft copy of the report.

**Mr J.J.M. Bowler:** One of the best director generals in the whole system.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** He is good. For the member for Willagee to suggest he had not seen the report to try to whip up this public hysteria that I have somehow picked up this secret report and that I was going to hide it and do all this stuff is a complete nonsense. We are here to deliver genuine outcomes. I wish the member for Willagee was in the chamber, because he has publicly discussed maintenance before. Members may recall his fence. The member got a bit snaky when I mentioned the address of his property, which of course is available publicly on the register here in Parliament. I still maintain that his action in attempting through his public position to seek private gain was inappropriate.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** That is a bit rich when you look at the Minister for Planning! That is a very rich accusation to make when the Minister for Planning would not even admit it. I would not go down there if I were you.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am not, member for Armadale. I am no expert in corruption, but I have written, in relation to the member for Willagee's activities, to the Corruption and Crime Commission. I do not know if he has been corrupt. I think what he did was highly inappropriate. I have written to the CCC, because I assessed the *Hansard* —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Without him being here! That is incredibly rich.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am telling the member; it is my opportunity to speak. I read the *Hansard* in and around the referral of allegations against the Premier with The Cliffe. Given the standards applied to those activities, I felt compelled to write to the CCC. That was based on the bar set by members opposite in that debate on the referral of the Premier's activities with The Cliffe and some supposed relationship to his son. The CCC may or may not conduct an investigation; that has absolutely nothing to do with me. They now have that information. I have shared my concerns with them. The Speaker made it very clear in relation to what transpired in Parliament that day. However, we will see what happens.

Let me close by saying that there have been problems with the head contractor model, but I am far more confident now that this is a robust model that will deliver or has the potential to deliver positive outcomes.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [6.37 pm]:** I want to thank the Minister for Housing for his explanation, but unfortunately I have to refute a lot of the things that he said about the efficiencies of the system. I can say that I have seen a change since 2001, maybe because I have been here just a little longer than the member for Armadale, especially in country areas, which has been alluded to. Because of the short time available, I will go through only a couple of the cases I have here with me. They include outstanding work orders from 31 May 2011. From 2011 to now, people have been putting up with things such as a fence that had blown over. There was also a property that needed work done and a lady who moved into a refurbished house but who then had to get a medical certificate because the rubbish around the property was affecting her health. However, because of the system, she had to come into my office for help. I might add that because my region does not have a Department of Housing office, on many occasions my office is the first point of contact, which is why I have an understanding of these issues. People come through my front door for help and then out the back door. The staff of the Department of Housing in Bunbury work very hard. I am not criticising them; it is the system I am criticising. Under this system, people are complaining. In 2011 Mrs Joan Dinah moved in. There are still problems with her house. She was proud of it after it had been refurbished. She was lucky to get that house, and she is very appreciative of it. But she could not get the final bit done—that is, have the rubbish removed from under the house when it was refurbished. That sort of problem is ongoing.

There is another problem. The minister has a new system, but I contacted the Department of Housing in Bunbury and received an email telling me that unfortunately officers of the department now cannot log maintenance. That is just ridiculous. When people try to contact the department—they may get the wrong number—these officers cannot redirect these people. I find that to be absolutely ludicrous. A lot of people in public housing cannot afford to wait on the phone to the department. I have received emails left, right and centre from people who have waited 10 minutes and then hung up and then rung back and waited three minutes and then hung up. That is money out of their budgets that they cannot afford to spend on waiting on the phone to put in a complaint. There are still major problems down there. A couple of other issues come to mind. In another case a large window in a bedroom was badly cracked and was in danger of falling in. The tenant reported it again 10 days later and still nothing was done. In another case, the keys to a front door were lost, but the door was locked and so the rear doors had to be used to enter and exit the house. After a lengthy wait for maintenance, someone was sent to fix it. A contractor for Housing Direct who does maintenance in the south west lives in Harvey. This is one of the

