

## PUBLIC HOUSING — FUNDING

### *Motion*

Resumed from 11 June on the following motion moved by Mr F.M. Logan —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its budget funding cuts to public housing, crisis accommodation and other housing programs as waiting times for public housing continue to increase and the failure of Liberal–National governments to increase the income threshold limit for public housing tenants.

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [4.01 pm]: I was delighted to rise last Wednesday to begin the debate on this motion. I was particularly appreciative of the member for Cockburn’s contribution and his forensic dissection of the 2014–15 budget and the budget papers. In particular, he pointed out that if we follow the line item “Construction and Purchase of Houses Program” in the “New Works” table on page 527 of budget paper No 2—of which only a component is public housing—across to the estimate expenditure in 2014, we see that the government has committed to spend \$8 million. Last year’s financial figure of \$127.5 million drops to \$8 million in the forthcoming financial year. What the member for Cockburn demonstrated and went through in great detail was how the public of Western Australia are not getting what they expect from their public housing authority. They know that the public housing and housing affordability situation needs to be addressed. Indeed, it is such a situation that the compassionate in our community want to ensure that people are not in excessive housing stress. We in this place know that housing stress is defined as spending more than 30 per cent of income on housing. They do not want to see the level of homelessness dealt with on 7.30 and other current affairs programs or through a person ringing a talkback radio program because of homelessness. They particularly do not want to see the impact homelessness has on children in our community. The capacity to provide and have our communities thrive is a great concern to all of us.

Figures from the 2011 census show the situation. At the time, 9 595 Western Australian citizens were homeless and there was an increase of 1 171 people living in severely overcrowded dwellings. Not only are people homeless, but also dwellings are overcrowded. As well, the 2011 census shows that 7 000 people were marginally housed. It is of great concern that during 2012–13, an estimated 21 417 people received support from a government-funded specialist homeless agency in Western Australia. Of these, 15 173, or 71 per cent, were adults. A crushing figure is that 6 244, or 29 per cent, were under 18 years of age. It does concern us. In a survey of homelessness conducted by a shelter and spoken about at a Western Australian Council of Social Service seminar, 90 per cent of those surveyed said that the barrier to getting appropriate service was because the services were full. When they sought assistance for homelessness and the predicament they found themselves in, they found that they could not get appropriate services. That certainly seems to be the experience of many of the agencies that assist with housing.

As I raised last time I spoke on this, Coolabaroo Housing Service in Gosnells, which is for Aboriginal people, is turning away Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people because it cannot assist them with housing. That is one of the biggest issues for community agencies around Mirrabooka—they are not able to assist people who are homeless. I must not be the only member of Parliament who has had a deputy principal or someone from a school call them because a student’s family faces imminent homelessness and they are concerned about the impact that would have on the schooling of someone they care for in their school community, so much so that the school has to get involved in trying to assist with that greater pastoral need. That is why we have public housing in our community. That is why there is an established public housing authority.

We want a community that does not include homelessness and has the benefits of secure housing. We are not a community that allows people to erect tents; in fact, if they are put up at the workers’ embassy across the road from Parliament House, they are taken down. If they are put up on vacant land at the corner of Milldale Way and Chesterfield Road—the Department of Housing land that I stand and speak about repetitively in this place—they are taken down. We are a community that will not allow people to set up alternatives to the bricks-and-mortar type of house and, because of that, because we have a certain expectation of how our community should look and be housed, we have to cater for those in our community who cannot access the private rental market because of cost or other aspects of their situation. Often that may be because there is such high demand in the private rental market, as we have seen. There may be an Islamic family with four or five children that tries to rent a private rental but will not be given a house. I raised this issue once before in this place. We had a much-respected African community elder who had previously run a shop and was in the stages of purchasing a house. He was getting his loan together but became homeless because the house he was renting was sold or some such thing; I am not entirely sure of the circumstances. He could not get another tenancy in the period of time that he needed one and he found himself homeless. It was quite a shock for him and his community that that occurred. I, for one, believe that has probably got a little to do with how we sometimes view those who are different in our

community when they try to rent a house. Thankfully, he now has his loan, has purchased a house, and life for him and his family has returned to normality.

Before I go into greater detail on some of the things I want to talk about, I go back to the Department of Housing land on Milldale Way in Mirrabooka. I thank the minister for the opportunity of the briefing that I had from his department recently, which I sought through the member for Willagee during the estimates hearings. It was enlightening, albeit disappointing, because, in effect, the response was, “We’re waiting for the City of Stirling to finish its structural planning.” My view is that that was delayed and almost restarted because of the commitments that the government made around the Metro Area Express light rail. Because of that, the department suddenly got all excited and sought rezoning for that area. Previously it was zoned for only four storeys and the department wanted to increase that to eight because it saw that it was important to be able to maximise housing around a light rail system. That went back into the system and had to go through advertising in the paper and all the rest of the process to ensure that there were no objections. That went through, and then the department went back to the town and structure planning that it wanted for the whole area—not just government land, by the way, but the whole area of Mirrabooka. That is what the department is saying is delaying the land. Frankly, should I be successful in the 2017 state election, I will be saying in my first speech in this house that the land is still not developed. That briefing gave me no reassurance that there was any speed in this process. Once the structure planning goes out and is advertised, the department has to decide what it wants to do and it will have to advertise and contract out. A poor bloke was sent in to deal with a cranky member for Mirrabooka, and I told him that it does not seem that there will be anything happening for four-odd years.

The people in that area are disappointed with the government’s failure to deliver MAX; they are disappointed at having to wait for something to happen with that land. It seems to me that the government needs to take control. If the government can take control in Scarborough and get the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority to develop and deal with the issues there, it can certainly do the same in Mirrabooka. There are a lot of people sitting on land, waiting for something to happen, including the Department of Housing, and no-one is doing anything. Meanwhile, this land is in close proximity to the city and could deliver great affordable housing into the area, but it needs someone to provide leadership. I have come to the firm conclusion that that leadership is no longer about waiting for the City of Stirling or the Department of Housing to do it; it needs something like the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority to come over the top and organise it. If the government can give \$2 million to Chinatown, \$30 million to Scarborough and \$2.6 billion to Elizabeth Quay, it could certainly deliver something to Mirrabooka, given that it is not going to deliver the light rail.

As I said, I was very appreciative of the member for Cockburn’s comments and I noted from his comments that the minister had had a number of questions without notice; one does think that maybe he protests too much.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I have spoken in this house a couple of times about how well the minister’s staff do under really trying circumstances. They are bearing the brunt of the minister’s poor management of public housing. They are bearing the brunt of people in desperate situations turning up and looking to access affordable housing. The member for Cockburn in his contribution to the third reading debate for the appropriation bill very eloquently described the way in which the minister is now institutionalising poverty in the Department of Housing. A Homeswest tenant can earn a maximum of only \$430 a week, whereas the minimum industry award across Australia is \$640 a week. The minister is effectively institutionalising poverty in that area. Public housing should cover a broad range of people, because that will ensure that we have a broad range of clients accessing the services, so that we do not have one particular group that staff have to deal with on an ongoing basis. Frankly, that is what has happened under this government. People who are marginalised and perhaps suffering from a mental illness tend to be relegated because they perhaps do not have the same opportunities that others have. We would like that to be different, but that is the case, so suddenly the minister’s staff are dealing with complex problems, but they are equipped with only the capacity to be accommodation managers. I have raised with the minister the death of Robert Roll and the finding from the minister’s investigation that there was a lack of resources to be able to identify the problems Mr Roll was having. I also note that on 16 December 2013, the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA put out a press release calling for greater protection for Department of Housing staff, to look after their welfare. The press release revealed that in 2012–13, eight housing officers were assaulted by tenants, up from four in the previous year, and charges were laid in five cases. Further to that, 12 staff were threatened with violence or verbally abused by applicants or tenants, up from six the previous year. I believe that those officers would have dealt well with those situations, under difficult circumstances. I often say to my staff that when people yell at them, it is because they do not have power, because powerful people do not need to yell; they get what they want. If they are getting upset and yelling, it is because they have lost power and they are trying to gain something in their lives that they can control.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Just remember that next time you're in the chair!

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I thank the member for Albany! In this case, it is a power struggle, not a situation of vulnerability. No-one accepts poor behaviour towards public servants—people who do a great job of serving our community—but I believe that the department has people who are sympathetic and empathetic to the people with whom they deal.

I put it to the minister that I would welcome a Dorothy Dixier that would have the minister talking about how he supports his staff. Given that he has frozen their wages and is having a blue with them over wages and conditions—despite the fact that he asks them to do some of the most difficult jobs of all—and given that he has frozen the appointment of FTEs, I want to know how he supports his staff. He can stand and bang on about how the national rental affordability scheme has delivered properties in leafy green Nedlands to refurbish a university hall of residence and say that that is a housing opportunity, and that all his figures include opportunities, loans and bond assistance, but I want to know how he is supporting his people on the front line, doing some of the hardest work in the public sector.

I also note that the effective cut from \$127.5 million last year to \$8 million in the forthcoming financial year for the purchase and construction of housing in Western Australia will do nothing to meet the needs of the 20 000 people on the public housing waiting list. I draw the attention of the Minister for Housing to the submission of the National Foundation for Australian Women to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics' inquiry into affordable housing, and, in particular, to an article in *The Sunday Times* on 1 June. Its figures show that the number of homeless women in Australia has risen 19 per cent in the past five years and that the lack of affordable housing is felt disproportionately by women because of the high number of women in low-paid jobs, the number of women heading single families and high rates of poverty among older women who live alone. While the minister does that, he could talk about how the government is dealing with the bigger problem of the gender pay gap in Western Australia and what it is doing to help women who find it difficult to meet the cost of living in this state. Western Australia has a 27 per cent gender pay gap. Frankly, given women's income is already discriminated against, there is little wonder why it is harder to make ends meet, to meet the rent and to afford the cost of living and housing in Western Australia.

With bricks, I would like congratulate the minister. I note that in the same edition of *The Sunday Times* the Department of Housing quickly found a good news story. When I worked for a former minister for housing, I recall the chief executive officer calling and saying, "Yes, yes, that is a bad story, but here we have in the bottom drawer this great story about a person with a house." It is a great story when people get houses, and the story I refer to is about Leanne Donegan who was denied loans because she was a woman—hence, I raise the issue. I thought it was interesting that the minister was happy to put into the paper a story about how Keystart was happy to help a poor woman who found herself discriminated against because every time she went to seek housing finance she was asked, "Do you have a partner?" She states in that *The Sunday Times* article —

"Being a female and on my own — I felt like they weren't even going to look at me,"...

"They would ask you, 'Do you have a partner', and, 'Can he put in his salary?'"

She was very kind and said —

"I think this was just for a safety net."

I would be very unkind and say that that is probably because she is suffering the Western Australian disease when it comes to women—that is, the government does not respond to make sure that she is not paid 27 per cent less than most men in this state, as a general rule. In any event, I commend Keystart. I have done some great work with Keystart. I have previously drawn to the minister's attention the issues that face many new arrivals to Western Australia. I understand that the Housing Crisis Committee, an organisation that operates in the northern suburbs that seeks affordable housing for people, wants Keystart and the government to consider more than one income when purchasing a house. It is about income sharing, not necessarily in relationships, but via multiple sources. That sort of thinking outside of the box would be worthwhile because some of the new arrivals to Western Australia are happy to share housing and housing costs.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** A joint ownership?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Yes, that sort of thing. That could be really on the edge of people being able to purchase a home. Newly arrived Australians, especially from Burma, Sudan, South Sudan or Afghanistan, come here thinking this is the land of opportunity; yet when they get here, they find it is the land of opposing forces unless they can find the financial security that they do not have when they are newly arrived. They are on the margins, working long hours in casualised work and facing various difficulties, and suddenly they find that gaining the security of housing through the purchase of a home is difficult. There needs to be some innovation in this area to

Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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assist those people. I am sure there are good agencies that have been working in this space for a long time that could work with the government on this matter. It seems to me, again, that if the government really wants to provide housing opportunities, those opportunities need to be across the board and available to everyone in the community, not just to the public servants who are being peddled out to show how to purchase a house, as the member for Cockburn illustrated in his speech.

