

PUBLIC HOUSING

Motion

Resumed from 22 May on the following motion moved by Mr F.M. Logan —

That this house condemns the government for its failures in the housing portfolio, and in particular public housing.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [4.13 pm]: I rise to continue my remarks on this motion. The Minister for Housing will recall that when I last spoke, I was talking about the stresses on the housing workers who deal with public housing demands—and not only public housing demands, but also private housing demands. I reflected on how difficult it must be for the Department of Housing workers and mentioned that the workers at the Department of Housing at Mirrabooka need to be congratulated for working in adverse conditions at this time. That stress was outlined further in a short article written in *The Sunday Times* two weeks ago that the minister would be aware of. In that article, the chair of the Western Australian Community Legal Centres raised concerns about homelessness and stated that the need for housing has exacerbated to the point at which some people working in these services fear violence. The headline was something like “community workers fear violence”. I spoke to one of those workers recently.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The minister will be aware also that I have been a volunteer board member of various community legal services over 15 years, so I am well acquainted with many of these types of services. I was talking to a community worker recently who said that her front-of-desk administration staff member had to be taken into the back office at times because the front desk was so stressful when dealing with people who have housing demands and who get very upset and quite aggressive when nothing can be done to assist them.

It is with some pleasure that I see that a tender went out in the past few days from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the children and community ministerial body for the homelessness assessment and referral service. I imagine that the minister was involved in the process and is aware of this. The process combines the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Housing as well as other agencies to allow people to respond to the demands relating to homelessness in Western Australia. As I have said in this place previously, a homeless person is no longer just someone who is living rough on the streets. Many families have had to become separated by having to share their children around and having to find accommodation in different properties because they have been unable to get affordable housing. People are also living in their cars. Homelessness is no longer just people who are sleeping out in the open at night, although that is still a major problem. Homelessness has gone from being about people with mental health issues to people being unable to actually get housing. I note that in the tender request issued by the Western Australian government, the project for the homelessness assessment and referral services was part of the “Western Australia Homelessness State Plan 2010–13: Opening Doors to Address Homelessness”, which the minister has raised previously.

The tender request refers to the consultation that went into developing the service. Eight of the 15 plans identified included better coordinated services as one of the top three priorities. The procurement information refers to identifying this as an area of great need. In a two-week period in February 2013, and over a one-week period in the Department of Housing’s homeless advisory service—three weeks in total—637 people sought assistance from the department by either presenting at the district office or calling Crisis Care or the Department of Housing’s homeless advisory service. That is assuming that in that two-week period they were either calling or fronting the child protection district officers, and, during the other week they were calling or fronting the Department of Housing. There is probably some cross-referencing. Even if each case was a separate individual, that is 637 people over three weeks. That is a lot of people fronting up and saying they are homeless. That survey indicates that the largest group of people were singles, followed by families with children, representing 57 per cent and 35 per cent of the total respectively. I understand that this has become a major problem for the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. It is dealing with homelessness on an ongoing basis and cannot deal with its core work of child protection. This service goes part way to addressing that. My only concern, if the minister has an opportunity to clarify this, is what impact this will have on Crisis Care. Is this the privatisation or outsourcing of Crisis Care? My understanding was that the role of Crisis Care was to coordinate services in the area of homelessness. It would not come as any surprise to members that in the survey I referred to among the top three recorded reasons for homelessness, making up 66 per cent of the total, was eviction from either public or private housing, and from families or friends’ homes or others. We get those people through our doors every day: people who have been evicted because the property owners are going to do up the house or they are coming back from somewhere; or there has been a family or relationship breakdown and family or domestic

violence. From looking at the service agreement, I understand the expectation is that the service will be delivered for a period of three years for a fixed price of \$600 000 per annum, with an additional brokerage fund of up to \$150 000 per annum to purchase overnight accommodation in emergency situations when no other options are available. It creates some concern when there is a limit on how many people can be assisted by this amount of money. I wonder whether tenders for this service will rely on saying that they cannot help people on a given night because they have run out of their brokerage funds.

Reflecting on this tender request, the minister might be able to clarify whether he sought advice from the Victorian housing department, which has had a homeless assessment and referral service for some time. It commenced in October 2005 and was rebadged in 2008 as Opening Doors, when it had a budget increase of \$6.75 million over the four years from 2008 to 2012. An article in the *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, volume 14, number 2, from August 2008, looked at how the program was operating. The article did not go into great detail because it believed that the department would do a review at the end of 2008. The problem with this homeless assistance referral service, which I welcome and I hope assists people with private rentals as well as others, is that increasingly when people are homeless, part of gaining private rentals is about accessing the rental market, which is all done online and that is quite difficult. As I said before, when people front up to apply for a private rental property they find 30 or more other people there. One assumes that this is hands-on, on-the-ground assistance beyond what is currently available through Crisis Care, whereby a person just talks to someone on the phone. That is my hope for this new service. I also hope that this program is not a replacement for what is really needed. The author of an article in the *Australian Journal of Primary Health* spoke to many stakeholders in Victoria. On page 65, the article reads —

Some people in the community sector argue that it is not the “front end” that needs fixing so much as the supply problems with affordable housing and support at the “back end”.

Given that eviction is one of the reasons for homelessness that have been outlined in the tender documents, that would seem to be the case. The article continues —

In fact, there is something of a consensus on this point—the community sector and the Office of Housing agree that more affordable housing is required.

This journal article refers to another issue with using this model for homelessness assessment and referral services that relates to the processes and the form making. It states —

The problem of exclusions of certain consumers from the service system is now explicitly on the agenda ...

In finalising my contribution, I take the opportunity to raise what I see as something of a problem with the tender model. It looks at the delivering community services in partnership policy that came into effect in July 2011. I do not know whether the minister or even the Premier is aware, but because of the way that new funding model occurs, small non-government organisations can no longer tender on the basis that they would get Lotterywest funds for things like computers and photocopiers. Lotterywest has said that they can no longer rely on getting these set-up funds or using them as part of the tender process for replacement. This is actually costing government more because that was one of the ways that small non-government organisations operated; for example, when community legal centres set up new services, such as the new tenancy service that has to be established because the Tenants Advice Service recently shut its doors. In the process of tendering, an organisation could previously have gone to Lotterywest and got in-principle support for a grant for office equipment and refurbishment in order to deliver a service; now Lotterywest says that because this new delivering community services in partnership policy is an open competitive model with the private and public sector, non-government organisations can no longer put in that tender. That makes things a lot more costly. I digress, but I put on record that this is something the government may need to look at in that tender process that may disadvantage being able to deliver services in the manner that the government wants to, given that the pricing for the homeless assessment referral service is \$600 000. It makes it a bit difficult for a not-for-profit, non-government, community-based organisation when it cannot source additional funds. It really means only those large organisations take the field. Sometimes those large organisations are not as good at doing that hands-on work that I was talking about—that is, going out to a tenancy and helping people out. I have said before in this place that the Edmund Rice Centre has a really good hands-on service with its tenancy services for newly arrived Australians, by visiting them and going through the processes. It would be a shame that a policy that was meant to address some of those issues would disadvantage organisations because of a process and procurement policy that undermines the use of alternative funds such as Lotterywest.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.27 pm]: I rise to contribute to this debate. Although it is the nature of debate in private members' business to condemn the government et cetera, which I know this motion does, I

actually think, in all seriousness, that because of the crisis that faces us with homelessness and people threatened with homelessness and the facts that are presented to us every day about the difficulties so many families and individuals find in securing safe and appropriate accommodation, this should be the number one priority of the newly elected Barnett government.

In my 12 and a bit years as a member of Parliament I have not seen the situation as bad as it is now in Mandurah and the Peel region, and I am sure it is a major problem for many other electorates and communities throughout Western Australia. I am sure the minister would have access to statistics for Mandurah and Peel, which were highlighted only recently in a report in the *Mandurah Mail* on 2 May in which Anglicare highlighted its annual rental affordability snapshot. It showed that Mandurah residents were among those severely affected by the lack of affordable rental accommodation. The minister may or may not be aware that historically Mandurah is a place where a person could get a cheap, affordable rental. In the 26-plus years I have lived in Mandurah, and particularly when I served on the City of Mandurah as a councillor and deputy mayor from 1994 to 2001, one of the good things was that if a family needed accommodation there was a good supply of affordable rental accommodation. I note that the Minister for Housing was in Mandurah last Friday and went on a bit of an accidental tour while trying to find a particular address. During that time I worked on the council there was a very good supply of affordable rental housing, particularly in central Mandurah. A lot of the available housing stock had been built in the 1950s and 1960s and although some of it was beginning to deteriorate and was in need of maintenance, by and large if a person needed a rental property, they could get one, and it was cheap to rent. In the past decade that has been turned on its head, particularly in the last four or five years. Those houses have gone and they have been replaced by units which people are either living in or have been taken up by people who have held them as retirement homes and now live in them permanently. That means the stock of affordable rentals in Mandurah is now minute. In fact, when any property comes onto the rental market in Mandurah now it is often snapped up within days, if not hours, of being advertised, and often it may not even be advertised by real estate agents because of the high demand.