problems that came up, and it is a real problem. The contractor in Harvey would not come up to fix the tenant's door because he would be out of pocket. He would not do that job, whereas previously the local contractor would do the job. There were set rates for different parts. Why would a contractor drive up from Harvey for one job? A contractor would not do that because he would go broke very quickly. That is where the system is falling down; there is a lack of use of local contractors. Homeswest used to make up one-third of the work of local contractors and the rest was maintenance work. Contractors have moved away from that work; they no longer need that work as part of their business. So it is very difficult to get them to look at a hot-water system. I think the whole thing needs a revamp in the south west. When I say "south west", I am talking about Bunbury, Harvey and Collie, because that is one of the cut-off points. There are not many problems in the Capel area or in other areas, but Collie has a large amount of public housing compared with some other areas.

We need to get back to basics. It is quite obvious that the system that has been put in place in the south west is not working because people cannot get their jobs done. Mrs Lorraine Bennell's public housing house was burnt in a kitchen fire. The family moved to the other end of the house while the work was done, but they have been disappointed. They did not grizzle for nearly 12 months. But they looked around and thought about it and wondered why their kitchen had not been painted after a lengthy wait for the carpentry work to be done. Then they wanted to know why the work had not been done and when they could get it done. They are not people who want to grizzle; they appreciate what they have. Of course, they see others living on the street and they do not want this saga to go on. They are certainly very frustrated.

In another case, a fence was knocked over in a storm when a tree fell on it. Mrs Robyn Probert reported that her gas hot-water system was not working. This was the third time it had happened. A plumber had been out twice to fix the hot-water system because there was no spark on the pilot light. She said that the unit needed replacing. She has had no hot water for 10 days. Robyn has two children and is desperate to have this fixed. It is just not fair on the children in that family to go 10 days without a hot shower. It causes problems at school, because the kids do not want to have a cold shower and so they go to school without a shower and that causes social problems. It is not just a direct issue with public housing; it affects the community as well. I am sure that all of us have been subjected to that from time to time. In another case, Tania Jones of 38 Atkinson Street wanted the Department of Housing to contact her urgently as a tree had been uprooted and another fence had been blown over. This was after her first complaint in 2011. In the meantime, there was another storm and another fence had blown over. The answer was —

Fallen tree is in front yard—not a problem to leave on ground for now: tenants may chop it up themselves, ...

What sort of an answer is that from the department? That is deplorable. I think these people are privileged to be in a Department of Housing house. They take care of their house and think about the maintenance. That sort of attitude causes some people to lose faith and not look after their properties. Some of the best kept houses in Collie are Department of Housing houses; there is no doubt about that. But if people lose faith in the system, they will gradually go down the line. One of the disappointing things I have seen—it was probably brought in by a Labor government—is the Keystart program. Under this program, people were given a house, but they could not afford to fix it. Over time, little things would go wrong. The front window might break, but they would not have 50 or 100 bucks to fix it, so it would not get fixed and a bit of cardboard would be put up. If the hot-water system broke down, they might use the kettle. Slowly but surely Keystart people fall down if they do not have the backup and the money. Then they want to go into a Department of Housing house. They sell their house at a loss and they have debt. They do not have the same enthusiasm that they previously had. It is about systems.

Although I agree with the minister about the system and about paying and not having the job done, there need to be some checks and balances. There should always be checks and balances, whether they be on tenants or maintenance. But, as the minister mentioned, we need to look at why the jobs are not being done in a shorter period and in a cost-effective way. I believe a lot of the issues are happening because the minister has applied a one-size-fits-all system in the south west area. I believe we can cut it into squares so that some of the existing jobs can be worked on and the local contractors can get back maybe five or 10 per cent of their business. It needs to be cost effective and the work needs to be done in a timely way. Someone might have to come up from Harvey or Bunbury to do the work. I believe that sometimes a couple of contractors would come up from Busselton. That is where the problem is. Time is spent on the road, so straightaway the contractors are charging for an hour and a half drive from Busselton to Collie or for a three-quarter of an hour drive from Harvey. Efficiencies are being lost in travelling time. We all know that when a tradie gets to the job, he has to have his choc milk before he does the job. That is just life and we have to adjust. Local tradespeople need to be competitive and profitable. Someone said that they would not even bother looking at a job because the price was too low. Businesses do not work if they are not profitable.