I am also concerned about commonwealth rent assistance, which currently totals about \$3.6 billion annually. It is not sufficient to deal with people renting in the private sector. I understand that there are 1 267 979 recipients of rent assistance in Australia as at June 2013. Eight per cent of that money is received in Western Australia. The maximum that a person can receive is 75c in the dollar above a rent threshold—that is, 35 per cent or 40 per cent if a person shows that it takes 40 per cent of their income—and the maximum is about \$124. Most of all, I want the minister to protect that commonwealth rent assistance, especially given that the Liberal federal government is cutting it from the people who can least afford it. We have just seen what the federal government has done to pensioners, so the minister had better be in there batting for Western Australia, because if he is not, it will affect not only those people who get rent assistance, but also —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Community housing affordability.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Yes, the options to take it across to community housing organisations. Community housing associations work only because the government gives them capital and they can get rent assistance. It is cost shifting.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [4.27 pm]: I also rise to speak on the member for Cockburn's public housing motion. There are few more important issues for any state government to deal with than housing, along with health, education, security and community safety. I want to make some comments about the importance of housing, the issue of public and community housing, and then relay to the Minister for Housing some scenarios that have come to my office.

As the Minister for Housing would very well know, housing is paramount to the citizens of Western Australia. The importance of shelter is very well known throughout the world. The right to adequate shelter is recognised under various international instruments of the United Nations. Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 8 of which refers to the right to housing. The question I ask, however, is whether article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is legally binding on the governments that have signed that instrument that came into force in 1966. What obligation does that impose on the Australian government and, of course, on the state governments that lie underneath? It is a positive obligation in the sense that it is not like the right to the freedom of speech, which is a negative obligation. This obligation requires positive action by governments. There is always debate in international human rights circles about whether positive obligations are rights of the first order or aspirational rights. What I am saying is properly left to universities because it is more important for the people that we represent that we deal with the situation rather than deal with our international obligations. However, I wanted to relay to the house the importance of housing internationally and why the right to housing is recognised under various international instruments.

We know that housing or adequate shelter is so important for people's self-esteem and their ability to hold down a job and obtain adequate education. I think I have mentioned a number of times that each year one of the primary schools in my electorate has a 40 per cent transient student population. The principal says that it is basically because of housing. A lot of parents are unable to obtain satisfactory long-term housing so they move from one dwelling to another.

The importance of housing is something that we can all agree on. The question is: what do we do about it? It is difficult for any government. No government will ever be able to satisfy the demand for public housing completely. That is why we need to try to come up with some creative solutions. It is quite clear that the current public housing system that both governments have followed, whether it is through the Department of Housing, Homeswest or whatever we wish to call it, plus non-government agency community housing, does not provide enough housing. The waiting lists are phenomenal.

Before I get to some of the scenarios that I have come across in my office, one of the problems is that there is not enough housing—not enough physical structures—and another problem is the affordability issue. As we know, over the past 10 years in Western Australia the cost of housing has increased significantly, whether one wants to purchase a house or rent a house, because of the mining boom and the general economic boom. The problem is that the people who may not have the capacity to purchase a home often do not have the income to rent. I know that the department provides bond assistance but even if it provides bond assistance, that does not necessarily mean that people can afford to rent. Often, a lot of these people are on Centrelink assistance. It then becomes a question of whether they feed their family or pay the rent. Once the decision is made to feed their family rather

than pay the rent, the tenure of that rental accommodation is under threat. That is a problem, and there are also the associated utility charges for electricity, water and so forth. The issues that are facing the government are amazingly complex, and in many respects they are at a crisis level.

I would now like to relay to the minister some scenarios that I have seen in my office. The first one relates to the homeless situation. As I have also stated recently, there is an increase in homelessness in Western Australia. It is evident not just in the city. Once upon a time there were no visible homeless people in Perth. I am sure we have all witnessed people sleeping in lanes or at the entrance to shops overnight, whether it be in the city or elsewhere. I have seen a number of homeless people along Albany Highway in Victoria Park, which is quite depressing, and I have also seen it in my electorate. The Acting Speaker (Mr N.W. Morton) would be very well aware of Riverside Drive, near the old Kelmscott swimming pool, just down from Canning Mills Road. I have seen homeless people there, which I would never have seen before. That is incredibly depressing. The government is not necessarily the cause of people being made homeless in the first place but government actions can aggravate the situation and make it difficult for them to try to get back on even terms. Many of these people cannot even contemplate having a roof over their heads.

A disability pensioner who has been on the priority list for single accommodation for five years and is also dual listed for community housing came to our office. At the moment he is living at his ex-partner's home and sleeps on the floor in the lounge room. Some people might wonder what he is complaining about if his ex-partner is allowing him to sleep on the floor in the lounge. The ex-partner will not allow him to sleep there forever. The problem is that this disability pensioner has a pacemaker and suffers from seizures, and his living situation only exacerbates his condition. I believe that he has tried without success to find a home through the national rental affordability scheme. He has been told by the department that the department is housing people who applied for priority housing in 2008. It would be good if the minister has an update on that and can address the house about it.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It depends where you are. It ranges.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is out my way.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** When did he apply?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** He has been on the priority list for single accommodation for five years. He has been told by the department that it is currently housing people who applied in 2008.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Is he on the priority list?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Yes, for priority housing. The department told him that it is currently housing people who applied to get on the priority list in 2008. He has been on the priority list for five years.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** The other fact is also the type of rental they are after.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** He is after single accommodation. In any case, that is quite alarming. We have made inquiries of the department and have been told that he remains on the priority list. At present no properties are available in the south east metropolitan area as the vacancy rate is very low. That is concerning on many levels. The south-east corridor has a lot of people who make demands on the public housing scheme. If there is no availability or there is a low vacancy rate, that is a real problem. Also, before the minister was Minister for Housing, I think the government made a conscious decision on public housing in the western suburbs. They were sold because they were viewed as being prime real estate and the money could be better used by selling the properties and building public housing in areas that were not of such high economic value. Many areas in the south-east metropolitan area do not have the same real estate value as those in the western suburbs. If the department is finding it difficult to provide sufficient public housing stock in the south-east metropolitan area, one has to wonder where we are heading as a civil society in a state that is supposed to be the richest state in Australia—one of the richest states in the world.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Only if you're rich.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Inequality is becoming a major issue. There is no doubt that the federal budget has focused people's minds on inequality. Even John Howard, the second longest serving Prime Minister in Australia, criticised the federal budget for all its inequalities. That is quite a significant criticism by a former Prime Minister, a hero of the Liberal Party.

The second constituent that I wish to talk about is another disability pensioner. She is a single mother with twin 15-year-old daughters. She has significant medical issues, including renal failure, and must undergo dialysis every night at home. She requires a house with wheelchair access because of her disabilities. She has other disabilities that I do not want to state now because it might give away her identity. She is also a university student. She is doing her best to improve her situation but is not being helped by the housing situation. She

previously lived in a private rental for three years, but the owner decided to sell the house and she has been on a priority list since May 2013. She was offered a house by the department in May, but the department said that she declined because she believed it was medically unsuitable. The house would appear to be medically unsuitable but there are other issues with regard to the house. The disability pensioner talks about the house being filthy, it has no fencing, there are holes in the walls, there are no curtains, the floor coverings and flyscreens are ripped, the weeds are as tall as her and there is uneven paving, which would be dangerous for her because of her mobility disability. Although the house is definitely medically unsuitable, it is in a poor state for anyone to live in. This information was passed on to the department that stated the home would be reassessed to ensure it is suitable for allocation prior to being reoffered to another client on the waiting list.

My next problem relates to maintenance, an issue that has been raised in this house numerous times. It was this government that decided to contract out maintenance. The minister has a very hard case to prove that the contracting out of maintenance has been a success; if anything, it has been a failure. People have telephoned us to say that they asked the maintenance people to come out to look at “X”, and while they were looking at “X”, they told them about “Y”, but the maintenance people could not deal with “Y” because they had to go back to the department and obtain the proper invoice or order forms et cetera before dealing with “Y”. That is an incredibly inefficient use of public resources, and it also takes a lot longer for things to be done. Last year an age pensioner from my electorate who lives in Homeswest accommodation had major issues with regard to flooding or water supply in her unit. She had been asking the department for a considerable time to deal with the problem that involved the water supply to the whole complex—I think there were about eight Homeswest units in the complex, and they were very nice units situated near the Armadale swimming pool. The minister is an old Armadalian but he probably left Armadale before it was built.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I know the swimming pool.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is not that far from the pool, and not that far from Cecil Andrews Senior High School actually. In any case, no matter what she asked for the department was not dealing with it. She rang 6PR and it was so strange because as she went on air—I was with her—the maintenance people arrived. I think Homeswest had been told about an hour and a half earlier that she was going to be on air on 6PR. She had been waiting for a number of days for this water issue to be solved without any success and then once Homeswest found out that she was going to be on 6PR, within half an hour the maintenance people arrived. That is not good enough. Of course the minister is not there to look at what people are going out to the jobs, but it happened on his watch. As with the commanding officer of a ship, in the end he is responsible, and of course he must stay with a sinking ship and not desert it. It is also the minister’s job to put in place the systems to ensure that these problems are rectified.

With regard to maintenance, a constituent contacted my office on 11 February this year. She talked about extensive cracking throughout the house and was concerned about the structural integrity of the house. There were cracks in the shower tiles and bubbling in the linoleum, and the problems were generally quite dangerous.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** My office emailed the department on 11 February but it took until 17 February for the property to be inspected. Subsequently the department thought it necessary to arrange for a structural engineer to carry out an assessment of the property, and that occurred on 20 February. On 11 March we emailed the department to ascertain the outcome of the structural engineer’s inspection, and on 26 March the constituent called our office to talk about how the cracks in the shower were becoming worse. The constituent was really concerned about the safety of the bathroom and the house in general. On 2 April, the department advised that the property service officers had inspected the house on 30 March and noted that although there were cracks in the shower, they saw no evidence of associated water damage but that it would arrange for the shower to be sealed. The department also said that the engineer had made recommendations that could potentially reverse the existing cracks and limit further cracking, which were under review. The engineer stated that the house was stable and safe for habitation in its present condition. However, the constituent said that the report suggested filling cracks with expander filler and maybe installing underground reticulation to prevent further cracking.

On 30 April, the constituent received a letter from the department saying it would replace the front verandah posts, seal the shower and seal around the cornices. The department also stated that there were minor cracks in the bathroom floor that did not require attention, but the constituent emailed my office to say that she thought the cracks in the bathroom tiles were not minor as bits were chipping off and she was very concerned that her or her young son would cut themselves because the edges were quite sharp. She was also concerned about water leaking into the floors and the walls and that she could not scrub the shower tiles as pieces kept falling off when she did so. On 8 May she emailed us to say that the cracks in the walls had been temporarily fixed, the shower and kitchen benchtops had still not been fixed, and that there was a problem with the temperature and hot water

pressure that she had reported. On 4 June, she emailed to say that the cracks in the shower had not been repaired and corners of the shower had been siliconed, but that there were still cracks in the tiles. The exterior wall under the bathroom window was wet, indicating a serious leak. Members must remember that we were contacted on 11 February, and we are now into June. The Department of Housing informed her that it would take up to 10 days to get the pressure test done and that the gutters were full and the eaves were wet and mouldy due to the cracked ridge capping. She was also told that this would be fixed under routine maintenance and that there had previously been problems with water streaming down the inside of the lounge window, a problem that had never been satisfactorily fixed. She also reported large amounts of metal sticking out of the earth in the backyard that was extremely dangerous for her son. The department said it would remove it within five days. On 5 June, the plumber came out and told the constituent that the leak was caused by cracked tiles—surprise, surprise—and that they needed to be replaced, but that he could not fix the leak.