In May Anglicare released its affordable rental snapshot, assessing 4 272 rental properties across the state. It calculated affordability as 30 per cent of a household's gross income. The *Mandurah Mail* of Thursday, 2 May 2013 states —

Nikki Wise, Mandurah Reach Out Drop In Centre manager said it was now extremely hard for Mandurah residents, including those with disabilities, single mothers and pensioners to find rentals.

“The disability pension combined with rent assistance is only \$800 a fortnight ...

That is \$400 a week. The article further states —

Ms Wise said with the rent in most cases at \$350 a week or higher it is not enough for someone to survive.

This is serious stuff, because these people are often the most vulnerable in our communities and they should be a priority of the government.

It is now difficult to find in Mandurah any rental under \$300 a week. If someone can get a rental for \$200, they are probably accessing a substandard structure. This issue is serious because so many people are desperate. Every day—I do not exaggerate—the staff in my office in central Mandurah are contacted either by phone, email or walk-ins about the housing crisis. Minister, I honestly am not fibbing that it happens every day. I give an example of two inquiries that came in yesterday. One is an email inquiry and I will not identify the person, but I will mention her first name. I tried to ring her about an hour ago, but I have not heard back from her. This person's situation is only one example. Her name is Tracey and she writes —

Dear Minister,

She called me minister, which I am proud of, but I am not —

Are you in a position to help a homeless family of four, 1 adult and 3 children aged 17 & 15. Recently vacated our rental property in Meadow Springs as rent increased by \$70pw —

So the rent went up \$70. Minister, this is happening all the time. The crisis of access to stock means a landlord can essentially ask anything. People are saying, “I will pay more if I can secure this rental property”. The email continues —

which unfortunately I could not afford.

By the way, this came in yesterday, 10 June, just before 5.00 pm. It continues—

Currently we are living in our car in the Perth Metro area, showering and having meals at mum's one bedroom apartment.

Mum cannot accommodate them —

The children cannot attend their usual secondary school in Mandurah as the distance is too far to travel each day. I can't enrol them in a local Perth school as we don't have a permanent address. I hope you understand my concerns for their future education and well being.

We are facing huge obstacles ...

There is an issue about the father, which I will not mention. It continues—

The children are depressed, self harming, and worried, which has a huge emotional impact on us as a family unit. It's saddness me to say we're falling apart and trying to stay strong and supportive for my children is taking it's toll on me. I'm currently unemployed due to the above circumstances, but usually work 5 days a week to support my family.

Because of the circumstances, which I have not highlighted, she is now not working because she has to care for the children —

I resigned from my place of employment to give total support to my three traumatized children and now we're faced with being homeless as I cannot secure a rental property. I'm on the Homeswest Priority Wait List, but unfortunately there are huge wait lists here too.

I'm at a loss what to do next and in desperate need of a home for my family in the Perth. Can you please help or refer me to some one that can.

Your sincerely

Tracey

Yesterday another woman came into my office and highlighted her problem about a rental. I believe her name was Leeanne and she told my staff how she had been to a rental inspection for a property and was aghast. She said, "I couldn't believe it." She brought in photos that she had taken with her phone to show my staff, because I was in Parliament yesterday. The photos showed up to 40 people queued to look at what she called a scungy unit. She said there were about 40 people lined up to go through this scungy unit and she could not believe how many people there were. She said, "Then of course what happens is you look at yourself and you look at the other people in the line and you start to analyse your chances." I have heard about this happening on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, having children is not necessarily an advantage in these circumstances.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Or a dog as well.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Exactly. In fact, it is the senior couples who have the best chance of securing those particular units, because they are assessed as being more capable, reliable and able to pay the rent. Members can only imagine when 40-odd people turn up to a rental inspection what chance people who have two or more children have. What would happen if there was a single mum or dad who had a couple of babies or toddlers? They would have to take their children with them and they would have to be open and honest, because the first questions a real estate agent will ask are, "How many kids do you have and what are their ages?" What happens? They know that they have Buckley's chance of securing that rental, particularly if a well-dressed senior couple, both on a pension and with good references et cetera, also apply. I am absolutely certain that this example is replicated throughout Western Australia and it is not only a Mandurah–Peel problem. I have to tell the minister that this is happening daily.

On Friday the minister was in Mandurah, and it was great to catch up with him and very briefly talk about some of the issues that we face locally. I know the minister is getting the same story from many other communities, but I have to tell the minister that it is the most frustrating issue for me as a local member. More than anything I would love to have in my office a list of 50 houses so I could simply say, "Right. Tracey or Leeanne or Mr and Mrs Smith—pensioner couple—we have a place here and I reckon we can get you into it tonight." The reality is that in many of our electorate offices—I am sure members here have had the same experience—we see these faces of desperation. They seek from us that little bit of hope. Quite frankly, it is one of the most frustrating and heart-wrenching experiences because we know that, essentially, we cannot help them. We cannot pluck a house or a unit or a place out of nowhere to help them. For any member of Parliament, that is the most frustrating thing. Then of course we go through the process of referring. How many members in this place know the people who work with the local housing agencies, local non-government organisations and crisis welfare groups on a first-name basis? We know what the answer will be when they pick up the phone.

In the case of WestAus Crisis Care, Lynn and Albert Rodgers and the team there have been doing crisis support for many, many years. I might ring Lynn and say, “Lynn, we have Tracey here today. She is in front of me with her three children. She’s homeless tonight and she doesn’t know where to go. She has nowhere to go. What have you got?” WestAus has five crisis houses in Mandurah. It needs another five, and for the life of me I cannot understand why royalties for regions should not provide the five extra houses that are needed. That is what royalties for regions funding should deliver in places such as Mandurah and the Peel region. “What have you got, Lynn?” “David, our five crisis houses have been full for the past X number of months.” WestAus helps the people in the crisis houses to access affordable permanent accommodation, but quite often it takes many, many months to get those people out of the crisis houses and into affordable rental properties. One of the very significant problems in Mandurah in particular, as the minister would be well aware, is that when people become desperate, they need family support or some other support around them more than ever. The officers at the Department of Housing, such as Rick Muir, do a great job. I admire that man. The minister has an excellent employee down there. The minister met Rick on Friday. Rick has been in that job for a while and knows this issue like the back of his hand. I know he gets frustrated, too, but he is a good officer and he has a great team down there at Homeswest.

Mr W.R. Marmion: It is a great team with a lot of experience. We are lucky.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We are lucky.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If I could have more Rick Muirs in the world, I would be very, very happy. The problem is that Rick and other managers of Department of Housing offices in both regional and metropolitan areas not only have waiting lists as long as your arm, but are always juggling priorities and trying to please the never-ending list of desperate people. I think that this is the point; they are desperate now. They do not have anything to give them. Yes, they can offer bond assistance, but if we send the Traceys and Leeannes of the world down to the Department of Housing office to get an interview for priority housing, their chances of being housed within months, or even a year, are very low. That is the reality.

The opposition will condemn the government and all those things, but to be honest with members, we must move past that. I am glad the Premier is here this afternoon, because I do not think that he does not understand the issue. I think he understands that there is not a simple solution. It is not as simple as building more houses. I think the energies and efforts of government, members of Parliament and the communities in the hotspots where this housing crisis is being experienced need to all come together to deal with this. We need to do it very soon because people are desperate. The thing that I worry about most when I read Tracey’s email or talk to people such as Leeanne or receive phone calls from people is whether they have children, because that is another compounding issue. Those children are not going home to a safe, secure house that they think will be their home for the next month, three months or a year, so their learning and education are affected. It also impacts on their sense of value. I cannot imagine how kids must feel if they are part of a family bunking down in the back of a car at night. They are rugged up by mum or dad or both and they might have been fed some takeaway food or something from an esky. They are bundled up and rugged up and sleep in a car at night.

Mr P.B. Watson: It is a safety issue, too.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I know people in Mandurah who change where they park their car every night because of that safety issue and also because they are ashamed that they are in this situation. They should not be ashamed. To be totally honest, we should be ashamed that this has been allowed to happen. It has happened collectively over a period of years and it is a real situation.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You may have said so, but how many people would you estimate at any one time would be in that situation in Mandurah?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Probably around a dozen people will be sleeping in cars tonight in Mandurah. The Premier has made a good point, because I think there are a lot of hidden statistics. That is not necessarily a true indication of people staying in their cars. I remember teaching a girl called Krystal. She is now a single mum with four children, including three-year-old twins—a bit like mine—and a four-month-old. Krystal was in a rental until last November. The tenancy ended because the owner had to sell. Krystal was then living in a car for a week before she started to stay with various friends. She is now with a personal friend of mine, a mum, whose children I taught at primary school and who are now aged in their late 20s and 30s. She is staying with this friend, who also has an older daughter with one child, with her four kids—a four-year-old, three-year-old twins and one four-month old—in a three-bedroom home. Thank goodness this mother of two kids whom I taught at North Mandurah Primary School took in Krystal and her children. However, it is not a permanent solution for Krystal and her family. Unfortunately, if those kids end up staying in that situation for an unacceptable period,

other implications can impact on their livelihood. This family not only needs a permanent roof over their heads but also a home that is stable and provides basic shelter. Mandurah is in a housing crisis. I will not criticise the Minister for Housing by saying he has to solve it. If I said that, I think it would be a cop-out. It is easy for me to say, "Premier and minister, you're useless for not doing anything about it." At the end of the day that will not help solve Krystal, Leeanne and Tracey's problems. We have to work together.