I have an email from a person who has got out of the business because he lost the Department of Housing business. He states —

Hi All

A Note of Thanks

I wish to advise, that as from the close of business on Wednesday 29 February 2012, I am closing my architectural practice.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all, for all your support, encouragement and friendship, throughout my many years of association with the Department of Housing.

The reason for closing my practice, is simply due to the Department not tendering any work to architects, over the past 18 months.

The department has lost a person who was working for it. Obviously, a lot of his business came from the Department of Housing and he used to watch for tenders from the department. It has now lost that person.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Member, can I just say—I'm not disputing that some of this has had an impact—that an architect generally would not be involved with a lot of the maintenance work. However, the department has definitely changed its procurement models. It used to basically do it on a block-by-block-by-block basis.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I understand that, but my point is that the system put in place is pushing people out; it is pushing them away.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I think in country areas there are, for the reasons you have articulated, some issues we need to look at.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Again, I come back to some of these poor people—I have a couple of minutes left—who really are beside themselves. They cannot get outside because the fence is down. The dog has been on the chain for three months because the ranger said that if it is in the street, the person who owns it will be fined, but they do not have a fence. The kids still cannot play outside because they do not have a fence. One person said, “Mick, please, can you help? Who do I go to?” We pass on the number. She came back a week later and said, “I've been on the phone for 10 minutes and I haven't been able to get through.” The frustration that builds up causes more problems than what it is worth. I missed out a bit from the email from the architect.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** This is the architect.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Roland McCallum is the architect. I will read the last bit of the email. It states —

I am a spirit filled christian taking my instructions in life from the bible. The bible teaches me to bless those that curse me and pray for those who despitely use me. So I pray for and ask God to bless Colin Barnett, Troy Buswell and all the executive officers of the Department who have taken away my lively hood, after such long diligent service.

I thought I had to put that in *Hansard* because the minister has been blessed, and maybe with that blessing he will be able to find it in his heart to fix the system that has fallen apart.

At first when the tenders were all let, okay, there was the pushing and the shoving, and people were saying, “I can't get this done”, because there was some leniency about people going out on weekends on the basis of just a phone call, with no job order. The job order would then be put in on the Monday. That was done on a regular basis within my region; I know that. So, yes, compliance, tightening up and working with it had to be done. I have no problem with that. But where do people go when the system falls down and the department says, “No, that's not what we want now. The system is okay. It's just that we have to tighten it up”? I do not believe that. I believe that the whole system has fallen apart, so the minister has to start again. I suppose there is a contract that is very difficult to get out of now, because I believe it is quite a long-term one.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No, I don't think it has that long to run. It may be six months or 12 months.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** If the contractors are not going to do the job, the minister really has to address that.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Where was that architect from—just out of interest?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Harvey, I think. I will have a look. Is the minister going to thank him for the prayers?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** I am. I think it's very generous.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** That is very good of the minister.

The other thing, as I get towards the end of my time, is that there is another issue that concerns me. I heard the minister say that people have jumped in and said that the money has dried up. Internally, that is the word in the