On 10 June, the department responded to say that it had not been able to contact the constituent to gain access to the house. We doubted that that was the situation because we had never had any problems with contacting the constituent; we used the same means of communication that the department used. The constituent said that she had no missed calls or notes in the letterbox saying that the department had tried to contact her. It turns out that the property service manager had popped into the house on the off chance that she might be home. One could argue that this is not really an adequate attempt to contact the constituent. The constituent then called to say that the department had finally contacted her on 10 June. On 11 June she called to say that the property service manager had come out that morning and taken multiple photos of cracks and other maintenance problems, photos of which were also taken back in February this year. She said that he undertook to look into everything and get back to her as soon as possible. It was also noted that the department had been invoiced incorrectly by the contractor for fixing doors at the property, a job that was not carried out. This is the problem once we contract out maintenance.

The problem is that the department has just been putting a bandaid on the problems with the property instead of fixing it. The constituent should be moved elsewhere and the property fixed or it should be demolished. I am not philosophically saying that I am always opposed to the contracting out of government services; it depends, obviously. The proof is in the pudding; the results are there. The contracting out of the maintenance of Department of Housing properties has been an abject failure for the people who are renting the properties and for the taxpayer. I would be interested to know the so-called economic savings that the government alleges have been made by contracting out, because it ain't been more efficient, so I do not know where the economic savings are. If anything, it has increased the cost because rather than the maintenance person who would have been working for the department once upon a time being able to do A, B and C, they can do only B and have to go back and try to get the appropriate invoice for A or C.

Another homeless constituent in my electorate has been living in her friend's car, which is rather sad. Her children are in the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and there is an issue with substance abuse. The Department of Housing is not at fault if someone has a substance abuse problem, but the department has to deal with the tenants who come before it. This constituent desperately needs stable and secure accommodation for her to address her substance abuse problem. Living in the car of a friend is not an environment that is conducive to someone addressing their substance abuse problem. It is incredibly important that people in this type of situation receive appropriate and secure accommodation. Leaving aside what some people would call the aggravating situation of substance abuse or whatever, many people are homeless through no fault of their own. There but for the grace of God go I, and many people are only one pay packet away from poverty. That is the scenario for many people. It is not the scenario for a minister or a backbencher; we could probably survive not receiving a couple of payments.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** As long as you do not do anything wrong.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As long as we do not do anything wrong; that is right.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** We do not miss out on our parliamentary pension ever.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That is right. We better not start on that or we might be here to the end of the year talking about parliamentary superannuation or pensions. As the minister would know, a very interesting debate happened many years ago when the parliamentarians voted to change the superannuation scheme, but the ones in the existing scheme managed to retain it.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Except for one.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Mr Carpenter, who later became the Premier, was the only one.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It was his bill, was it not?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It was originally, but I think it was brought in by then Premier Richard Court.

**Mr M.H. Taylor:** It sounds as though we need an inquiry!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** There may be bipartisanship on that.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** You might get a lot of speakers, as you say.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** We might. I go back to the serious issue of housing. The minister is fully aware that there is a crisis due to the lack of stock, the way the department runs its maintenance works and how it deals with complaints. In my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill 2014, I raised the issue of appropriate housing for people who now do not have shelter because of domestic violence, and I will refer to it in the short time I have left. This comes under the Minister for Housing's portfolio to a degree but, of course, the Minister for Women's Interests would also have some responsibility. As we very well know, domestic violence is predominantly a gendered crime. The way domestic violence statistics are now recorded means that many of the cases involving sibling are removed from the domestic violence statistics. Therefore, the statistics reflect the traditional spousal relationship between two people and there is no doubt that the victims are mainly women. What happens? They often have had to leave home and often they have children. I give the government credit for recently opening a shelter down in Busselton in the member for Vasse's electorate. It was an election promise and it is great that it has been accomplished, but I believe it was not implemented to the level intended. There are not as many beds as there were to be —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Was that a men's refuge?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** No, it is for women.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** There is a counterargument that —

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That is what I was getting to. There should also be shelters for males so that the female victim can stay in the house with her children in a stable environment and the kids can go to the same school. There needs to be both men's and women's shelters. Communicare runs a men's shelter, which is very good, but there is a need for more. There is a need for more shelters for men and also there is a need for increased shelter —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Norm Marlborough made one in Kwinana. The member for Kwinana may tell me whether it is still running.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Is there a men's shelter in Kwinana?

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Richard Court supported it and managed to get the old Kwinana hospital provided.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** There was but I don't think it is there anymore.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That has the advantage, as the Minister for Housing alluded to, that the female can stay in the shelter with her children. I highlighted this morning that many of these women's shelters do not allow males aged over 15 or 16 years to reside in the shelters and, of course, some of these victims have male children who are 16 years old.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** They might have pets. They cannot take their pets.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** What happens then? We have to split the family or the victim does not gain the benefit of that shelter. We need to be very creative in trying to deal with these issues because resources are limited, but the minister, unfortunately, has failed in the housing portfolio. Some of it is incredibly difficult but some of it could be improved with a bit more creative thinking and more priority input into the housing budget. The issue is about priorities; if the government has the appropriate priorities, many of the problems that we face as society can be dealt with.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [5.00 pm]: I will make some very brief comments because I have a function to get to and, after listening to the members for Armadale and Mirrabooka, I can never do justice to their level of understanding of the detail of this important subject. In Kwinana it is by far and away the issue that we in my electorate office struggle with the most. At least 80 per cent of the inquiries that we deal with are from people seeking housing or some housing service, such as repairs, or from people dealing with the complex social issues associated with housing. From that point of view, I think this is a very important debate and I am sorry that I cannot hang around to do it justice.

In March last year 1 800 people in Kwinana were on the waiting list, 550 of whom were on the priority listing. Members have only to go to Kwinana Beach on any given evening to see the extent to which the lack of housing in my area is taking a toll on the community. There are dozens of cars with people either living in them or staying in them overnight because they have nowhere else to go. People are constantly coming to my office to plead their case for priority listing or simply because they are feeling the tension and stress associated with not

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 18 June 2014]

p4135b-4160a

Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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having housing, particularly for their kids. It is important that we bring this issue to this place. This government has been the recipient of large levels of funding from the previous Labor federal government, and we now know that funding will stop.

For that reason, we are entering a very difficult stage because we know, from its own spending in housing, that this government's commitment is not that great. In fact, the member for Cockburn was pointing out the very large challenges we face with the budget as shown in its forward estimates around emergency housing and other forms of social housing which, quite simply, will not be supported in the forthcoming budget because that ongoing stream of funding from the federal government will not be available. So this minister is in trouble. The level of funding he will have available to him will be a fraction of that which was available to his predecessor, and as a result of that he will not be able to develop the housing stock, which we need to keep to service the community. It is important that the Minister for Housing's hand be strengthened in his relationship with his federal colleagues to make sure we improve our efforts in social housing.

Today I want to talk about a specific family who not only are a very good example of the challenges that we confront with housing, but also are a very good example of the importance that social housing plays in our community. Rebecca Lovell is a mother of three or four kids, but the kid in question in this particular case is young Tremaine. Rebecca and her family need a four-bedroom house in order to accommodate her family and to accommodate her partner, who has serious comorbidity health issues. For that reason, they need a four-bedroom house to live in. The problem for Rebecca and her son, Tremaine, is that for reasons that we do not fully understand but which we fully appreciate, Tremaine, because of the environmental health conditions of this somewhat dilapidated dwelling, falls sick every time he spends any extended period of time in the house. When I say "sick", I mean he gets serious infections, and his last period of time in hospital was six weeks, which involved him being on an intravenous drip for antibiotics to deal with his chronic health issues.

Now we do not need to be rocket scientists to understand that Tremaine staying in hospital for six weeks to receive this intensive treatment for his infection is costing the state a significant amount of money, but because of the lack of housing stock, we cannot remove Tremaine from that house, and as a result of that, he comes back home and is sick again. Rebecca's immediate solution to that is to have Tremaine stay with his grandparents, who live nearby, but that is obviously not a great situation for them to be in: one, because his grandparents are just that, grandparents, and their capacity to care for Tremaine is limited; but two, Tremaine wants to live in the same house as his father. He wants to live with his dad, and he cannot do so because to do so threatens Tremaine's health. I am told by Rebecca that she has been challenged by some people about her care for Tremaine; that when Tremaine goes back home, he gets sick. People say, "Well, are you really caring for your son, if you're allowing him to re-enter this building?" It is a very difficult situation for Rebecca to be in.

Rebecca came to see me and told me her story. I thought it was worth checking out, so I spoke with her doctor, and, sure enough, her doctor testified sincerely that Tremaine needs to be housed in a different house; a house that does not have the sort of dilapidated environmental health conditions of the particular building he currently lives in. I spoke with the representatives from the local department, and they agree: Tremaine needs to be re-accommodated; Rebecca's family needs to be housed in a different building. But here is the rub: there is no stock; there is no available housing for this family to move to.

So it is not because of a lack of evidence supporting Rebecca, it is not for a lack of effort by the department. It is simply a lack of capacity to rehouse Tremaine because no housing stock is available. Rebecca, like a lot of people, moves around the community and sees houses that are vacant for a long period of time. She sees houses that are vacant, which she would be very happy to be accommodated in, but sees those houses sold to the private sector, or sees those houses become dilapidated and demolished so that new smaller accommodation can be put in its place. We can imagine her frustration. She is trying desperately to care for her child and has her husband's illnesses at the same time to deal with, but because the department does not have the housing stock, and this government is not willing to develop the housing stock to accommodate these families with complex health conditions, she is unable to meet the needs of her child.

Rebecca looks around the community, sees these old Homeswest dwellings left vacant that she and many others would be very happy to move into, but for some reason instead the minister sees fit to allow them to either fall into a dilapidated state or simply sit by to be sold off to the private sector to be developed at some point down the line. There is a crisis in our accommodation now. There is a crisis with these people needing to find new accommodation, and it is not good enough for the government to move in this softly softly manner. It actually has to understand that out there in the community there is a huge need, and this need will only be met by a significant investment in housing stock, by a significant program of innovative housing solutions, and by a significant effort by this government to ensure that there is appropriate accommodation for people who can enter the lower end of the private-sector housing options, so that we do not keep so much pressure on our social housing options.

I am very concerned about housing in our community. It seems for some reason that it is not one of those policy issues that attracts a huge amount of interest and attention in the media. Yet I think it is one of the most serious issues confronting our community. If a child is not housed properly, that child cannot be cared for properly. If that child does not receive the care needed, it means that child will become a burden upon our health system. If children do not have a safe, secure environment, they cannot learn properly at school. They cannot take advantage of the opportunities that our education system provides for them. In certain respects, I know the minister probably does not see this as one of his most important portfolios, but it is fundamental to the success of the government overall in terms of the health and wellbeing of our community. This government must do more; it has to bring the waitlists down for families like the Lovells, and in particular, young Tremaine, for whom social housing is not an option, it is a necessity. We must ensure that we do not continue to let these families down.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [5.08 pm]: I rise to support the resolution proposed by the member for Cockburn; namely, that this house condemns the Barnett government for its budget funding cuts to public housing, crisis accommodation and other housing programs, as waiting times for public housing continue to increase, and also the failure of the Liberal government to increase the income threshold limit for public housing tenants.

I am always amused when I read the budget papers to see the housing wait times. On page 523, it states in the line item of “Waiting times for accommodation — applicants housed” is supposed to be 139 weeks. Yet everybody knows it ends up being much much longer. We can have people even on the priority list waiting for that sort of time limit. In fact, the member for Armadale made the point about a person in his electorate who has been waiting for five years on the priority list. I have constituents who have been waiting seven years on the ordinary list—some 350 weeks, who have not been housed. I do not know why the government continues to put out this fiction in the budget papers of saying that the wait time is 139 weeks, when everybody knows that that is not how long people have to wait to get a house.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Are you saying they’re wrong?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I am saying that I do not know how these figures are invented, but they are not based on the experience of people.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** In some towns the waiting list is very short.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** It is not; I am sorry to tell the minister that. He should come out to electorates and talk to people.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I said some towns.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Some—so what? That is not the average. The average wait time is enormous. In Cannington—I raised this with the minister in the estimates committee hearings—a particular gentleman who is a cleaner spends two-thirds of his income —

**Mr W.R. Marmion** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is up to the member for Cannington if he is going to accept the interjection.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** This gentleman spends two-thirds of his income on his housing costs, and he has been on the waitlist for seven years. That is the actual experience of people in Western Australia. As I say, I have absolutely no idea how the minister can place a figure of 139 weeks in the budget papers, because that does not reflect the reality of what people in the community find.