This may be a little controversial. I spoke to the Minister for Housing and his director general only last Friday about people currently in public housing comprising four bedrooms but only have two people living in them. Some have been there for decades. I have a couple of examples of people in Mandurah. One wonderful lady, whose name I will not mention, rang me during the election campaign to ask for help. She and her husband, in his late 80s, had been in the same former Department of Housing and Works place for 37 years. It is a four-bedroom house and they had been there 37 years. I was amazed. This fellow is on dialysis three or four days a week. This has been their home for 37 years; of course they have an attraction to it and a sense of "this is ours". The reality is that they should not be there; it is no longer suitable for their needs. I wrote to the minister of the day, not the current Minister for Housing, and to Rick. This couple wanted to reconfigure the bathroom. It was a four-bedroom home from old stock. It had the old shower over the bath. Their son was a builder. They wanted permission to convert the bathroom so that dad, who is not well and is on dialysis, can get in and out of the shower, because he now cannot do that. They were prepared to pay for it all. The department was very sympathetic. It offered this couple a seniors unit. By and large, as we know, they become available much quicker than a lot of four by twos. The department offered to pay for them to shift into one. It even offered to make sure it was nice. They did not want to do it. I said to the director general last Friday, "We've got to come together to talk to these people." One of the keys is getting families involved. If it is the department fronting up, people will say, "It's the department making me move!" We have to look at better communication. The key is to get the son in because he is the agitator on behalf of mum. The department needs to say to the son, "Here is the situation: your mum and dad actually deserve better. They deserve to be housed in a seniors unit that has a bathroom with appropriate disabled access, because that is what dad needs now; he is effectively disabled. He's not going to get any better." Talk and work with the family. I know that is intensive stuff. I have to be honest, the house that that couple live in should be housing Krystal and her four kids or Tracey and her three kids, or it should be housing Leeanne and her needs. We have to start to match up the need because public housing is now desperate.

I know the motion says we "condemn" the government, and I do not think enough has been done; however, I really think it is incumbent on all of us to work to find solutions to this problem because it is a major crisis. If more and more people are not able to have their basic need of shelter fulfilled, there is something wrong in St Louis as far as I am concerned. There is something drastically wrong. It is incumbent upon the Premier to make this a priority. I know the opposition and the government can chide about getting on with projects like Elizabeth Quay and the new stadium, but when people come into my office every day—I am sure it happens to many other members, these sorts of real life experiences; they are real people, I did not make them up—we have to do something. We have to do it now. It has to be over a sustained period. If the government actually went into deficit—we always cling to these surpluses!—and said, "We're going into deficit because we have a major priority and that is in fact to ensure that Western Australian families, particularly those with children, special needs and disabilities, are housed appropriately because they are not being housed at the moment, we have a problem in our public housing system," I think the general public would say, "No problem. We're happy to have a deficit if that's what you're spending the money on." If our resources were put into fixing housing, I honestly think most Western Australians would applaud that. I will watch very closely. Please, we need to work together on this. This should be a major priority in the August budget. I will look very closely at the budget when it is brought down in August, as I am sure many members in this place will, to ensure there is a plan to solve this housing crisis in Western Australia.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [4.56 pm]: I would like to talk about the housing crisis in Albany. It is a little different being a country member because I know the people who come in to my electorate office. A lot of city members probably do not know the people who come in on a daily basis with issues such as not being able to get a house. People are sleeping on the beach, in cars, up at the forts, or in the shopping centre malls in Albany. They sleep in a different place every night because the police come along and move them along. In this day and age one would think something like this would happen only in Third World countries. I first want to say that the Department of Housing staff in Albany are great. The management there is tremendous. They are understaffed and obviously they have not got the facilities to provide to the people who really need it. One of the biggest problems is Transfield. We have so many houses in Albany. People come in and say, "Watto, I've seen four houses in Lockyer and three in Spencer Park but no-one is in them." The Department of Housing tell me, "No; maintenance is being done there." I asked, "Can you give me a time?" "No. We're waiting on Transfield and we've run out of money." These vacant houses are sitting around Albany while people are sleeping in cars and other areas. If the Department of Health visited some of the houses in Lockyer, they would be very disturbed at

the number of people living under one roof. People cannot afford proper rentals. They might get a little shed out at Youngs Siding, which is about 20 kilometres out of town, but would probably pay as much as someone in town pays for a proper house. Minister, unoccupied houses are a real problem. I do not know what the answer is. I do not know why Transfield cannot fix them. Under the old system people with a problem would ring up and the local contractor would come in to fix it. It would be done the next day. Now houses are sitting there for up to five months and nothing is being done. As I said to the member for Mandurah, people are sleeping in cars with young kids. Imagine sleeping in a car all night, going down to the restrooms or down to the surf club the next morning to have a shower and get dressed, probably going to McDonald's for breakfast and then getting the kids off to school. Then when the kids come home from school, they have nowhere to do their homework except in the back of the car, or maybe they go down the park or something like that and sit on one of the wooden benches.

It seems to me that we are getting our priorities wrong. We are spending money in areas that are good for the state, but we are missing out on the basics. Every child should be able to come home at night, have a bed to sleep in and be able to close the front door and feel safe. For me, they are the basic necessities for a child. We have children in Albany, and their mums and dads, sleeping in unsafe conditions.

On Monday I spoke to a constituent, and 12 years ago when I got into this job, people, especially those from the Noongar community, would come in and say, "Can you give me a letter of support to say that I'm a good person?" Back then, I would know those people would get a house in probably a month at the most; I cannot promise them anything in five years now. Even our crisis centres have huge waiting lists. I am waiting on some information I was hoping I would have before today, but I know that people on the priority list have huge waits in Albany. The priority waiting time now is what the normal waiting time used to be. We seem to be going backwards in that area.

The big development of units in Spencer Park opposite the shopping centre was knocked down probably four or five years ago, and nothing has happened since that time. People from Spencer Park come in and say, "What's happening there? There used to be 26 units there." Across the road, on the other side of Spencer Park shopping centre, there are vacant blocks of Homeswest land. Nothing is being done with that. I have raised that before, but I was told that the City of Albany did not have its precinct plan. The precinct plan has been in place for more than 12 months now, but still nothing has happened.

When the Treasurer was the Minister for Housing he came down to Albany, and one of my constituents said, "Why doesn't the state government rent out some of these rental properties and give people who are desperate for a house and are out on the street a 12-month lease?" Albany has a lot of rental properties. If the government were to do that, I know there would have to be special conditions. Private rental owners want to make sure they have proper tenants, and the government needs to have proper rules in place. But we are a little bit different in Albany in that we have plenty of rentals but they are just so expensive. The suggestion was that maybe some of these houses could be rented out to clear the backlog that never seems to improve. People will take anything at the moment.

A lot of people come to Albany to get away from issues in the city. If somebody has a problem in the city—a husband mistreating a wife, family break-ups; Indigenous issues, including family feuds—they might come to Albany; if they are four and a half hours away, they think they are safe, but we cannot accommodate them. These people come down and expect to get a house, but we cannot provide one. Some people out there do not deserve houses. I have had people come in, and when I have checked up with Homeswest, I have found that they have smashed their previous house up. I just say to them, "You had your chance." That is fair enough. A gentleman came in three weeks ago and said, "I want a house. I've been waiting for a while." I got onto Homeswest and he owed \$22 000 for belting up the previous house. He said, "I didn't do it; my relatives did." I said, "You're in charge of that house." In that situation, I can understand people at the old Homeswest saying, "We can't give you anything until you've paid off your debt."

Some of my seniors just want things done around their houses. They are getting older and a lot of my senior ladies are on their own, but they cannot get anything done because there is just no money. I can understand the Department of Housing in Albany saying, "Okay, we can't provide anything," but when they say, "We've run out of funds to do basic maintenance," that is a concern. It is a government house, provided by the government, and it is not as though they are getting it for free; they are paying rent. But part of their contract states that if there is an issue or something is broken, the department will fix it. The department has been saying for six months that it cannot spend any money and there is no money available; it seems to me they are breaching the contract. The tenants sign a contract that states that they will look after the house and pay rent, but the government also says that it will look after that house, but it is not.

Community housing does a great job in Albany, but, again, people have to be on the Homeswest list to get community housing. We have a very good manager down there—I cannot think of her name at the moment—

and she does a tremendous job. They are looking at getting more houses around Albany, but it is just frustrating. As a country member, when people walk in, I know who they are; I have probably coached them at basketball or they are the mums and dads of friends of my kids. These people are embarrassed. They come in and say, “Can you come out and see me because I don’t want to be seen going into your office looking as though I’m begging for something?” These are really good people. The husband or the wife might have been put off work or they have been in a rental and the person who owns the house has said, “Look, I want to sell the house”, and they look at the housing market and think, “Where can I go?” Normally, those people could go to the government, but at the moment that opportunity is not there.

Something else the member for Mandurah raised was downsizing. A lot of my seniors are in big houses and want to downsize—they just want a two-bedroom unit—but they cannot because none is available. I have other people who have two or three children, maybe a single mum or a couple with two children, who cannot get this housing either. Something seems to be out of kilter. Some of my seniors want to get out of their houses that are too big. They have been great houses for them, and some of have been in there 20 or 30 years, but now they want to downsize, relax a bit and get something closer to town. These other really desperate people will go anywhere in Albany—be it as far out as Napier or Youngs Siding, and some of them even go to Mt Barker and commute to work each day; a lot of people work at the Fletcher abattoir, so they do not mind going to Mt Barker, but there are no houses available up there either and there is a waiting list.