south west: there is no money available for any further maintenance until the next budget comes out. That is what is being said, and the minister has refuted that.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No, I didn't. What I said was that it hasn't all been spent, and there's no doubt that some categories of maintenance are not being progressed as quickly as they otherwise would because we would run out of money before the end of the year. That is a broader budget issue, but that has been our historical challenge for the department for a number of years. Some years are worse than others.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Does that not show that the system the minister put in place is not working? That is what I am saying to the minister. The money is still being expended too quickly or not on the right jobs if the minister thinks the box is big enough.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** The other argument is that you haven't got enough money in the pot.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** But when we hear that coming from inside and the minister mentioning important maintenance and regular maintenance, who does the checks and balances? If a house has not been fixed for six months and has not been painted inside, is that what the minister would call needed maintenance, or would he say that needed maintenance is with the house that has the front door that cannot be opened or the house that does not have steps? That is another problem that the minister has within the system, because there are no proper checks and balances to say who makes the call. Within the system, we really have to do more. It must be remembered that one size does not fit all. The issues that I think the minister must talk to the people in the south west about are how much money is there and where it will be used, and the use of local contractors.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [6.55 pm]:** I will be very brief in endorsing the comments of the members for Armadale and Collie–Preston. The minister, in the exchange with the member for Armadale, accused the member of not being in this place long enough; therefore, how would he know?

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** No, I didn't say that.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is what the minister said. I base my evidence of the problems that exist and need to be fixed on the experience of people in my electorate, including a fellow called Ron Bellamy. Ron has been in his unit in Rockford Street, Mandurah for 16 years.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Ron Bellamy?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. He has seen a couple of governments come and go.

**Mr T.R. Buswell:** Where does he live? I think I know him.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** In Rockford Street. The minister probably knows his name because he writes to the minister regularly. However, Ron Bellamy is a fellow who has lived in his unit for 16 years. Ron has seen the previous system and the current system that this government has undertaken with the Transfield Services model. Ron had a couple of examples only recently when again calls were made to the central number. The work was given a priority, but the work was not done or the work was not done quickly enough. Ron had a real problem. He had locks put on his front and back doors, but when the doors were closed, they did not self-lock at all; they continued to open. Then he had a problem with the back door. It locked, and he could not get out. It took five days before action was taken. That was a real problem for him. He also has a pylon—I think this is really dangerous—that holds up his front porch, and it is basically on a lean. It has been pushed into place back and forth. Some time ago he bailed up one of the contractors and told him about that, and all the contractor did was straighten up the pylon again. Ron has seen the system under both governments, Labor and Liberal. He said to me last night on the phone that there is a problem with the current system—again, the member for Collie–Preston highlighted this. He said that a lot of the work was previously done by locals who knew the tenants and the tenancies, and they were timely in responding. In fact, he said that his locks were finally fixed by a local contractor who came in and fixed them within a few minutes.

We have heard a lot tonight. I have received the same complaints, and I will not go through them because time is going to beat me. I have a number of examples similar to those that have been read out by the member for Collie–Preston and those that have been highlighted by the member for Armadale. These are examples of maintenance needs not being responded to in a timely fashion. Whether or not we see some examples as being a greater priority than other examples, the fact remains that these are people's homes, and many of these people are vulnerable. They are certainly concerned when something happens. I have an example of rats in the roof of the Department of Housing home of some elderly people. Those rats are eating through the electrical wires, causing problems, and those things have taken weeks to be responded to. At night these people go to bed listening to the rats chewing and playing up in the roof cavity. There are people who have security lighting concerns, and they reported that over a three-month period. I will not mention any names because I do not want these tenants to get into trouble. Security lights are a very important issue for elderly people in particular. Security lights have been out of action for extended periods. The example I am looking at is a security light

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problem of 20 March this year, so it was only yesterday. For three months, this person has reported on several occasions that the light is not working. The neighbours have also reported it. She was told that it would be fixed on Friday, and it still had not been done as at 4.00 pm on Monday.

I know that these may be seen as isolated examples by the minister, but they are not. They are widespread throughout the system. They are problems that are experienced in many, many communities. The system that the minister has set up has some major flaws and it needs to be fixed. The responses need to be timely, and the maintenance needs to be done in a timely fashion, particularly when it comes to those issues that affect vulnerable tenants in our community—namely, tenants who are older, tenants who have a disability or tenants who have a mental illness or some other particular illness. When they report an issue or a problem, they expect it to be responded to appropriately.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*House adjourned at 7.00 pm*

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