I want to draw the house’s attention to a debate that was held in this chamber on 20 March 2008 when a matter of public interest was raised regarding housing issues. At the time, the Liberal opposition railed against the fact that the median price had reached \$460 000; of course, at the moment it is \$540 000. The Liberal opposition complained about the median price for private rentals being \$320 a week, and now—I just looked it up on the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia website—the median rental price in Perth is \$460 a week. It is interesting that members opposite complained about the obsession of the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, with denser living. Yesterday I used the word “fetish”, but it was actually “obsession”, which still means the same thing. It was also interesting that the Liberal opposition complained about the fall-off in the number of blocks being put on the market, which back then was at 18 000. The figure I have for 2011 is for 11 000 blocks—the minister can tell me whether there is a new figure—so land supply has been falling under the current government, not rising. All the problems that the Liberal opposition identified when we were in government are now worse, and that is the reality that confronts people in the community.

By this motion we are also drawing attention to the fact that the threshold for housing eligibility has not been increased. Let us focus on that for a moment because it is a very important issue for a number of reasons. One is that when I was a kid growing up—obviously not in Western Australia—a wide variety of people were housed in public housing. There were people like my mother, a war widow; there were people on what today would be called a disability support pension; and there were aged pensioners; but there was also a large number of people with full-time employment, regular jobs, in public housing. That was because the threshold was high enough for working people to be eligible to enter public housing. The problem with the current government is that because it chooses not to increase the threshold, effectively the only people who end up in public housing are those who are the most vulnerable. If they have a full-time job, they can no longer stay in public housing. The eligibility threshold for public housing in Western Australia is \$200 less than the minimum wage.

I give an example of a particular person in my electorate who is an enrolled nurse who worked three days a week. The Department of Housing wanted to reduce, not the number of people housed, but the number of people on the waiting list, not by housing more people, but by removing them from the waitlist or from houses. This woman was presented with a choice: she could go back to working two days a week as an enrolled nurse and therefore comply with the income threshold with the advantage of having rent capped at, I think, 27 per cent of income or she could keep working three days a week but end up in a private rental when a private rental would suddenly consume a much higher proportion of her income. That is like the example I gave of the cleaner who has been on the waitlist for seven years who pays two-thirds of his income for a private rental. What did the nurse do? She did the only thing available to her and reduced her working week back to two days, because to lose her public housing would have been to put herself in poverty. It has to be understood that what has happened here is what is called in the jargon a “poverty trap”. The failure of the government to increase the eligibility threshold is putting people into a poverty trap in which they cannot move off welfare or increase their hours of work because they will lose their housing. It is a blunt instrument that is leading to poor outcomes and it will not be the way forward. We have to do something about increasing the income eligibility threshold limit for public housing, and that is why the member for Mirrabooka’s motion specifically discusses that issue. I suggest that the threshold should be set at least around the minimum wage, because otherwise people are just being pushed into poverty—as I say the term used is poverty trap.

Out my way we have particular issue because Curtin University is in the electorate of Victoria Park, next to mine, and there is also Canning College and a private college on Wharf Street around the corner from my office. Therefore, we have many students. There are a number of training providers, and that causes students to move into the local area. I will particularly focus on Curtin University, which has tens of thousands of students who need to be accommodated somewhere and they often move into the low-cost private rental market. That is great, but of course it means that effectively the cost of rentals is pushed up, which makes it harder for people to find private rental accommodation. I think the university has an obligation to provide more student accommodation either at the university or near it so that this problem of spillage into local areas and other suburbs is reduced. Another problem is overcrowding in private rental houses, because the law in Western Australia states that there can be two unrelated people per bedroom in each house. For example, in the suburb of Wilson, a house on a quarter-acre block could get bulldozed to make way for four three-bedroom units, so we go from one house with four bedrooms to four units with a total of 12 bedrooms, and as two unrelated people per bedroom is allowed in Western Australia, that is potentially up to 24 people in one location. When that occurs, it has a big impact on neighbours. It needs to be closely looked at. As I say, I think there is an obligation on the universities to increase the amount of rental accommodation.

I note the minister’s boastful behaviour regarding the national rental affordability scheme—money from which went into student accommodation at the University of Western Australia. I make the point that I am not quite sure that that is what the national rental affordability scheme was designed to do, because the university has in fact been subsidised to attract foreign students.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It’s designed to do what you want it to do.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Yes, except the university has the obligation to do that anyway. Therefore, it has been subsidised by federal taxpayers to do what really is, in my view, its obligation. The commonwealth developed the scheme.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** By dragging them out of the private sector market, you are actually making houses affordable.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The problem is that the government gets seen coming on these sorts of deals. The university gets away with not having to spend money on accommodation that it would have had to have built anyway. That is what I am saying. I think the university is obliged to build accommodation, but the NRAS

money directed that way is not available for spending on other family rental accommodation that could have been delivered.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** You've got to look at the outcomes.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** That is what I am doing. I am saying that the university was subsidised to get away from its obligation. If the Minister for Housing had negotiated better with it, he probably would have got a better outcome.

**Mr W.R. Marmion** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, minister. We will get on with the motion before us.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I thank the Deputy Speaker; I do need protection from the rampant intimidation coming from the minister!

I had a look at the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia website before I spoke, and I refer to the latest figures quoted on that website for the 12-month increase in the cost of buying established houses in my electorate. Of course, someone who owns a house or houses in my electorate will think these figures are pretty good, but someone who is trying to get a start in life and needs to buy a house will think they are pretty bad. In Cannington, the median price has gone up 10.5 per cent over 12 months; in East Cannington, 23.4 per cent; Langford, 13.5 per cent; and in Wilson, 9.4 per cent. I think there is probably an issue in respect of Wilson, because some of Wilson is quite close to the river and prices there are very high, while other parts of it are more affordable. Therefore, it depends upon the balance between the affordable part of Wilson and the river properties.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Can I just make a suggestion on those figures? If you look at the lower 25 per cent quartile, you'll probably get a better idea of what the affordable housing prices are in your suburb.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Sure. Beckenham has gone up by 13.5 per cent; Ferndale, 16.4 per cent; Queens Park, 14.5 per cent; and Lynwood, 15.9 per cent. We can see that there is a significant increase across the board, and I remind members that in 2008 the Liberal Party railed against increasing median house prices. It said that that was the evidence of market failure and evidence of the poor government response to land supply and housing affordability. Even if we judge the government on its own standards rather than the standards of others, it is still a failure.

I turn specifically to cuts in housing expenditure by the current government, and I draw members' attention to cuts in royalties for regions funding for housing. In 2011–12, on page 708 of budget paper No 2, the two out years—that is, 2013–14 and 2014–15—show what was expected to be spent on housing from royalties for regions as \$100 million and \$55.5 million respectively. What do we find when we come to these two financial years on page 527 of budget paper No 2 for 2014–15? Royalties for regions funding for 2013–14 was actually \$32.964 million, and \$38.3 million for 2014–15. Over those two years, about \$70 million was budgeted to spend, compared with the \$155.5 million that was talked about for those two years back in 2011–12.

This is important for the reason that it allowed the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Regional Development—it might even have been the same person in 2011–12—to boast at the time about how much was going to be spent on housing from royalties for regions, but when the government actually came to putting the rubber on the road, the money had disappeared and there was close to \$85 million cut from funding for housing.

It reminds me to look at crisis accommodation funding. Earlier this year the minister put out a media release saying that he was planning to spend \$14.364 million on the crisis accommodation program, but he actually spent only \$4.202 million in the current financial year, and then nothing for two years. He then puts in a figure of \$10.162 million for the last year of the forward estimates to support his media release about how kind he is in allocating nearly \$14.5 million to crisis accommodation, when actually he is spending only \$4 million. By the time we get to 2017–18, the same thing will happen as happened with funding from royalties for regions: he will just back it out of the budget and will not have to spend the money.

During the estimates hearings I was here, with the member for Cockburn, holding the minister to account.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** We were holding the minister to account for his, I must say, very poor performance in this portfolio, and this matter was greatly canvassed by the member for Cockburn. He mounted a very cogent argument about why this has been so badly handled by the current government, which is why the cuts to crisis accommodation have been included as one of the specific issues we are raising with the minister today.

In 2011–12 the state government believed that it was going to get \$191.278 million from the commonwealth government for 2014–15. But when we look at how much we are getting from the commonwealth for 2014–15, we see that we are getting zero! When there was a Liberal–National state government and a Labor federal government, the state Liberal–National government believed that it was going to get nearly \$200 million.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Sorry—how much did you say we were getting in 2013–14?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The government’s budget estimate in 2011–12 for commonwealth grants and funds in 2014–15 was \$191.278 million, and what it actually got in 2014–15 was zero. I am pointing out that when there was a state Liberal government and a federal Labor government, those were the sorts of figures that the state government expected to get. Now we find that under a federal Liberal government we instead get nothing, and guess what? Their plan for next year is also to give us nothing, and the year after that and the year after that.

We cannot expect much different, because under the federal Howard Liberal government, the former state Labor government got nothing either, and that was one of the great struggles for the state Labor government—the commonwealth government would not put any money into public housing in Western Australia. We have gone back to where we were: the plan now is that we get nothing.

I turn now to the contracting-out of the management of maintenance. The minister will probably point out to everybody that the maintenance has been contracted out for a long time—in fact, since Jim McGinty was housing minister in 1992. That was when the Building Management Authority was abolished and it was all put out to tender; it might have been the end of 1991. Anyway, it has been there for a long time. When the member for Vasse was Minister for Housing, he outsourced the management of the contract. When this matter was recently retendered, there was no opportunity for an internal bid. When I was a union official, one of the places we used to organise was QFC or Qantas Flight Catering Ltd, as it was previously called. When QFCL wanted to test the market to see what could be provided by outside contractors, it always allowed the workforce and management at each individual site to bid for the same work, because otherwise it would not have known what the actual market price was.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** We used to do that at Main Roads. The only problem with that is apportioning on-costs and corporate costs across a —

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I bet the minister \$100 that he does not properly account for the costs of managing the contract when he has outsourced the management of the contracting. He still has to manage the contract and I can tell him that one of the problems that led to KPMG making a report on this when the member for Vasse was Minister for Housing was the extensive problems the government experienced in managing the contractors who were managing the contractors!

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** There were start-up issues.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** It is more than start-up issues, because after the government realised that it could not achieve what it thought it could achieve, it changed the goalposts. That is what all the reports show. The original intention of the outsourcing, the parameters for success for change, the so-called failure standards were reduced after the contract had been let. I think the government knows that it made a mistake contracting out the whole of the metropolitan area to one contract manager. I understand that is one of the things that the Department of Housing made sure that it did not do this time—to contract everything out to one contract manager. I make the point about these things, as the member for Armadale makes the point: I do not have an ideological opposition to contracting out; I have a practical opposition to governments doing bad deals. The moment we lose the capacity to do the work ourselves, we cannot know whether we are getting a good deal anymore, and we do not know whether the best price is the one we are getting or the one that is being provided by a contractor. I know people in the private sector who contract services to government, and they have people who specialise in finding the variation to a contract. Then there is the argument about exactly what has been contracted. As we have seen time and again, this government is very bad at specifying what it wants the private sector to do and the government keeps getting put over a barrel and ends up losing because of its incapacity to negotiate properly.