I think housing is a basic right. I am not saying the government should provide houses for everyone, but I think it should provide for those in need. There are a lot of people in need out there today, minister. Albany is struggling at the moment. A lot of people thought Grange Resources would provide a real fillip for Albany, but that has not happened. We have other issues down there. We are hoping for a good farming season this year, which will set the whole ball rolling in Albany. If the farmers do well, Albany does well, but in the last couple of years they have not. A lot of people have been leaving town—especially young people—and we have the fly in, fly out workers who are away three weeks and only back for one. All these things have an effect. A lot of FIFOs now come down to Albany to buy houses, and they have the money to push prices higher so there are fewer houses available. The FIFOs are going along and making higher bids on houses than the people of Albany can afford, so they are coming in with the big money and buying the houses.

The main point, minister, is that we have to look at Transfield. I do not know how the funding for it works; maybe the minister can explain that. Is Transfield given a certain amount of money or does it just go on what actually happens on the day or in the year? We must look at giving people who want to get out of four-bedroom houses the opportunity to get into two-bedroom units or something smaller. We must look at the three blocks in Spencer Park; that is really important because a lot of it is a low socioeconomic area. A lot of seniors are there, but people also look for houses there because it is close to the school and the hospital. A lot of people who come into town want to live there.

Minister, I am a bit like the member for Mandurah, and I realise it is an issue we all have to look at. I would prefer to see everyone in my electorate housed properly rather than a new football stadium. I know that a lot of people in Albany would feel the same way. It is great that we are going to have a new football stadium; it is great that we are going to have Elizabeth Quay and all these things. But if people are not being housed and they are sleeping in the streets, on the beach, in cars and up on the forts, it is just not good enough in this day and age.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Housing) [5.10 pm]: I might deal first with the comments of the members who spoke today because they are fresh in my mind, and then I will go back to my notes from two or three weeks ago. I thank everyone for contributing to the debate. We already know about a lot of the issues. The member for Mirrabooka made some complimentary comments about the Department of Housing staff, and suggested that they are good staff and may be under a bit of stress with the people who come into the department. As members, we know about that, because we also get those people in our electorate offices. I recognise that. Of course, those staff are trained to deal with that.

Most of the comments after that related to homelessness and a contract that has been put out by Minister Morton. Obviously, we work together, but that is a specific issue for her. The member for Mirrabooka also commented on the way the funding model is working, which I am not across. However, it is now more difficult to put in a submission, because Lotterywest money cannot be parked. Obviously, I will raise that issue with the minister.

The member for Mandurah, who is still in the house, suggested that this is a number one priority. The Premier was in the house at the same time and he noted that comment. I agree with and recognise a lot of the points the member made about housing affordability. My staff did a quick check on the houses available in Mandurah for up to \$250 a week, and there are six at the moment. I recognise that there are people who maybe cannot even afford that. What options do they have if they are on the waiting list? I guess one option is the car or family. The member made the very good point that if people have family, they probably rely on them. The point was also made by the member for Albany that there are numbers of people who we know of, but there would be others

who we do not know of. I can relate to that, because just on a personal note—I live in Nedlands—I have a not-so-salubrious granny flat; I would hardly call it a granny flat. A relative in my family fits the category that the member for Mandurah referred to, except they had a dog. I do not want to get too personal because I do not want them to be identified, but let us perhaps say it is a single mother who is unemployed with a couple of kids and a dog. The member mentioned that with the particular lady in his electorate, there were 40 people —

Mr D.A. Templeman: That was yesterday.

Mr W.R. MARMION: That was yesterday. I know that this person spent some 10 months looking for a house. One could argue that I had a vested interest in her finding a house because she was living in my not-so-salubrious granny flat. It took her 10 months. This was about a year ago. I think the climate has come off a bit —

Mr P.B. Watson: I hope you didn't get her into a Homeswest house.

Mr W.R. MARMION: No. She is in the private rental market. Generally, six to 10 people are looking for a place; that is in the Perth market. In one instance there were up to 40 people—that was a one-off—and she had no chance, of course, because the private owner could choose to take probably a less risky tenant. That is all recognised. Indeed, I will get on to what the department is doing.

The member for Mandurah raised another good point about a four-bedroom house with perhaps only one or two people living in it. If they are elderly, it is a difficult situation. When I worked previously for the Minister for Health, I had experience of that in Mandurah in getting people out of aged-care facilities that the state then owned—I might have mentioned that. They get attached to the house. I agree entirely with the member. Once they reach a certain age, we need to get the family, and the children in particular, on side; otherwise, it is most difficult to move them. That is certainly something that the department is encouraging. It has teams of people who can try to assist people to move out of an inappropriate house into a more appropriate house. Indeed, we are building one and two-bedroom units. In fact, the stuff we are building is fit for purpose in that we are building more one and two-bedroom units, and I will get on to that later. I was a bit surprised when the member for Albany said that he has almost the opposite situation in his electorate. He said that that stock is not available. The main stock we are building is one and two-bedroom units. We recognise that that is the market, so that is what we are doing. I will give the figures on that later.

The member for Albany made a number of other comments. He criticised Transfield. He asked, "How is maintenance done?" It is done on a priority basis. Certain maintenance issues are a priority, and they have to be fixed within 24 hours. These are emergency ones such as power and water issues. They have to be fixed within a certain time frame. There are performance indicators for Transfield, for example, if it happens to be the head contractor. It is seven days for the less serious issues, and there is planned maintenance. But performance targets must be met. If the gas is off and the people cannot get hot water, it has to meet —

Mr P.B. Watson: But, minister, before you had local people doing it. Now you've got outside contractors who come into town doing it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Local people still do the work. This is a bit of a furphy. Transfield is just the intermediary, so we actually have —

Mr P.B. Watson: Yes, I know. It had good people doing it before, but it put in the contracts and made it so uneconomical for the local people to do it that it is not getting the top people to do it, if you know what I mean.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes, I know where the member is coming from, but we will get people from the other side saying that it is better.

Mr P.B. Watson: Not the people in Homeswest houses, apparently.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Typically—I am speaking just hypothetically—in some areas one contractor may have been getting all the work because they got on really well with the Department of Housing people, and I have heard other stories that it is now spread throughout the town so that more people are getting the work. We could have an argument on that, and it depends on whom you talk to as to who is right and who is wrong, and with a vested interest.

There have been a lot of speakers on this motion. I want to get back to when we started with the member for Cockburn. He started by raising his concerns relating to waiting times, waiting lists and also maintenance issues. He quoted that the number of people waiting for public housing rose from 16 932 in 2007–08 to 22 871 in 2012–13. He got those figures a bit wrong. It is important to understand that when we are talking about waitlists, the numbers equate to households requiring assistance. It is not the people; it is the number of applications. In fact, there are 16 932 households, which equates to 39 755 people. They were waiting for public housing in 2007–08, at a time when the state population was 2.163 million. There were 22 871 households, which represents 50 669

Ms Janine Freeman; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Bill Marmion; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan

people, waiting as at 30 June 2012, and again that was in the context of a state population of 2.43 million. If we look more closely at these figures and at the number of people waiting compared with population growth, we see that in fact 1.8 per cent of the population was waiting for public housing in 2007–08 against 2.1 per cent in 2011–12. That is an increase of 0.3 per cent over five years—a period of significant growth in economic development, employment and population. Furthermore, if we return to the member’s analysis over a five-year period and look at the trend in waiting list figures since 2009, they are in fact trending downwards—from 24 136 households in 2009–10 to 22 871 households in 2011–12. I will give the member an update: based on May 2013 figures, that downward trend is continuing with 21 162 households on the waiting list. The department is achieving this downward trend by providing opportunities for more affordable housing for low and moderate-income households, so people do not need to rely on public housing. This includes 3 690 new social houses for people with very low incomes and 1 554 public houses that were freed up and reallocated to people on the waiting list, after helping over-income tenants to transition into alternative housing options. There are 897 houses now provided under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and A Place to Call Home program. There are 595 crisis accommodation program units currently deployed right across the state. There have been 724 dwellings completed under the National Rental Affordability Scheme and we have assisted 30 727 people through rental bond loans. So, the department is implementing strategies to improve and manage our waitlist.

On 16 January 2012, the department implemented improvements to the annual housing rental application review process to ensure that applicants remain income and asset eligible for assistance for the duration of their time on the waitlist, while also ensuring that the list reflects applicants who are in greatest need. Applicants on the waiting list need to inform the department of any change in their circumstances, including their income, assets and changes of household members.

The member for Cockburn has previously forgotten the cyclic market conditions that the department faces in the area of land development and sales. The figures he quoted on the department’s lot development are accurate but have been taken out of context. When viewed in isolation, total state land developed over the corresponding period was 18 115 lots in 2007–08 and 11 099 lots in 2011–12, so it has gone backwards. Based on these numbers, during the period from 2007–08 to 2011–12, due to changing market conditions, total state land development dropped by 39 per cent, whereas the department’s land development program dropped only 30 per cent. What I am saying is that the department’s total presence in the land market grew from 14 per cent to 16 per cent.