I move to another issue, and that is the running up of cash assets by the housing authority. Page 530 of budget paper No 2 shows that the government expects the estimated actual for the end of the 2013–14 financial year—two weeks’ time—to be \$9.666 million in cash assets. Yet by the end of 2014–15, the coming financial year, the expectation is to have \$164.852 million in cash assets, which will increase again to \$329.047 million in the 2015–16 year, come down slightly in 2016–17 and then reduce again in 2017–18. Because the government has problems with net debt, it is not spending money. The housing authority operates not on a budget allocation but, rather, principally on selling land for profit, and the government is still going to keep doing its commercial activities. Rather than using that money to house people during a housing crisis in Western Australia, the government is going to run up the cash balances so that it looks as if it has borrowed less money because the net

debt will be lower by the amount of that extra cash. It will be interesting to see, because of the exponential growth in debt, what happens here. Obviously, the plan is to run down the cash balances, particularly in 2017–18, but that will happen only if the government has control over its net debt by then. Given that over five budgets the government has not been able to control its net debt, I do not think anybody can have any confidence that that is going to happen over the next three years either. The pea and thimble trick at the expense of housing needy Western Australians will continue into the future; in other words, there is \$320 million in cash that is not going to be spent on housing people in this state over the next two years when one looks from the end of 2013–14 to the end of 2015–16. I do not understand that, given that, like so many other members in this chamber, the number one issue that comes into my office in Cannington is the problem of housing.

I have had extraordinary situations explained to me, including the story of a migrant family of a husband, with a nice steady job, wife and three or four kids, who live in a group of units where the garages all face towards each other. Believe it or not, their aged neighbour drove out of his carport and accidentally put his foot on the accelerator instead of the brake and accelerated his car backwards through the lounge room of the family's house, injuring two of the children who were watching TV, making the house unfit for human occupation. Even though it was a private rental and the family had a good relationship with and excellent references from their landlord, they needed to find accommodation. The husband was so busy trying to find somewhere for his family to live that he could not go to work for a number of weeks, which put more financial strain on them. There was just no accommodation. It was not that there was no crisis accommodation; there was no accommodation where all the family could be together. That is an example of the problems that can occur.

The member for Mirrabooka made the comment that when the private rental market is so tight and there is a young couple and a family of migrants, particularly Muslim migrants, going for the same house, who will the real estate agent allocate the house to? Often it is not the family with the children; it will be the young couple. Good on the young couple, because they need a home; but it is difficult for the families who are without public accommodation trying to survive on the money left after they spend two-thirds of their income in the rental market, particularly when housing eligibility is so tight.

I finish on the issue of housing eligibility, because one thing the government proudly boasts about is the reduction in the housing waitlist. The government does not explain, of course, that many people come off the housing waitlist without ever getting a house. Originally, an applicant had to be eligible for public housing when they were not on the housing list and then when their name came up, they had to be still eligible for public housing at that time. Now there is a process of continually reviewing somebody's eligibility for public housing, and if they cease to be eligible while they are still on the list, even though they may never have had a house, they are removed from the list. If anything happens to them, because often these people are marginally employed —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** What if they are not? What if they are working up north, earning \$120 000? Do they stay on the list?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Minister, they are never going to get public housing if they are on \$120 000, so it does not actually matter. It does not create an additional place on the housing waitlist. Knocking a person off the list does not get anybody housed, because they have to be eligible to be in the house. If they are not eligible to be in the house, they will not get into the house. It does not make any difference. It does not reduce the waitlist.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I am just giving you an argument why somebody shouldn't be on the list if they have got a high income.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** How many people on \$120 000 did the minister find on the list when he started knocking those people off it? It is not people on \$120 000 a year; people on \$18 000 a year are being knocked off the list. The minister knows that is what happens. The problem is that there are people who are just marginally above the income limit. What do they do? They are in private rental accommodation and probably pay two-thirds of their income on rent and they are being knocked off the list because they are \$10 above the limit. That happens, and that is how they have got the numbers on the list down. It is not about accommodating people; it is about keeping people off the list so that the government can boast how many people are on the list. It is not a serious option.

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle) [5.39 pm]:** I would like to take the opportunity to speak on the motion on public housing. Like many members on both sides of the house, a number of issues regularly come to my electorate office about the demand on public housing. Not only do we see examples of the statistics that we know are getting worse by the year—there are big concerns about the budget allocation on that particular line item—but we see the human face to those statistics. We see the individual instances that are all different and that are, nearly without exception, compelling. That is why people on this side of the house want to speak this afternoon and on other occasions when the issue of public housing and how to deal with the housing demand comes before the house.

I want to speak about an area in my electorate known as Davis Park, in Beaconsfield. It received some attention in January this year when there was a police raid. On 11 January, about 75 police raided Davis Park because it was identified as a particular crime area. That was not news to the residents of Davis Park. This area, bordered by Lefroy Road, Fifth Avenue, South Street and Caesar Street, is considered a hotspot of crime and is a problem area. One of the reasons that I think it has attracted a lot of attention is that it has a high density of public housing, particularly for the metropolitan area. About 85 per cent of the houses in those blocks are public housing. It has been untouched by the redesign and intervention that other concentrations of public housing have received. Areas such as Mirrabooka, Medina —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Cockburn Central.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** — Cockburn Central and Queens Park have similarly concentrated areas of public housing. It has been known for some time that this is not a desirable way of housing people. We get problem areas and these problems are intensified when such dense areas of public housing are allocated.

I want to speak about this issue because I have come to know some of the residents in that area, one of whom I received a call from just a few weeks ago. Members may have seen one of the residents named Mott interviewed in February on *7.30 WA*. I spent some time with him and he rang me recently to say that his tyres had been slashed. He believes his tyres were slashed because he has been speaking out about the situation in his area. He did not expect that I would be able to do anything about that—he just sounded tired. He is a fantastic bloke who does a lot of work for his elderly neighbours such as maintenance around their houses, visiting them and taking them on errands and the like. He was very energetic to see change in his area but I fear that he, and other residents that I have met who want to see change in their neighbourhood, are just feeling worn down. They have had episodic attention from government agencies and the media but nothing changes. In the incident on 11 January, there was a lot of attention with a large number of police and police horses, and the news agencies were notified and came along. There were arrests and a lot of fuss was made. The residents welcomed that attention but what they want to see is sustained attention in their neighbourhood.

Members have heard me speak about this issue before. Davis Park came to my attention when I was campaigning during the state election. While doorknocking, I came across a couple of 10-year-old boys fighting. When I tried to break up the fight, I started to see what the authorities might be dealing with. I am not particularly afraid of 10-year-old boys, but these boys were certainly not going to pay any attention to me.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** The 10-year-olds are getting taller.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, they are. They were not going to pay any attention to me whatsoever. The language was pretty colourful and there were unsupervised toddlers looking at this fight.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** Looking on? They were cheering on.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes; they were toddlers. I started to get a taste of what was happening in the neighbourhood because when we got back to our car after doorknocking that afternoon, the car had been broken into and someone's bag had been stolen. Then the next day I got an opportunity to meet two of the boys' parents during the course of my doorknocking and gained an insight into what was happening. This is only a small example from the couple of days I spent in this neighbourhood but it gave me a taste of what goes on and I continue to see what goes on in the area.

One of the women who complained publicly to the local newspaper and then to the police eventually had to be relocated out of the area. In the time that it took the department to relocate her, her backyard and part of the back of her house were set on fire. Her house was continually attacked, so much so that she was afraid to go back into the house and had to be relocated. That took some effort from a range of agencies and my electorate office but eventually she was relocated. People are scared. It is not good when not only individuals are scared, which I am sure happens in lots of neighbourhoods and some of which are worse than others, but also people in this neighbourhood are scared on a day-to-day basis.

I welcomed the attention from a partnership called the South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum, which is a bit of an awkward name. The South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum was established to work across the local government agencies of Cockburn, Fremantle and Melville. It involves cooperation between not-for-profit agencies working across those local government areas, as well as all levels of government—local, state and commonwealth—and provides human services across those areas. It also involves cooperation with community members, businesses and philanthropists. It is hoping to get a group of agencies and people working across a range of government and non-government organisations to improve social change. The South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum actually identified Davis Park as a hotspot area and I hope that the forum can drive some change and cooperation between government agencies such as WA Police, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, the Department of Housing and the like, and through not-for-profits such as the police and

community youth centres and St Patrick's Community Support Centre, which also provides assistance. Fremantle Multicultural Centre of Western Australia Inc does some very good work in that area and there are some private organisations that may also be available to help.

The reason that I am speaking about Davis Park this afternoon is that the concentration of public housing in that area is a key issue that needs to be addressed. This is not because I believe there should be less public housing in Beaconsfield or my electorate of Fremantle. My understanding is that Fremantle City Council is one of the few local councils that welcomes a defined allocation of public housing in its area. I think it is about 10 or 15 per cent.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** That is spread.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, it is spread across the council. It does not say, "Yes, we support public housing, but somewhere else." The council welcomes it and it is good that it does, but the concentration of public housing in Davis Park needs to be addressed. The minister would be aware that this issue has come up. The director general of the Department of Housing was interviewed on 7.30 WA when this issue was highlighted. I do not envy his job of having to defend this government's allocation of resources and what he has to deal with when managing that department. In that instance, the director general essentially said, "We do not think that the Department of Housing has a major problem in Davis Park." He was referring to the police raids that I have already spoken about. The director general also said that if one looks at the number of charges that were laid from those raids, only about half of them—I forget the specific figures—related to public housing and the department was not able to intervene unless charges were laid and convictions upheld. No-one argues with that but the reality is that the department knows that if it is pouring money into these concentrated areas, it is putting good money after bad. In fact, it would be very strategic to start to break up that area. I understand that the department has done some planning in that area.

I welcome the opportunity to speak about Davis Park this evening because I spoke about Mott, one of the residents, feeling dejected. There are a couple of other very good residents there. From the last communication I had with them, they were feeling tired and dejected. They received some attention at the beginning of the year. A lot of police have come in and raided the area and a lot of fuss has been made. There has been some media attention. They have had to deal with more government agencies than they should have to deal with that come and have meetings and say they are going to do things but six months later, nothing has changed. Some work has been done by some of those residents, asking the state government to do some work to break up that area. There is a petition going around. I want to keep working on that petition and have a conversation with the community. It is concerned that if we ask the government to break up this particular concentration of public housing, those people may lose their houses or be forced to move when they do not want to. Obviously, we do not want to see that happen. We want people to feel secure in their houses in terms of not only the tenure of their house but also the neighbourhood that they live in. If I have been able to bring that to the minister's attention again this afternoon, that would be a good thing.

I was reminded of another area in my electorate on the weekend; that is, three housing units on Holland Street in White Gum Valley, not far from Carrington Street, diagonally across from Fremantle Cemetery. I became aware of this area when I was doorknocking. I have never seen public housing like this. Perhaps I have not seen enough public housing in Western Australia but I was very shocked by the state of these units.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Right opposite Fremantle Cemetery, are they? At the northern end or down the bottom end?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** They are on the north west side, on Holland Street, diagonally across from the cemetery. There are three sets of units. I understand that the department might be trying to transition people out of those units. When I was doorknocking, I met people who were privately renting. I understand the strategy is to give people short-term private rentals. To learn on the weekend that a young mother with a baby was living in these units—I think she is a refugee—concerned me greatly. It is not an area that a young woman should be living in on her own. I will try to see her. The state of those units is appalling and needs attention. I have raised it with the regional office.

I could talk about any number of other issues in relation to housing, in particular, the waiting times for public housing in the state government's budget that this house has been dealing with. In 2013, the estimated waiting time was 130 weeks. The actual waiting time in 2013 was 138 weeks. The waiting time in this year's budget has been extended even further to 139 weeks. In 2012–13, the waiting time was 132 weeks; two years later, we are moving to 139 weeks' waiting time. That concerns me. I am sure that many members in this house, not only members on this side, are dealing with the frustration of residents who are trying to overcome that waiting time. I would like to see that addressed, as I am sure many people in the community would as well.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 18 June 2014]

p4135b-4160a

Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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Finally, I notice that the Leader of the Opposition is in the house this evening. Last year I came across a young mother, Jennifer, who was eight and a half months pregnant and who had a two-year-old, camping in South Fremantle in winter. She was camping with her sister, her brother and her sister's boyfriend. They were frustrated by the lack of public housing, as they should be when she is eight and a half months pregnant with a two-year-old and camping. She could not get any public housing. I added my efforts, as did the Leader of the Opposition and other people, to try to get her housing. We got her one night's emergency accommodation but could not get her any more.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** She and her family ended up spending a couple of nights in my electorate office, which at least was dry. They had a bit of camping equipment and the like. Jennifer and her family have complicated lives. They were in very difficult circumstances, which made it difficult to place them. I understand that the problems Jennifer and her family were facing were not easy to resolve. To my mind, that just made them all the more deserving of attention. It certainly made her and her family all the more deserving of secure accommodation. Since then, Jennifer would have had her baby. I hope she is doing well. I am concerned that the agencies that were trying to coordinate assistance for Jennifer and her family may have given up on what was a very difficult circumstance that she and her family were in. Frankly, if it had not been for me as a member of Parliament—I am sure any number of members would have done the same thing—sitting in the regional office of the Department of Housing saying that I would not move until we got some accommodation for this girl and her family, we would not have been able to get her anything. I remember that the Leader of the Opposition was concerned about what would happen to security in my electorate office when I had a family camping in it but I was not concerned about what would happen to my photocopying supplies; I was more concerned about what would happen to those people. They were really appreciative, and it worked out over those few days. It highlighted the fact that every person on the waiting list has a story to tell. They are often compelling stories and in need of attention.

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [5.58 pm]:** I rise in the few minutes left to again raise the issue of the Palm Beach Caravan Park in my electorate of Rockingham. It featured on *A Current Affair* the other evening. If members had watched that show, they would have seen that the people involved are nervous and scared about their future. I will ensure that members understand what has happened. The commonwealth government has bought a caravan park in which there are around 170 permanent residents. It is closing that caravan park and making those people homeless. Our federal government is doing that to 170 people who live in my electorate. Many of them are elderly, some are veterans and many have health conditions. The commonwealth government is buying the caravan park that these people have bought their home in and is bulldozing their homes. I find it incredible that the national government of this country would do that to citizens without having done the due diligence around these people and what their future might hold. To just buy it and say to these people that they have only a lease and therefore they will have to find somewhere else to go at some point and to not do the due diligence and research around the fact that they were given assurances by the owner of that caravan park that that would be their home for the duration of their lives, speaks very ill of the fact that the Abbott government would bulldoze the homes of 170 people in Rockingham and throw them out on the street. That is the first point I want to make.

The second point I want to make is that now we have a crisis on our hands with these people. A meeting was held the other morning between representatives of the Department of Housing, the City of Rockingham and Defence Housing Australia. The advice I have had from the caravan park residents is that the meeting provided few answers for them about their futures. The City of Rockingham has put out a press release, saying that it is optimistic about the future and it looks forward to a development on the site of the Palm Beach Caravan Park. That is great for it to be optimistic.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**Mr M. MCGOWAN:** Before the break, I was talking about the Palm Beach Caravan Park and Camping Holiday Village, and I said that the City of Rockingham had put out a press release indicating that it welcomed the development and looked forward to the people in the caravan park being housed, and it expressed the view that the Department of Housing would house the residents of the caravan park who will be made homeless by the commonwealth government bulldozing their homes. I am saying three things tonight. Firstly, I want clarity about the future of the people who will be made homeless by the commonwealth government bulldozing their homes. I want to know whether they will be housed by the Department of Housing. Will public housing be made available to these people? Is there a priority process for them? Will they get certainty? Secondly, I want to know whether the Department of Planning will allow the planning changes to permit this caravan park to be rezoned so that these people's homes can be bulldozed. I want to get clarity around the role of the Department of Planning in all of this. Thirdly, if the Department of Housing will house the people who will be made homeless, and I hope that

is the case, I find it extraordinary that one level of government can knock over people's homes and then put it on another level of government to pay to rehouse those people in much more expensive properties, especially as those people are happy in their original homes. How can two levels of government be so uncooperative that one level of government can bulldoze people's homes and then put it on another level of government to house them in homes at three times the cost? How can that happen, particularly when I stood in this very chamber three years ago and warned the government that this would happen, and the then Minister for Housing gave an assurance to Parliament and expressed the view that the government would purchase these caravan parks, rezone them so that they could never be anything but caravan parks and then put them back out into the marketplace? That was an expensive option, but surely it was a cheaper option than the commonwealth bulldozing people's homes and the state housing 160 people in publicly funded houses. I think there has been a lack of cooperation between both levels of government to allow this to happen and to allow these families to go through all this stress. I know these people and I know how old they are, and I know how stressful this has been for them. This is dangerous to their health. These are elderly people without much means, and the stress being caused is dangerous to their health and wellbeing and, for some of them, to their very lives. I am very concerned that the commonwealth has allowed this to happen and that the state will therefore have to pick up the tab. I hope the state will pick up the tab; if it does not, we will have another set of issues. If it does pick up the tab, why does the state have to pay for a commonwealth decision because the commonwealth did not do its due diligence? Why did the state fail to implement the plan that the former Minister for Housing, the member for Vasse, indicated that the state would implement?

All around, the people of the Palm Beach Caravan Park and Camping Holiday Village in my electorate of Rockingham are sitting in the middle of this maelstrom of government misadventure that has put their future in a very precarious position, and they do not need that.

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee)** [7.05 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to talk on the chestnut that has been raised in the house in one form or another on more occasions than both capital and recurrent budget matters, antisocial behaviour and things of that nature. It is of particular concern that we continue to bring it up, and I suppose it will always be a feature of the state Parliament—that is, the matter of housing. It is not just public housing, because, as we all know, the public housing system feels the brunt of the wider issue of affordability. The federal and state budgets will have the hardest impacts on the cost of living and what it means to seek your way in the suburbs of Western Australia. We know that, at times, the median house price in WA is the highest in the country. I am aware—I am happy to take interjection on my facts, but I am pretty sure that I am right—that the median house price in WA is around \$540 000, or just over half a million dollars.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I think it has popped down to \$530 000.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** But who is quibbling? The current house loan interest rate is 4.69 per cent. An ordinary worker's income is around \$37 000 a year, which is nearly the minimum wage. That equates to about \$700 a week before tax, which has to pay for the whole cost of running a household. If people scraped together the \$30 000 deposit required for the average home, they would still need a mortgage of around \$490 000 or \$500 000. The repayments on that mortgage at an interest rate of 4.5 per cent would be about \$22 500 a year, or \$432 a week. Remember, I said that their disposable income is \$700 a week in after-tax dollars, so, with a principal payment of a further \$100 a week, it would bring the total to \$532. They could not get ahead on a median house price. People would be hard-pressed to find a flat or a unit in the suburbs that I represent, and they certainly would not find a reasonable-sized block of 500 square metres or more for around that price. I am talking about areas that traditionally have been tougher suburbs that are on the turn. Step-up suburbs such as Coolbellup and Willagee are now seeing second and third home owners.

Public housing has a particular role to play in the mix of housing that is available. We heard the member for Cockburn speak earlier this week about the fact that the income threshold for public housing is \$200 below the minimum wage. We are talking about the poorest of the poor—the most disadvantaged people in our community—who form the 50 000-odd people or the nearly 21 000 applications that sit before the government for the provision of public housing. It is not as though there is not the opportunity to increase the supply of public housing. There is also the fact that, in my opinion, the capital is available, and I will touch on this during the third reading debate on the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014–15 Bill. Some \$250 million of retained funds on the books of the Department of Housing could be used to unlock existing infrastructure.

One of the biggest problems in the suburb of Willagee, and probably in the seat of Willagee generally, is not the lack of housing; it is the lack of the right type of housing. Willagee now has the highest number of single-occupant, quarter-acre blocks with four-bedroom war service homes than any other suburb in the city. I will say that again: Willagee has the highest number of single-occupant, quarter-acre blocks with public housing than any

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p4135b-4160a

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other suburb. I think Balga is the next suburb, and I cannot recall the other ones. Those two suburbs, Balga and Willagee, were built at similar times. Certainly, when Willagee was built, it was 100 per cent public housing—war service housing and so on. It was really the Australian horizontal equivalent of the council flat towers in the United Kingdom, for any members who have visited London and seen them; that is all it is, but just spread out. As I said, Willagee has that particular problem, so there is a lot of unleveraged or sunk capital just sitting there, moribund. The vast majority of those single-occupant dwellings are lived in by women, typically widows who have raised families and been participants in the community for their entire life. They are more than happy to move because the garden is too hard to look after, the house is too big for them and they need to downsize, but their problem is that they have a great fear that if they offer their house back to the Department of Housing to go on the list for either renovation, sale, disposal or reallocation, they will have to move well outside the district to find accommodation. There is no way at that end of their life that they can provide for themselves. The reason they are in a Department of Housing house is their inability to provide housing for themselves. The fact that they have to worry that the department will knock on their door any day and say that it needs the house puts them in a real dilemma. We know that is not true, but that fear is still present for them. We must expend a certain amount of money and fast in relative terms to ensure that we unlock that asset. In the suburb of Willagee there is not just a scattering of one person per dwelling here and there, but in any given street there could be three or four adjoining blocks with single-occupant dwellings. One street in my electorate has three single-occupant dwellings each built on a quarter-acre block and all next to each other. The zoning in that area is R25, so we could end up building something like 20 units on those blocks. Let me put it this way, we could provide seniors accommodation—independent living—for at least 20 people with one and two-bedroom units on those three blocks. We need to find a way to unlock the moribund asset that sits in the 36 000 dwellings plus that the Department of Housing owns. I think the total asset is worth around \$17 billion across the state. It is a moot figure because it just exists on the balance sheets. We must find better ways to unlock the asset.

There are also Department of Housing blocks in my suburbs—there is no point going through them but there are enough of them; I am doing a study to see how many there are—that are empty and the house has been demolished. Several houses have been demolished and the blocks have been sitting vacant. One block has been vacant for as long as 10 years—it beggars belief! I know the minister is confronted with many issues in his portfolio, but some decisive action must be taken to release this land and develop it into appropriate accommodation that meets the changing demographic of the existing clients within the Department of Housing. It is easy for me to sit on this side of the chamber and say that the minister needs to fix it. Clearly, we must look at innovative ways to unlock particularly vacant land. I have asked questions on notice in the past to discover in my seat how much of that land exists and how long it has been sitting there either as an empty block or with an empty dwelling on it. I wonder whether the better solution is to offer it by lease, if nothing else, to a community housing organisation to develop, within the licence of the permit that might be put under that lease, the number of dwellings that are needed to meet the need—it is very simple. We would get to unlock a whole lot of properties, and whether those properties get disposed of or converted is an open question. The department clearly has limited capacity to develop those blocks or houses that are in the single dwelling or single house past economic life categories—that is, houses that are 60 or 70 years old. If the department and the government do not have the resources to fund that development, we should bring in the organisations that have the capacity to do so. Foundation Housing and Access Housing Australia are two examples. I have problems with the way that those organisations manage their clientele and with their transparency, but it is nothing that the minister cannot fix by putting in place better operating procedures and using the department more as a regulator than the developer. We should put the developers in an area in which they have the most commercial acumen, which is not to say that the department has not done fantastic things with some of the innovative dwellings that it has been involved with, particularly Cockburn Central, as a recent example. We have unlocked capital—moribund capital, if members like—or sunk funds of the Crown that really ought to be unlocked.

We also have people, in my view, who simply do not deserve a public house. I am not talking about antisocial behaviour or about those involved in criminal activity, which members have seen in my electorate, and the department has been successful in assisting the police to ensure that we have a comprehensive response to that criminal activity. I am talking about people who treat their houses poorly. I am talking about people who have abused the privilege of housing year after year. I will give members one example, and I do not do so lightly. The residence at 4 Dunford Street in Willagee clearly falls in the category of mismanagement and improper use of a house. The department has already told me that the house is well beyond its economic life. The department has been very responsive and the regional manager, Melanie Croke, has been exceptional in her support of anything I bring to her, so this is not the department's problem but what seems to be a systemic problem. I was called to the house some months ago by the neighbour, a tremendous family who has been living there for years and years. They said that they have just had enough. They took me out the back of their house and I looked over the fence and I swear that what I saw made *Steptoe and Son* look like a dental clinic. It was unbelievable what was there.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 18 June 2014]

p4135b-4160a

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There were illegal structures—sheds that had been put up—and mountains and mountains of rubbish, and the number of snakes the family said that come through the fence from there was beyond belief. I did my thing and reported it to the regional manager, Ms Croke, and got a pretty quick response. When I asked whether someone had gone around there and done the required mandatory inspection, and Melanie is not to be blamed because this had happened in the past, to her credit she said that the record showed that that had happened. I asked whether any warnings had been given or any remedial action had happened and she said no. Clearly, somebody had not gone around there because this amount of junk does not build up in one week or between inspections. The illegal structures have now been referred to the council and the council has put in an order for retrospective approval on the tenant because that tenant has been there long enough to have built them. When we went back through the case, it appeared to have been mismanaged in that some inspector had probably gone around to the place, got to the front gate and saw the “Warning—Dog” sign or something like that, and that is as far as they got. They then ticked the house off the list and moved on to the next inspection in what was probably a long list of inspections for that particular day. It seems to me that the resources for the Department of Housing are stretched so far that they are like local governments, working only by exception or by complaint. If there is a complaint, it will deal with it, but it will not systematically search through its clients and take on more work than it needs to. That is what happens when there is a resource constraint within a department; it cannot do its job properly.