Mr F.M. Logan: Minister, I accept that, but the difference is that as the private market shrank because of the GFC, so the public housing market grew in demand because people were looking. Your particular area should have grown, not shrunk. That’s the point I’m making.

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is what I am saying. The corollary is that the government is stepping in and making sure that we are doing our bit. There is a private side of the market and there is a government side of the market.

The member also accused the department of reducing the number of large family homes and replacing them with duplexes or medium to high-density units. There is a change in demographics in our state’s population and a corresponding change in the demographics of the public housing waiting list. I will not read them all out, but I will give the member an example just to give him a bit of a snapshot of our waiting list numbers. Our actual stock includes about 6 000 two-bedroom properties, about 12 500 three-bedroom properties and about 3 000 four-bedroom properties. I will not go into any of the others. There are 21 162 applications on the waiting list and the demand for the type of properties they are asking for, in round figures, is 5 200 for two-bedroom properties and 3 400 for three-bedroom properties. Then it starts to drop off: in round figures, there are 1 300 applications waiting for four-bedroom properties and it goes down. Therefore, the actual demand is mainly for two-bedroom properties and three-bedroom properties after that. Our stock has more three-bedroom properties, so we need to ensure that when we build new houses, we focus a bit more on two-bedroom properties to make sure our stock matches demand.

The Liberal–National government established the Office of Land and Housing Supply, as the member knows, with the aim to provide strategic advice on the main barriers to the supply of affordable housing and to drive the delivery of priority affordable housing projects. The office sits in the Department of Planning. The member asked about its staffing. It currently has two staff members on contract.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mr W.R. MARMION: But that is providing advice, member.

Both the member for Cockburn and the member for Midland raised the issue of the department’s head contractor model and the value for money it presents. I point out that the Department of Housing via the head contractor

model delivers maintenance to more than 40 000 households—the largest public housing jurisdiction in Australia, in fact—doing 20 000 jobs a month. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the contractors get it right. The opposition has been going on about the model for over two years—it goes back to when I was first minister—totally ignoring some of the facts. The Department of Housing used to manage its maintenance services for various trades on its residential housing via some 700 individual contracts and agreements. That practice had been in place for many decades and was inefficient and expensive. The department undertook a review of its maintenance function and chose to move to a head contractor model whereby government deals with a small number of contractors who then manage a multiple of subcontractors. The introduction of the new model —

Mr F.M. Logan: Yes, pyramid subcontracting!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Let me finish. The introduction of the new model is a once-in-a-generation change that replaces a decades-old system with a new efficient maintenance contracting framework that is designed to deliver long-term savings and, ultimately, better services to social housing tenants.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I'm sure there's a lot of savings for you, but it's not better services. There's no question about it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will get to that in a minute.

The new model aims to increase opportunities for local contractors to carry out housing maintenance. We have moved away from a system in which a single contractor gets all the work in one area to one in which there are opportunities for multiple subcontractors in each of the areas. The old maintenance system that was replaced by the new model was far from perfect, and the department had experienced complaints about its maintenance services for many, many years. The maintenance of public housing was a regular topic on talkback radio and although the standard of public housing stock in Western Australia is higher than that in most other states, there have clearly been maintenance issues going back for years. The member for Cockburn knows that many of the one-off issues that the opposition endeavoured to use to present the new model or approach as a failure are in fact long-term systemic issues that pre-date the new model.

I will quote a report by the Auditor General in 2003 that states —

Public housing maintenance figures highly in tenant complaints to Homeswest, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, and the Equal Opportunity Commissioner. Homeswest has been criticised for the standard of its housing properties, the timeliness of urgent maintenance and repairs, the quality of work conducted by contractors, discrimination in the allocation and conduct of maintenance funding ...

I am just quoting; I was not in this place in 2003. All I am doing is quoting what the Auditor General said.

Mr F.M. Logan: The new model hasn't improved it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: The member cannot say it has or has not. The Auditor General said in 2003 that things were not very good then and I believe they are better now.

Ms M.M. Quirk: What's your basis for that?

Mr W.R. MARMION: If we —

Dr K.D. Hames: What's your basis for saying it hasn't?

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes, I will quote —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The number of complaints we get at our office; that's the basis!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Madam Acting Speaker —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I used to send you quite a lot of complaints when you were the housing minister, member for Dawesville, but the number that I now send is higher.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Where is the evidence?

Several members interjected.

Mr W.R. MARMION: You said, I said, you said —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Midland, I am on my feet. I have been told by Hansard that they are having trouble following the conversation. Can members please not interject by yelling across the chamber. If the minister wants to take interjections, please let me know.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I thank you for your advice, Madam Acting Speaker.

Let us fast forward to 2013. We have solved most of the problems. Yes, there were implementation problems in the early days of our new contracts. In September 2012, the Office of the Auditor General, which as everyone knows is an independent agency that reports directly to us, acknowledged that the Department of Housing had made substantial progress in its maintenance service provision. In September 2012, the Auditor General reported that most of the significant problems arising from the initial implementation had been resolved and that day-to-day maintenance processes were now functioning as intended; stability had been achieved; the control arrangements now in place were adequate and fully operational; controls over payment of job orders were adequate; no evidence of fraud had been found; customer complaints had fallen significantly; vacant property numbers had returned to long-term historical averages; overdue job numbers had fallen; and timeliness had improved.

The department's contract management governance includes checks of the quality of work and the timeliness of delivery responsiveness of the subcontractors. Whilst the department does not have a direct relationship or contract and the only relationship is via the head contractor, the performance of works undertaken by subcontractors, managed through each of the head contractors, is checked for timeliness, quality of work and responsiveness. These checks are undertaken by a number of reporting and compliance mechanisms, which due to the time I will not go into.

These initiatives have achieved positive results for the department in improving the timeliness of works delivered under the contract. These initiatives have filtered down to the subcontractor, ensuring that works are completed in a timely manner, and invoices are submitted as soon as works are completed. Furthermore, subcontractor relationships have improved with all parties. The head contractors are now adopting further training and business improvement around compliance to ensure that a high level of service delivery is undertaken. Improvements to the delivery of maintenance services to all housing tenants can be substantiated through the current reporting mechanisms and statistics. The members for Midland and Cockburn raised issues about the head contractor model.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I did not raise that so much directly. I was saying that people are not getting things fixed in a timely way.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It is the member's right to say that. The member for Cockburn also referred to the disruptive behaviour statistics and quoted the 2011–12 annual report, stating that the significant difference between the number of complaints received and third strikes issued is an indication that the department is not dealing with the disruptive behaviour. I will now address that. This is another issue that has been around for a long time. Once again, our government has taken the initiative and introduced a considerable policy response, as members know. We have allocated \$12 million over three years to make it work. The disruptive behaviour management strategy was implemented on 3 May 2011 to strengthen and streamline the current procedures. Under the improved policy, sanctions against tenants are applied based on the severity and frequency of proven disturbances. This is backed up by a team in the Department of Housing that has been recruited and inducted and will be fully deployed by the end of August 2013 to specifically focus on dealing with disruptive behaviour across the state. These staff will go in there. Staff have comprehensive training, including in investigations and legal recovery action in addition to client awareness programs to assist staff to deal with the difficult and challenging behaviours of some of our tenants.

Ms M.M. Quirk: If it was working adequately up till now, why is there an identified need for additional staff, especially in the climate when most agencies are having to cut their number of employees?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The three-strikes policy we implemented a couple of years ago has been working well and obviously we have changed the Residential Tenancies Act to provide another sanction to deal with disruptive tenants.

Mr F.M. Logan: Your figures say only 110 third strikes were issued out of 13 000 complaints.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will get to that in a minute. The figures are dropping off. There are a lot of first strikes and then the number of second and third strikes drop off. That can be an indicator that that is working.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Every time I ring up about one premises they say it is the first time they have heard about it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will get on to the specifics in a minute. I will give members figures on the number of complaints. The department receives on average 1 100 complaints a month. That is probably not surprising.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They don't register all their complaints. Plenty of constituents say they are not registered. I write letters and the department advises that there are no complaints.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will address my comments to you, Madam Acting Speaker. I am telling members what the department told me. I do not count all the complaints personally. I have been told that the department receives on average 1 100 complaints a month and that for the 2012–13 financial year, as at 30 April 2013, the department has received 11 434 complaints. That has resulted in 562 first strikes, 235 second strikes and 105 third strikes. This financial year, 328 tenancies have been vacated as a result of disruptive behaviour action. Of this, 61 tenants vacated after a termination notice was issued, 82 tenants vacated following a court order and 185 tenancies were vacated by bailiff eviction.

The introduction of disruptive behaviour reporting in 2011, operated through the department's contact centre, ensures that all complaints are recorded and actioned. The disparity between the number of complaints received and the number of first strikes issued is attributed to the number of complaints that are unable to be substantiated based on the evidence collected by the department or the complaint is not categorised as disruptive behaviour or the complaint is vexatious. The consistent decline between the first and third strikes is an indication that through the disruptive behaviour management strategy a large percentage of the department's tenants are modifying their behaviour in order to remain in their home. That is a reasonable conclusion from those figures. Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act were introduced in July 2012, which included the introduction of section 75A, "Termination of social housing tenancy agreement due to objectionable behaviour". Prior to the introduction of section 75A, the department was criticised for using section 62, "Notice of termination by owner upon ground of breach of term of agreement", and section 64, "Notice of termination by owner without any ground". As I have already stated, the government's three-strikes policy has enabled a consistent and transparent approach to managing disruptive behaviour. This has been supported by changes in the Residential Tenancies Act to allow the department to pursue legal action under new section 75A. This means that some of the red tape that slowed down the old processes is gone. Under the new approach, and consistent with new section 75A of the RTA, the department is able to manage disruptive behaviour based on a pattern of behaviour or incidents over a sustained period. That means that a problem tenant who knows the system can no longer get away with it.