Despite the best efforts of the director general in modernising the department, particularly in the application of the digital age, if you like, which is a great innovation, we are still swimming against the tide. The tenants at 4 Dunford Street in Willagee do not deserve the home. I am advised by the neighbours that the tenant does not actually live there; the son of the tenant lives there. The son of the tenant has been subject to a community treatment order out of Alma Street and is at times not supervised at all, so obviously I have taken up that matter separately. As we can see with these particular issues in housing, their management requires a complex-needs approach. We cannot look at one issue without understanding that there is a holistic problem. There are other people living there for long periods in the outbuildings that were illegally constructed. The whole place is beyond its economic life. I took photos for the benefit of Melanie Croke, to ensure that she did not have to go out there herself, and the department responded to her. That is just one example of mismanagement due to a lack of resources, I suppose, at the department and something slipping through the cracks year on year, because it would easily have taken 10 years’ worth of work to get that house in that condition. I use that example because it is probably one of the more severe cases. Other members got to their feet and described even worse examples of some of the activities that go on in those houses. However, in my example something needs to be done. The tenants do not deserve that house. There is some capital in the asset that the department owns that should be leveraged up. If the department does not have the resources because this government has leached all the operating capacity for the department to actually undertake its job at a meaningful level, we need to get rid of the asset as fast as possible or transfer the job to those who have the capacity to deal with it.

In estimates we also asked about community housing organisations. They survive, as we know, on the basis of the commonwealth rental assistance scheme. We have already seen that the national rental affordability scheme is under threat and might be gone. We are now wondering what will happen to the CRA scheme, which is the fundamental economic model for the provision of community housing. If we do not speak loudly and clearly to the commonwealth for that scheme to be sustained, we can imagine the catastrophic problem. Even if the federal government shortens it and changes the economic model and does not provide compensation in any other way, the whole model for the Community Housing Coalition will change overnight and the state will have to pick up the responsibility. Access Housing has 1 200 houses, I think, and Foundation Housing has a similar number. The department will have to take those back on very quickly, not to mention the impact of the flow-on cost. The government does not get CRA, it does not get to claim GST, and it does not get the benefits that accrue commercially to community housing associations. The department is better at regulating and needs to do more regulation in the community housing sector, in my opinion, to achieve a better interface and more transparency, particularly for local members when they ask questions about a particular tenancy. The operator of the house should not be identified, as ultimately the state is responsible.

I will conclude my remarks simply by saying that we need to unlock the capital that exists in the ground so that we can make a better contribution to the public housing component of the housing spectrum and ensure that we are doing the right thing by the people of Western Australia.

**MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Housing)** [7.23 pm]: I thank the members on the other side who have contributed to the debate on this motion. As I work through the remaining time, I will address many of the cases and issues they raised. Maybe I will begin in reverse order by making a couple of observations that were a bit surprising to me, actually.

The member for Cockburn went through the annual reports and talked about the differential between a public house and a social house. He pulled out figures for public houses, which basically are houses that are managed

by the Department of Housing. In 2007–08, the public rental stock was 35 473. He got that figure out of the annual report and it is the correct figure. His figure from the 2012–13 annual report for public housing stock of 36 714 is also the correct figure. That showed an increase in the public rental housing stock of about 1 300 in round figures over the period when we came into government. However, that does not include all the social housing, because it also includes the community housing sector, some joint ventures and also some crisis accommodation to get to the total of social housing for those two periods. The total figure was 39 132 in 2007–08, and that has increased to 43 057 in 2013–14.

However, the member did not go back to the annual report of 2001 when the total public rental stock was 35 111. If we compare that with the figures over those eight years from 2001 to 2007–08, the public housing stock figure had gone up by only 362. That surprised me because I thought it would have been higher. So, the actual public housing stock has only really grown since we brought in our affordable housing strategy. I think we have to take some credit for that because the strategy means that we are providing affordable housing to try to transition people out of public housing to get the waiting list down. Admittedly, during the difficult times of the global financial crisis and the solid economic times in 2007, 2008 and 2009 in Western Australia due to the high activity in the mining industry and in the oil and gas industry, unfortunately rentals and the average house value went up. There was therefore a problem in that there was not enough affordable housing. I have to say, therefore, that we have had a quite large program of capital investment. A lot of that has occurred in the country too, including areas where there has been a breakdown in the system in towns such as Port Hedland, Karratha and Onslow.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** A lot of that's been federal money too, minister. We never got anything when Howard was in.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes. A massive amount of royalties for regions money, which is state government money, has gone to worker accommodation, affordable housing and also not-for-profit organisations that work in that area; so there has been quite a lot. We have also put a lot of work into building crisis accommodation.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I have a lot of notes to get through, member, and I will be battling to get through them before eight o'clock.

However, there are some key messages. Firstly, a lot of members opposite have pulled out a line from the budget that refers to top-up money the Department of Housing sometimes gets from the commonwealth rental fund for specific programs. They highlighted that consolidated revenue funding in two particular years had dropped from \$100 million in round figures to \$8 million, and said that we are therefore spending only \$8 million on our social housing program. The revenue base for the Department of Housing is actually over \$1.7 billion. Basically, we have a \$1.7 billion business that, from time to time, gets top-up money from CRF. It is therefore a bit rough and misleading to pull out figures that have gone down in two particular years. The figures go up and down depending on the programs we specifically fund through CRF. However, it is now a \$1.7 billion program and a lot of funds are generated from within the business it undertakes. We actually have budgeted \$352 million for new works in the 2014–15 financial year.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** What is that, sorry?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The amount of \$352 million is budgeted for new works. I do not mind interjections on figures; it does not ruin my train of thought. As I have mentioned on many occasions, \$55 million will be spent on turning 200 housing properties into 500 townhouses and units. I do not know whether any of them are in the member for Willagee's area. Indeed, that spending reflects the sort of innovative ideas he spoke about, which I strongly support. That is good thinking. We have \$55 million in capital available to invest. It would involve typical quarter-acre blocks, such as the ones the member for Willagee mentioned, which would have possibly three-bedroom, one-bathroom houses occupied possibly by a single person. It would be even better if there were three houses in a row. Overall this program involves converting 200 homes into 500 and improving the housing stock. We would sell some off and get more capital to invest into affordable housing and further social housing.

Before I get into more detail, I will give a snapshot of crisis accommodation. Twenty-eight new crisis units will be built from 2014 to 2016 on top of the 350 new units for homeless people opened in the past two years, so we have been focusing on crisis accommodation. Indeed, our record is pretty good. The former Labor government's record on crisis accommodation was not too bad—a lot better than its record in the public housing area. We have to put in context what has been happening since 2008. The population has gone from 2.2 million to 2.5 million. In that context, our population has grown by 300 000, which is a 15 per cent increase in 15 years. At the same time, although the waiting list rose a bit three years ago, we have managed to bring it down by 4 000, despite the rapid increase in population. We want to focus on those most in need getting access to the 42 000 heavily subsidised rental accommodation units we have. I want to point out more than 600 public housing renters have

bought their own home or moved into affordable private rentals in the past year. Our strategy of making affordable houses available —

**Mr P.B. Watson:** How many is that?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It is 600. That has freed up 600 public housing places. The Liberal–National government’s “Affordable Housing Strategy 2010–2020: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing”, as everyone has heard me say on more than one occasion in this house, is aimed at supplying and diversifying the type of accommodation we have and providing 20 000 affordable homes by 2020. Essentially, this will be achieved through developing private sector partnerships, using our land and housing assets more effectively, as the member for Willagee has quite rightly said we should be doing, and increasing the availability of affordable private rentals. The national rental affordability scheme is one way, but we also have to encourage investors to build the right sort of affordable accommodation. The other tool in our kitbag is the strengthening of the community housing sector. As mentioned by many members, there is a market advantage for the community housing sector because of the rental subsidy provided by the commonwealth. Indeed, the member for Willagee is correct; the model would change if that rental subsidy were altered.

Creating viable alternatives to social housing for low income householders is fundamental to our strategy and there are different ways of achieving this. We have delivered more than 14 800 new affordable options out of the 20 000 we planned. This includes 4 300 new social homes for low income earners, 2 300 discounted private rentals and 7 400 Keystart homes. I can go into more detail on that later. In concert with introducing the affordable housing strategy, as everyone knows and as the Premier has mentioned on more than one occasion, the Liberal–National government invested \$600 million into the not-for-profit sector to support some of these housing strategies. Indeed, the model we have in Western Australia for the people in crisis accommodation involves the Department of Housing assisting with a capital component in delivering the assets, but the delivery of programs around crisis accommodation comes under the minister in the upper house. In most cases, she uses not-for-profit agencies to deliver those services.

I will now turn to the 2014–15 state budget and specifically comment on the lack of dollars mentioned by the other side. Firstly, as I said in my introduction, the state appropriations are only one source of funding for the housing authority. The state’s capital appropriation reduces by \$109.82 million in 2014–15 compared with the 2013–14 estimated actual. The reduction is as a result of the scheduled completion of funding for our social housing boost program in 2014–15, which was a \$65 million reduction because that has been completed; and \$14.4 million for the provision of 169 dwellings for clients of the Disability Services Commission program, which is something we have delivered on, which is very important. We have delivered \$2 million towards domestic violence accommodation and \$3 million for the purchase of land for Government Regional Officers’ Housing properties in Onslow. That accounts for a reduction in capital appropriation from the consolidated fund. As I said, the Department of Housing’s revenue per annum is \$1.7 billion, which it uses to deliver its programs. The asset investment program for new works in 2014–15 is \$352 million and \$154 million over the forward estimates. We are not cutting back on our asset investment program; indeed, it is all going along in a healthy way.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** It will all be in the out years.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** No, it will not.

It is important to note that the Housing Authority is continuing its affordable housing program, including the SharedStart program, of \$250 million in 2014–15 and the public housing stock redevelopment program is \$57.5 million in 2014–15. This combined expenditure, totalling \$307.5 million in 2014–15, which, as I have said, is in excess of \$1 billion over the forward estimates, is operating expenditure to build an inventory of properties for sale. As such, it is not part of the funding we see in the budget papers.

The land program also attracts operating expenditure, and that is separate from the accounting standards, so that is another figure that is not in the Department of Housing budget.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** When I was Minister for Housing in 2000, we were building —

**Mr P.B. Watson:** There are no interjections.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I am happy to take this interjection, Mr Acting Speaker.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** We are building 1 400 new dwellings a year. At the end of your seven years in government, you were building about 850 new dwellings a year. We are about 400 —

**Mr P.B. Watson** interjected.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** So were we.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr P.B. Watson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Albany! Minister, I want you to resume your speech.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I might cut down on interjections, Deputy Premier, it is not very helpful.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I want to reiterate that the minister will not take interjections.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mirrabooka, you spoke against what I expressly said. The minister is not taking any interjections unless they want a figure clarified. Is that correct, minister?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Correct, Mr Acting Speaker.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** The figure I would like clarified —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** When I said the figure, unfortunately, the Deputy Premier came in late because I covered the former Labor government's record on the increase in public rental housing over the eight years from 35 111 to 35 473. That is not very many houses.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Minister, what is the land sales figure?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I have not got to that. I cannot pull out figures willy-nilly; sorry, member.