Prior to the introduction of the three-strikes policy, the backing of legislation and the RTA amendments, the department's management of antisocial behaviour, as it was referred to then, was challenging. If there were no further substantiated incidents during a 14-day breach period, the department was unable to continue any further legal action against the tenant and was required to start the process again. This resulted in longstanding antisocial tenancies and considerable criticism within the community. However, it is important to realise that the department does not evict tenants. It is ultimately the magistrate who makes the final determination to end the tenancy, as everyone knows.

The department has evidence of cases for disruptive behaviour that have been presented in court that have followed the process, yet have been dismissed or adjourned by the magistrate, and when this occurs the department is required to recommence or defer the legal process. A current example of the department deferring legal action is a case against a certain lady who lives in Hilton for serious disruptive behaviour. The department was ordered to evict under section 64 of the Residential Tenancies Act; however, this particular lady sought legal representation and appealed the decision. The case has been escalated to the Supreme Court and consequently the department is required to defer any further action against the tenant until the Supreme Court's decision is handed down. Unfortunately, this is causing considerable unrest in the community with the disruptive behaviour complaints still continuing for that particular area of Hilton. Since the introduction of section 75A to the act in July 2012, 31 tenancies have been ended for disruptive behaviour, seven tenancies have been ended after a termination notice was issued, nine tenancies have been ended after a court order was granted and 15 tenants were evicted by bailiffs. Between May 2011 and April 2013, 679 tenancies have been ended as a result of the department's disruptive behaviour three-strikes policy.

Getting to some of the specific issues members raised, if they have mentioned a person's name or the location, I will mention it as well. The member for Midland raised an issue. This issue has to do with a complex at 5 Keane Street, Midland, known as Villagio Apartments. It consists of nine ground-floor commercial units and 28 residential units above. The department purchased 10 residential units in 2010 under the commonwealth government's stimulus project. Since the purchase, a number of ongoing maintenance issues have developed in the complex, as mentioned by the member. This was due to builder and contractual issues. The builder of the complex is unfortunately liquidated, and there is no builder's warranty. The member for Midland wrote to the former Minister for Housing regarding plumbing issues in units 10 and 11, which affected two commercial units below. These plumbing issues were rectified in August 2012 and no further issues have been raised regarding this. Since this time, no further inquiries regarding this have been received from the office of the member for Midland. However, the department is aware of similar issues in units 3 and 4 that are affecting commercial units

below, and the department has engaged the service of Conburg Plumbing and Property Maintenance to complete an investigation into the matter and rectify it as soon as possible. The affected tenants have been informed of the department's recent actions.

The member for Midland also referred to ongoing disruptive behaviour at Gelderland Entrance in Stratton. In response to the member raising this matter in Parliament and stating that the department had failed to take action, I can confirm that this tenancy has been of serious concern and under investigation for some time. Notwithstanding that, in response to the member's suggestion that it has not acted appropriately, the department has sought legal advice on its options under the RTA. Whilst the department could proceed to court under section 75A, it is mindful of the criticism that will be received from advocates and the Equal Opportunity Commission if the department were to proceed to court without fully considering procedural fairness, given children are involved. Under the disruptive behaviour three-strikes policy the department issued a first serious strike against the tenant on 17 April 2013 for a combination of incidents. Further incidents occurred on 2 May 2013 and were investigated by the department. The incidents relate to the removal of a closed-circuit television camera at a neighbouring property by the tenant's son and excessive yelling coming from the tenancy. WA Police attended the property on this date to defuse the situation and the tenant admitted she was yelling at her son for stealing from the neighbouring property. WA Police have since advised that the CCTV video quality is poor and as such, they are unable to lay charges against the person of interest. The department is continuing discussions with WA Police, as new evidence has come to hand regarding the tenant and that same incident on 2 May. In addition, a further complaint was received on 6 June 2013, which is fairly recent, relating to the behaviour of children throwing objects at neighbouring properties. The department is working with the Midland police and is contacting the tenant as part of its investigation to substantiate this particular complaint. If the complaint is substantiated, the department will proceed to issue a second strike against the tenant and, depending on the outcome of the incident on 2 May, the category of the second strike may be escalated from minor to serious.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What is the consequence of it being escalated to serious? Does that mean you take eviction action?

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is correct. If it is raised to the serious level, we can take action to evict; that is looked at on a case-by-case basis.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Can I say that I do not exaggerate the fear that neighbours in the whole neighbourhood are suffering here?

Mr W.R. MARMION: We recognise that. I have had a discussion with the department on this particular tenancy and the department sees it as a serious issue and is working as hard as it can, given what I said before about the due fairness and the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity buying in.

I move on to the member for Armadale, who raised a particular tenancy in Armadale he suggested was being used to cultivate and sell drugs. I looked into this one, but I will try to be a bit careful. The property in question is being investigated by the Department of Housing and the police. The tenant occupied the property in October 2004 and no disruptive behaviour complaints had been registered against the tenancy. I point out that the department and staff are trained in the identification, reporting and treatment of hazardous materials, including drug laboratories. The training course for this was designed by and is delivered in partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation. On 5 February 2013, department officers attended the property the member mentioned for a scheduled property inspection and detected the smell of bleach coming from the property. The tenant asked that the inspection be postponed to allow car bodies to be removed from the premises. The inspection did not proceed on this date and it was rescheduled. The next day the department notified the WA Police of a strong odour coming from the property and requested further information on the property. The rescheduled inspection was completed on 6 March and no evidence of the supply manufacture of drugs was found during the inspection. I make it clear right now that whilst I know that the Department of Housing property managers receive training on drug labs, I do not expect them to be experts in identifying drugs. Police advise that a raid was conducted on the property; however, no suspicious activity was identified. The department has been monitoring the tenancy for poor property standards and took legal action against the tenant for failure to rectify internal and external property standards. The matter was heard in court on 27 May 2013. The magistrate granted the order and provided the tenant 30 days to rectify the property standards, which the tenant has done.

The member for Armadale also referred to an email from a constituent in Brookdale who is complaining about department tenants jumping over her fence. This is a four-bedroom property that has been occupied by the current tenant since 2008 and current declared household members include six children aged between one and 10 years. The department investigated the disruptive behaviour complaint received on 20 May 2013, which relates to an incident on 15 May involving children climbing over the neighbour's fence and throwing objects at her

home. The complainant also referred the complaint to WA Police and the member for Armadale's electoral office. The department has investigated a complaint, including an interview with the tenant. The tenant has denied the allegations against his tenancy and advised that he has spoken to the complainant about the incident and advised her that his grandchildren were not involved. The department attempted to verify this with the complainant, who has denied any discussion with the tenant; however, she did not want to confirm this in writing. WA Police have confirmed that they have no record of a reported incident on 15 May. The department has written to the complainant to inform her of the outcome of her complaint.

The member for Armadale also raised maintenance issues at a seniors complex in Armadale. The complex in question is a designated seniors complex consisting of eight brick and tile single-storey units constructed in 1980. The department has no record of any requests for maintenance prior to the member's electorate office being contacted on 2 May.

The member referred to an unsafe, enclosed patio structure in the common grounds that the department delayed in removing. In fact, the structure was a brick wall enclosure for storing bins; however, it was not being used for this purpose. Residents were concerned because there was no lighting in this area, which represented a safety risk from people hiding in that area. The department issued job orders in May this year for the structure to be removed. Due to its size, construction materials and the fact that only one subcontractor was on site, this work was completed over two days. The contractor has completed the work, including the removal of all brick walls and the concrete pad. In addition, the following maintenance items were addressed. The driveway was repaired and a new soakwell and cover was installed. The department has requested quotes for tree maintenance at the complex and is arranging to install gates to prevent the walkway from becoming a public thoroughfare. The department informed the member for Armadale's office of these actions in response to his inquiry. Also, the estate's managers visited the complex and discussed planned maintenance work with all the tenants, who, I am informed, are pleased with the department's actions.

The member for Collie–Preston raised several issues relating to constituents on the waiting list in his electorate, the condition of public housing stock and the number of vacant properties. I have provided advice regarding the waitlist in response to the comments of the members for Gosnells and Cockburn. But based on the information provided, the department is able to comment on the following issues raised by the member for Collie–Preston. In relation to the waitlist issue, the constituent in question had previously been housed in a department property in Kalgoorlie. This property was vacated in December 2008 as a result of his incarceration. He had been repaying a vacated tenancy debt of \$3 982 during his prison sentence. The constituent is presently listed for singles accommodation in Collie from November 2012. In reference to comments regarding the applicant's removal from the waitlist, applicants provide next of kin contact details at the time of lodging their application and are advised at the time of their application listing that they are required to maintain their contact details with the department. The department's annual rental housing application review process surveys applicants on the anniversary of their listing date using the last known contact address provided by the applicant. The department will attempt to make three additional attempts to contact the applicant using the applicant's phone numbers provided and next of kin details prior to removal from the waiting list. Applicants who have been withdrawn from the waiting list have 12 months from the date the decision was made to repeal the department's decision.