The \$113.2 million state equity injection in 2013–14, which is a figure that members opposite keep raising—as well as its reduction in 2014–15—represents only 5.5 per cent of the Housing Authority's funding sources for 2013–14. It is not what we would call big bickies. The \$3.4 million state equity injection in 2014–15—that is next year's figure—represents only 0.18 per cent of the Housing Authority's funding sources in 2014–15. Members opposite need to look at the actual funding sources to get a true picture of how the Department of Housing works. I do not think I will get to that.

I wanted to talk about the more affordable ownership opportunities, which is what I mentioned before. There will be a \$55 million loan facility over two years from 2014–15 towards the public housing stock redevelopment program. Under this program, as I have mentioned to the member for Willagee, the Housing Authority is going to redevelop 200 underutilised public housing sites. Some could be sites that are vacant, and others could be sites that have houses that have passed their use-by date. We will deliver 500 new affordable homes by the end of 2015–2016. The total estimated expenditure for that program, utilising \$55 million, will be about \$135 million.

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** For 500?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes. We are turning 200 underutilised assets, using a loan facility of \$55 million—the actual cost of doing that will be an economic benefit of, I guess, \$135 million; that is the plan—into 500 new houses by 2015. Hopefully that will happen; otherwise I will be standing here in a couple of years' time and members opposite will be giving me a hard time. The members for Willagee and Cockburn raised the point that we have an opportunity with some of our underutilised assets, provided we have some capital, to really generate some quite good income and revenue so that we can actually cross-subsidise the social housing program.

The other important thing we have done over the past four or five years is invest in new housing in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions for Aboriginal people. We have also refurbished quite a lot of the houses; we have actually done that, as the member for Albany pointed out, mainly through commonwealth funds. Through royalties for regions, we will have \$33 million funding from 2013–14 to 2016–17 towards progressing our four-year West Kimberley transitional housing project. That is an important project that has wraparound services for Aboriginal people who end up having higher incomes and can actually own their own house. I think the member for Kimberley is across this program, with the Warmun foundation assisting. This is a program that the commonwealth is looking at, too.

**Ms J. Farrer:** Is that in East Kimberley?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes. We want to progress and continue that program, so we have a further \$33 million through royalties for regions to try to keep that program going. As I just said, the commonwealth has visited us and it has said that it is looking at this program, too. It would be terrific if the commonwealth does this in a broader sense, and perhaps even assists us further. It is a very good program, and it has wraparound services including financial counselling and advice. An Aboriginal person in the East Kimberley living in Department of Housing accommodation may have a job, but, as the member for Kimberley knows, the private rental market is

very high there; people cannot easily buy a house. But if we provide those houses, which this program does, we can show, through the right financial counselling, that people have the income to pay a loan on a house they own that may not be much more than they are paying for their Department of Housing rental property. As members know, if people's incomes go up, the department does not keep them at the low rate; it tries to get as close to the market rate as it can, within reason. We might find that for people who have a job, with a little counselling, we might be able to transition them from a Department of Housing house to their own house.

While I am on this topic, because it is a topic I like, I have a very good example of an Aboriginal couple from, I believe, Onslow who actually went through the shared equity program some years ago when the property prices in Onslow were a lot lower than they are now. They managed, through a Keystart loan for shared equity, to buy a house in Onslow just before the prices went up—everyone in town knows this story; I do not know their names, but all the Aboriginal people will tell you who they are—and they made \$600 000 when they sold the house and they now live in the Northern Territory. That is the folklore story.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** That's one story, minister; there are thousands —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** They are a one-off story, but the one thing that is good about that is that it does promote the SharedStart scheme. It shows how, once people have their own assets, they can become independent. That is an important project.

The other thing we have been quite proud of is the housing for workers funding over the seven years from 2011 to 2017—there is more to come. That will total \$355.5 million, and it has been very important in some of the towns where, especially for small business, it is very expensive to have people in a business if the owners have to provide housing for them in an area such as Port Hedland and Karratha, and I will throw in Kununurra, Derby and Onslow as well. That is a pretty good program that is innovative and provides housing for workers in that area.

Staying on the Aboriginal theme, we have been helping Aboriginal people in the Pilbara gain apprenticeships. We have had \$16 million of royalties for regions funding over three years from 2012-13 go towards a partnership to deliver apprentice and trainee employment related to accommodation in South Hedland and Newman as part of the Pilbara Cities program. That is a pretty good program that everyone has been quite proud of. The authority has partnered with the Department of Regional Development, the commonwealth government and BHP Billiton Iron Ore to construct and operate accommodation that will support Aboriginal employment and independent living in the Pilbara.

I will move on to increasing the supply of affordable rentals. The national rental affordability scheme is a scheme whereby the state government contributes 25 per cent and the commonwealth 75 per cent; it is actually a good scheme.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza):** Excuse me, minister; members, you need to keep those voices down.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It is a good scheme for the leverage for the state. Normally we do not get a four-to-one leverage with the commonwealth; sometimes we are lucky to get one-to-one. Here is an actual program from which we get four-to-one leverage with the commonwealth, and it is a program that addresses both housing supply and affordability. Obviously, it costs the state government some money, because the way the scheme works is that it allows the private sector to develop new rental accommodation and put it on the market at at least 20 per cent below the market rate. That is policed only by the commonwealth, although we have some representation as well. That means that we are actually getting a greater supply of accommodation, and that helps to keep affordable housing affordable. We have signed up to more than 5 000 dwellings; we actually signed up for 7 000, but the commonwealth is pulling out. We will still have more than 5 000 of these affordable lower rental dwellings being built, and they will also increase the supply. That is a key plank to our affordability strategy.

One of the important things that the opposition either deliberately avoided mentioning or is not aware of is that Housing has its own source funds. Through its own source funds, it is able to continue to support the government's strategy in significant ways. Despite the fact that the opposition has talked about some funds that are tied up as cash, I point out that these cash funds result from us completing our Government Regional Officers' Housing program, because the Department of Housing does not build only social houses; it also has a strong GROH program providing houses to government employees in the country. We have done a very large program in the last four years in a lot of towns. There are some terrific new government houses in Derby, Kununurra, Port Hedland and Karratha. That program has largely reached its end, so there are funds in the bank, so to speak, for when we crank that project up again in a few years.

Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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Basically, through our own source funds, we will continue our program, as I have already mentioned. There is \$219.7 million in the 2014–15 estimates. If we include all the forward estimates, \$932 million will be spent on residential land acquisition and development to enable the production of up to 2 214 housing lots in 2014–15 in the continued delivery of housing. In increasing the supply of affordable land, which is essential to have affordable houses, just next year we will be investing \$219.7 million. As members know, that delivers income because when we sell the land, we make a profit on that land, and that profit is reinvested into the Department of Housing for our social housing strategy. Indeed, our land development program, our housing development program and Keystart loans contribute in a large way to the annual income stream of the department.

I want to make mention of our SharedStart program. An amount of \$215 million in 2014–15 and \$1 billion over the forward estimates will be dedicated to the affordable housing program, including the SharedStart program. As I have mentioned in this house before, the SharedStart program provides the opportunity for home ownership for those people on very low incomes through access to a Keystart loan, which means that people do not have to have as much of a saved-up deposit as they do with other banks, even though the interest rate is the same. Our SharedStart program also ties into our housing development program, because we have affordable houses built that are available for people who want to get a SharedStart loan through Keystart.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Can I ask a question about it?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** No, the member cannot, because I have only five minutes to go and I have another 10 pages of notes.

One of the important things about that program that I might highlight, since the member has raised it, is that during a fairly difficult economic time for the building industry a couple of years ago, the building industry was not getting any orders. The Department of Housing said that it would do a deal with the industry. It said that it would pay for the construction of some houses, but it would get them at cost. What the department cleverly did—it was very innovative—in relation to the equity component in that period —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, minister. Members, I am still hearing a drone. I would really appreciate it if you would keep as quiet as you can.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I know I am droning on, but I enjoy droning on.

We have got a lot of pats on the back from the housing industry over the last couple of years for stepping into the market and constructing appropriate houses—that is, smaller houses on smaller blocks that were affordable and available to the market. We got those at cost, and the housing industry was pleased to build them so that it could keep its staff on and keep its business going, and it did not have to put anyone off. We built these houses and captured that equity through the SharedStart program. That equity is now owned by the taxpayers of Western Australia, and we got that by being innovative and working with the housing sector in Western Australia. I think everyone, including the Housing Authority, has been very pleased with that program.

I want to touch briefly on another sector, because it has been raised by, I think, most members, including the member for Cockburn. He raised this in a cautious manner, and I can understand his caution with this. This is the community housing sector program, which is another innovative way in which we are trying to maximise the value of the assets. Previously, we always had a certain number of houses that we would lease to the community housing sector, and it would look after them for us. We have moved cautiously—I say cautiously. I know that the member for Willagee spoke about this quite positively; he was a bit more positive than the member for Cockburn. But we are cautiously moving into transferring assets —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** It's part of the national debt.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes, that is right. But we are being cautious. We have transferred 1 505 houses cautiously—again I use the word “cautiously”, because I am a bit like the member for Cockburn—to the community housing sector on the proviso that it will deliver some 518 new houses with its own capital. We are watching and waiting on that, and I hope that the sector will deliver. If it does deliver, it is an option —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** How long have they got to do that?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The deadline to deliver those 518 houses is 2020.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** How many have they delivered so far?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I think I mentioned that in Parliament in answer to a question that someone on our side of the house asked me last week.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** You'll have to forgive me if I didn't follow all the dorothy dixers today.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It was not today; it was last week.

Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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**Mr D.J. Kelly:** It was yesterday, was it?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It is actually 151; I know the figure. That is the figure that my department gave me. We will have 151 houses when the latest development is opened shortly. We have 151 out of the 518, but by 2020, the sector should be delivering 518 houses. That is another way to make sure that we increase the number of affordable houses in the market. Also, they are social houses, so they hit the lower economic sector of the community. As the members for Willagee and Cockburn mentioned, there is a reason that the community housing sector can run its rental program a little more efficiently than we do, and that is because it gets commonwealth rental assistance. As two members said, they want me to watch that space carefully. I agree that if the commonwealth changes that rental subsidy, it will change the ball game quite considerably. Indeed, it may mean that the community housing sector might want to give those houses back to us, or we might want to get them back. That is something we will keep an eye on.

Not much time is left. Do members opposite want me to carry on so that debate on the motion can continue next week?

**Mr F.M. Logan:** Not necessarily. We don't mind bringing it to a vote.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** All right. I was just thinking that if there is any particular thing, I have all the notes —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You've covered most of it.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Have I covered most of it?

**Mr F.M. Logan:** I think so.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Okay. I did not mention the caravan park at Palm Beach, but I think we have that covered anyway.

With that, I am happy to say that I think we are doing a fantastic job in housing. I am very proud of my Department of Housing and the innovative options it has to make sure that we continue to outscore the record of members opposite, which I think was appalling. I was a little disappointed when I read that the net figure of public housing between 2001 and 2007–08 under the former Labor government increased from 35 111 to 35 473. A quick calculation shows that is an increase of 362 houses.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** But how many is it now—36 000?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The net total of public housing is 36 714. That is a lot more houses built, and in less time, than when the Labor Party was in government.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr I.M. Britza) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J. Farrer	Mr M. McGowan	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms S.F. McGurk ( <i>Teller</i> )
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr P.C. Tinley	
Mr D.J. Kelly	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson	

Noes (31)

Mr P. Abetz	Ms M.J. Davies	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr F.A. Alban	Ms W.M. Duncan	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr J. Norberger
Mr C.J. Barnett	Ms E. Evangel	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr I.M. Britza	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Dr K.D. Hames	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr C.D. Hatton	Mr N.W. Morton	Mr A. Krsticevic ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 18 June 2014]

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Ms Janine Freeman; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Bill Marmion

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Pairs

Ms L.L. Baker  
Mr D.A. Templeman  
Mr J.R. Quigley

Mr R.F. Johnson  
Mr J.H.D. Day  
Mrs L.M. Harvey

Question thus negatived.