The member made reference to the age of stock in Collie. The Collie area has benefited from the Liberal–National government's significant investment in refurbishing rental properties in Collie. Indeed, I will just read out some of the numbers without taking too much time of the house. In 2003–04, the refurbishment spend by the government in Collie was \$361 818; in 2008–09, \$800 332; in 2009–10, over \$1 million; in 2010–11, close to \$800 000; and in 2011–12, another \$800 000. It dropped off a bit in 2012–13 to about \$600 000. The expenditure on refurbishment by the Department of Housing in Collie has increased significantly under our watch.

The member for Girrawheen asked about the former Hainsworth Primary School site, which the department acquired after the closure of the school in 2010. The department negotiated with Satterley to progress the development of this site. This is independent of the New North project. The former school site has been rezoned as urban development. The department currently is exploring a range of residential development options at different densities for the site, and a local structure plan application will be submitted to the City of Wanneroo within the next two months. Following approval, a subdivision plan will be submitted and development is expected to occur immediately after approval.

Ms M.M. Quirk: That's not what I was told in the letter you sent me, minister!

Mr W.R. MARMION: I am responding to the member for Girrawheen's comments made in the house so it is in *Hansard*.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Minister, I got a letter from you yesterday that said the paperwork would not be submitted to the City of Wanneroo until the end of the year, and now you're telling me it's two months off!

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is what I have been advised.

Ms M.M. Quirk: The letter is signed by you, minister!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It obviously quickened up the process now.

Ms M.M. Quirk: That's good.

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is right. Anyway, following the approval, the member might be —

Dr K.D. Hames: To do well, you will get a street named after you like I did!

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes.

When the development is approved by the council, we will start the development as soon as possible. I cannot guarantee when the council gives approval, obviously.

Ms M.M. Quirk: I also raised an antisocial behaviour issue, I think.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Okay. I do not have notes on that.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It was Burnham Way, minister.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will have to get back to the member for Girrawheen on that by letter.

The member for Kwinana also referred to housing issues in his electorate and the number of people on the priority waitlist as of March this year. We have answered him through a question on notice; therefore, I probably do not need to go through the numbers there. He also referred to a constituent who is seven months' pregnant and unable to secure housing, and another applicant on the priority waiting list who has three children and is pregnant with a fourth child. We need further information to identify those cases. The member also referred to a constituent who was asked to vacate his Department of Housing home at 15 Clint Street, Calista, when his mother was placed into palliative care. On vacating the property, it is alleged that it remained vacant for 10 months. In response, the department granted the tenant's son two extensions for the keys to be returned to his mother's property at 15 Clint Street, Calista, following his advice that his mother was not returning to her tenancy. At the time the department was aware that the tenant's son was living in his own private accommodation and had not been listed as a householder during the term of his mother's tenancy agreement. On vacation, the department completed an assessment of the property and advised the then minister that the cost to bring 15 Clint Street, Calista back to a lettable standard was not viable, given the cost of \$50 000, and as such it was earmarked for demolition. The department experienced delays in demolition approval from the City of Kwinana and the WA Planning Commission before advertising the demolition through Tenders WA. Demolition was completed on 5 March 2013. The department is now considering options to maximise the yield of this 692 square metre block.

Mr R.H. Cook: Is the department still the owner of the property?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I imagine it would be.

Mr R.H. Cook: So they are considering redeveloping the site?

Mr W.R. MARMION: Correct. It is looking at options to maximise the yield on that site. Yes.

Mr R.H. Cook: Sorry, what does that mean?

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yield means the number of properties.

Mr R.H. Cook: Okay.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It depends on the zone. I am not sure of its zoning, but if it is zoned R80, people can place more houses on it than if it were zoned R20 or R30. I will not list it all, but I have all the data and dates of the processes undertaken.

Mr R.H. Cook: Would you make that available us to, minister?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will read it out.

On 8 June 2012, the property was formally vacated. On 20 July 2012, the region submitted its recommendations to the strategic asset management group to develop a five-bedroom property or one and two-bedroom units on the site. On 3 August 2012, the strategic asset management group approved the recommendation to demolish the property and to return the land for future use. On 28 August 2012, the department applied to the Western Australian Planning Commission for development approval. Approval was granted on 31 October 2012 to allow demolition of the property. On 5 March 2013, demolition was completed.

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The member for Gosnells made reference to the department culling the waiting list and using unfavourable methods to remove applicants from the waiting list to bring the total waiting list down. Specifically, reference was made to Mr Rabie's current housing situation. I have already addressed the issues about the waiting list. I make a good general comment relating to what all members opposite said about their concerns. Indeed, the member for Mandurah raised this point; I see that he is presently talking to the government Whip, but I know he is listening to me.

We are looking at an important policy action. If we had someone in a case that was verified as serious—I know the member for Mirrabooka raised this with me some weeks ago—it would be nice to have the option to house that person. The priority list is based on when someone is added to it, but we are looking at the possibility of using a matrix so that if a case is really, really serious, it would jump to the top.

Ms J.M. Freeman: That is what they do in Victoria, is it not?

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes, we are looking at other states. We are doing a virtual trial of that. I do not want to go into it in detail, but when we are happy with the possibility of the matrix, we will talk to stakeholders to see what they think and that will be something for the future. I have to defer to the Minister for Community Services on the homelessness issue that the member for Mirrabooka raised, but it may be useful if we also had some stock.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Those community housing organisations used to have greater capacity to pick that up. We could say to an agency, "Look, this is an absolutely desperate situation" and the community housing people would pick it up. However, now they cannot because that would be a breach of their contract. Managers of local Department of Housing offices will not make that decision because clearly it is difficult with so many people on the priority list. We used to do it with community housing, but now they will not make the decision. All the old flexibilities that used to be there have gone.

Mr W.R. MARMION: We discussed that and I understand that. I understand what the member is saying about the contract, but if we have a different system, they will still be able to meet the contract through a phone call to say they have a priority 1. I am speaking hypothetically now. The priority list may have A, B and C and A means find something for someone very quickly. We are looking at that. I do not want to pre-empt that.

I will jump to the member for Mirrabooka's favourite topic—the land at Milldale Way in Mirrabooka. It offers a potential for a mix of commercial, residential and public use. On 16 April 2013, lot 60 was subdivided into four lots—601, 602, 603 and 9501. Lot 601 comprises 2.5 hectares and is intended to be transferred to the Department of Health. The remaining landholding available for development comprises the balance of lot 60, which is 3.3 hectares, and lot 601, which is 1.2 hectares. Before the department can commence development planning, it has to wait for the City of Stirling to adopt local planning scheme amendments to rezone these sites. The remaining lot will be developed in keeping with the City of Stirling's objective to facilitate residential and mixed-use development in the Mirrabooka Regional Centre to create a safe, successful and vibrant centre. The development form will be appropriate to the location as guided by the planning scheme, financial feasibility and the housing outcomes offered.

Given the time, I will conclude by suggesting that I will not support the motion and I will certainly vote against it.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [6.04 pm] — in reply: I rise to respond to the position that has been put by the minister on behalf of the government in response to the criticism that has been levelled at the government and the statements made to support the motion before the house. I do not believe that the minister has addressed the core issue that I raised with him at the beginning of this discussion of the motion. He has certainly responded to a number of the issues raised by members on our side of the house. I thank the minister for responding to all those specific issues. This is probably one of the only times in parliamentary debate when members of Parliament are able to raise local issues relating to Department of Housing problems in their electorates and receive a direct response from the minister about those local issues. From that perspective the debate has been worthwhile and I thank the minister for responding to it. I do not know whether members appreciated those responses. I am not too sure that the member for Midland is at all happy with the responses she received this evening, but maybe others are.

I come back to the key issue; that is, I do not believe the minister has addressed the points that I raised, particularly the key point, which is the government's commitment to public housing. The point I have consistently made throughout this debate is that over the five-year period of the Liberal Barnett government, the number of people seeking public housing has increased by nearly 26 per cent and the number of applicants waiting for accommodation through public housing has jumped by 5 939.

Mr W.R. Marmion: It's coming down. That was my point.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I am quoting from the 2011–12 —

Mr W.R. Marmion: Yes, but in the past 12 months it has gone down.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That may well be the case, minister, and I will look at those figures when they come out. I have questions for the minister on those figures, but I can only go on the figures that are made available to me.

Mr W.R. Marmion: I just read them into *Hansard*, so you will be able to get them tonight or tomorrow.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I thank the minister. The number of new units that have been added to the public housing stock over the past five years is 1 276. That will not address the increase in demand for public housing. I take the minister's point that he has just made by way of interjection that the housing waiting list has probably dropped off a bit. Nevertheless, it is about the supply of units to meet that demand. Even with the figures that the minister has quoted and probably the new figures for the end of this financial year, the demand is still not being met by the supply of public housing. That is the key issue that I have been driving at. It has not been addressed because the Department of Housing and the various ministers have had their mind taken away from the provision of public housing to the provision of affordable housing through the private sector, community housing, Keystart or any other alternative approach to building public housing. That is the problem.

In his response to our criticism, the minister talked about the changing demographic nature of the public housing tenancy market, if I can put it in those terms, and the demographic of the applicants on the waiting list. He indicated that there is a greater demand now for one and two-bedroom units because of the number of single people out there. I agree with the minister. I just looked at the national housing figures for all states, including Western Australia, and 60 per cent of all people in public housing across Australia are singles. I agree with the point that the minister has made about the changing demographic nature.

Mr W.R. Marmion: The member for Mandurah made the point about people being in a four-bedroom place and we need to get them out. We're working on it.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I agree. I will come to that.

The issue is that the demographic of public housing tenants and the applicants has changed to singles, but not enough units and apartments are being built by the government to house singles. The government relies on the private and community sectors to build those apartments and units, albeit the Department of Housing has built some units. I will come to those in a moment.

Mr W.R. Marmion: You have more going up in Cockburn than anywhere.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I know. In two seconds I will come back to the ones in my electorate and just around the corner from my office.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No, the Department of Housing contracted and built these ones and they are very nice indeed.

Ms J.M. Freeman: We have talked about this. There was stimulus funding money going into that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: All the things the government is doing are funded by stimulus funding.

Ms J.M. Freeman: They were bought off the plan.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Hardly any of it is being built out of the government's own pocket. That is the whole point of the government not actually investing in public housing.

Mr W.R. Marmion: We are bankrolling those ones.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: With stimulus money. I am glad the Minister for Housing raised that so I can mention those units. The 130 units that have been built in one housing complex in Cockburn Central, around the corner from my office, are architecturally beautiful and the people who are moving in are saying they are nice units. But only 26 of the 130 units are being made available for public housing, 50 are being sold by the Department of Housing, and 50 are being made available through one scheme or another for affordable housing. Only 26 out of the 130 are available for public housing. That is not going to address the demand of 22 000 applicants.

Mr W.R. Marmion: But you can actually get some of those who are in social housing into that affordable housing through our shared equity scheme, so it's a win-win.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The minister is deluding himself. Those people coming to the Department of Housing for public housing are there for one reason: they cannot afford even shared housing. They are not eligible for

Keystart. To be eligible for Keystart people have to be employed and earn a certain amount of money. The minister knows that. They are his rules. People on the waiting list do not qualify.

Mr W.R. Marmion: I wasn't saying they were waiting; people are in social housing.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The minister is not dealing with the core issue. The core issue is people on the public housing waiting list who cannot afford any of those other schemes. They will continue to wait on the housing list until public housing units become available. Yes, the government is building new one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, but the problem is most of them are being given away or are being sold. What is the Department of Housing? Is it a developer or a provider of houses for people on the waiting list? As I said, of the 130 units in the new development at Cockburn Central, 26 will be available for the public housing waiting list, 50 will be sold straight to the open market and 50 will be made available under the affordable housing scheme. Those types of approaches will not address the massive blowout in the housing waiting list.

In his reply the minister mentioned the changing demographic of demand and said that there are 12 500 three-bedroom units in the housing stock, that 3 400 people were on the Homeswest waiting list and that 5 200 had applied for two-bedroom units. He used that as an example of the changing demographic. I will bring the minister back to the point I made initially in the motion: when one looks at the overall housing stock over the past five years for three-bedroom units, stock went backwards by 77, yet 3 400 people are still waiting for three-bedroom houses. The problem will not be resolved by doing that. There are 3 400 people on the waiting list for three-bedroom houses and the total stock went backwards, reduced by 77, over the past five years. That is the reason for the motion. The minister is not responsible personally, but as a representative of the government, because there have been numerous housing ministers and he has been the housing minister three times.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Only twice.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It feels like three times, but it is only twice.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: Are you taking injections?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Of course.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: That is probably like the situation in Bunbury where, in 2007, there were 66 fewer houses than there were in 2002.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, and there was probably a reason for that. In fact, I know the reason: they were renovating Wetherill Park.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: No, this is Bunbury I am talking about.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: What is the housing commission area there?

Mr G.M. Castrilli: You mean Withers.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, Withers.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: There were also 42 units vacant, so I presume you are talking about the same situation.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It was not good enough then. I accept that.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: I'm just saying.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member for Bunbury is right. It was not good enough, but significant changes were happening there, such as the upgrade to Withers—the member has seen what came out of that—and upgrades to Kwinana and Southwell in my electorate, and a series of other areas were transformed as part of a Department of Housing redevelopment. The problem, however, was that it did take a number of housing units out of the stock and they were not replaced quickly enough. That has not changed; it has got worse. The difficulty for the government is that the demand has got greater over the past five years.

I come back to my original point, if the demographics are changing, as the minister says they are, and I believe the minister is correct, one of the ways to resolve it is for the department to concentrate on building apartments in the same way it built apartments at Cockburn Central. However instead of building 130 units and flogging 50 of them and putting 50 in the affordable housing market, it should keep them and put people who are on the waiting list into them. That is one of the quickest ways to reduce the housing waiting list.

Dr K.D. Hames: That is what happened originally in Lockridge and Balga and eventually they became homes that were demolished.

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Mr F.M. LOGAN: I acknowledge that. Coming from London, I know the problems associated with council housing estates, housing commission estates and the post-war estate model. There are ways and means to get around that, but we simply cannot build 130 units and give most of them away.

Mr W.R. Marmion: But the money you make on the ones you sell can be used somewhere else to build more.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes. There is cross-party agreement on the mixed development of housing and neither party has moved away from that. But we must deal with the significant blowout in the housing waiting list in another way, in particular by building apartments.

The minister referred to the head contractor model. My criticism of the maintenance procedures, its timeliness and quality, as the minister says, has been going on for three years. My criticism comes back to the relationship between the housing commission and the head contractor as the only point of contact for oversight of quality, compared to the previous model where the then Department of Housing and Works delved down to the base level where that large number of small contractors was overseen by the department. The Department of Housing is now relying on Transfield to do the oversight work. It is clearly not working. The model in place, the one that I criticise, is a pyramid subcontracting model. That is exactly what it is. The maintenance contract has been let to Transfield. A handful of primary contractors working in particular areas of responsibility on Transfield's behalf, in turn, subcontract out further—this is sub-subcontracting—as the minister pointed out, to the numerous smaller, local subcontractors. By the time it gets down to them, the price they get for the job means we are getting the type of quality that is paid for. The department is not paying much, so the quality reflects what is paid.

The Minister for Housing has been in some of the same industries that I have. In the resource and engineering sectors in which exactly the same model was put in place, exactly the same problems arose; that is, if the minister uses the pyramid subcontracting model, he will get the type of quality that he pays for at the end of the day. The principal contractor tries to drive down the price from the sub-subcontractors as low as it possibly can. As a result of that, those subcontractors, who are sub-subcontractors, will provide what they are paid for, and that is not much. If they are paid peanuts, they are going to provide a very poor and shoddy service. How is that service overviewed? It is overviewed by the principal contractor, not by the person who is paying the cost in the first place—which is the minister, the Department of Housing and ultimately the taxpayer—because the Department of Housing's relationship is only with the principal contractor. They are going to say, "Is the quality of work being done well, Mr Transfield?" "Yes, it is, absolutely. Here are all the figures." "How do I know that?" "I've just told you." "Have you personally gone down to check the housing yourself?" "No." "So how do you know that it's okay?" "Transfield told me." Of course they are going to say that! There is a relationship only between the Department of Housing and the principal contractor. We see this over and over again in the private sector. Companies like to sell their services on the basis that they will be able to do the job cheaper and quicker. They may, but the job they are doing at the end of the day is usually not very good if it is quicker and cheaper than what was done previously. We are seeing that with Transfield.

Even the issue of being quicker is a fallacy, as the minister knows. For example, one of the member for Collie—Preston's constituents waited four weeks for electricity to be reconnected in Australind. She literally had to camp in her own housing commission house. That is not quick and that is not acceptable. Issues only come to the minister as a result of work being done by local members of Parliament—it does not matter whether they are Labor or Liberal. These issues only come to the Minister for Housing because those Department of Housing residents, our constituents, have nowhere else to go. Who else is going to speak up on their behalf apart from their local members of Parliament? It is not as though Transfield or any of Transfield's subcontractors will tell the minister that that poor woman in Australind waited four weeks for electricity. It is actually members of Parliament who are taking it up on behalf of the tenant. That is the reason I criticised the nature of the head contractor model. I have seen it work in many industries and it may well have worked or it could have worked. But the point we make to the government is it has had three years of criticism because it is not working; it is still not working. It then behoves the current Minister for Housing to grab this problem by the throat to sort it out. If that means taking that contract up with Transfield, that is exactly what he has to do.

I reiterate the points I made through the motion. We are going backwards in public housing in Western Australia. The public housing waitlist has blown out by nearly 26 per cent. The number of houses that have been added to the total housing stock has not kept up with demand. As a result of the adoption of the head contractor model, which the government has defended over the past three years, maintenance has also got worse within the public housing sector. It has not improved. The government has to be dragged kicking and screaming to change that head contractor model if we are to see an improvement in maintenance for public housing tenants across Western Australia.

Question put and negatived.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 12 June 2013]

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Ms Janine Freeman; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Bill Marmion; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran
Logan
