

**KIMBERLEY — GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

*Motion*

**MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn)** [5.32 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its failure to support the people in the Kimberley, including but not limited to —

- (a) a failure to comply with its own Buy Local and regional business preference policies;
- (b) a failure to act on Department of Housing commitments;
- (c) not supporting local employment in administering the national Indigenous housing stage 1 funding rollout;
- (d) cuts to schools; and
- (e) a failure to adequately address mental health issues in the Kimberley.

In speaking to that motion, I would like to first of all see where the Minister for Housing is.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz)**: The Minister for Housing is not here.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN**: There he is! Come on in, Bill!

Several members interjected.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN**: I will be raising a number of issues about housing that either the Minister for Housing or the Minister for Regional Development can talk on, but I presume it will be the Minister for Housing. But those are the issues that I will be addressing directly to the Minister for Housing, so relax, member for Pilbara.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister for Housing for arranging some of the meetings that I had with the departmental officers recently when I was in Kununurra and in Broome. I would like to run through with the minister a few things relating particularly to housing issues that came to my notice as I went through the Kimberley with the member for Kimberley. In the minister's response, whether it be today or later, I would not like the minister to continue on his track of saying that the shadow Minister for Housing has a behaviour whereby he goes out and finds issues, brings them to the house and then makes things up, and then the Minister for Housing has to come into the chamber and deny that all those things that I have put in *Hansard* are correct. I foreshadow the issues that I will raise with the minister by saying that these are the issues which have been raised with me and which I bring to the minister's attention.

First of all, I would like to talk to the house today—perhaps the Minister for Regional Development would also like to comment on this when I have finished—and to the ministers, in particular, about the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, or NPARIH, as that agreement is called. I would certainly like to congratulate and thank the former Labor government for initiating this partnership agreement and for the amount of money that the commonwealth government has put into the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. People can go through the Kimberley and see the impact that that investment is having in not only some of the larger towns of the Kimberley, but also some of the remote communities. It is having a significant impact on those communities and it is transforming some of the towns in the Kimberley. I am sure it is happening in the Western Desert areas as well.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, which was kicked off by the then commonwealth Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek, committed the Australian government to \$5.5 billion worth of investment into remote Indigenous housing over 10 years to 2018, and committed the commonwealth to construct 4 200 new houses and to 4 876 rebuilds. I will keep my comments specific to the Kimberley, as the motion states. From the NPARIH funding, over \$300 million was allocated to the Kimberley. The capital from the commonwealth was processed through the Western Australian Department of Housing, and in the process of expending that capital—again, I will keep my comments to the Kimberley—the tender put out was, from what I am advised, minister, effectively a single tender, and that tender was won by the Pindan construction company. Pindan arrived in the Kimberley and brought most of its workers with it. The target of the Aboriginal employment program—the Kimberley employment and enterprise program, or KEEP—which was 20 per cent Indigenous employment for that project, was complied with, but I put to the minister that it has been raised with me by a number of groups that it is questionable how many of the people who were employed under KEEP were local people. They certainly were Aboriginal, but it is questionable how many were local Aboriginal people who were given an opportunity to get work as a result of that \$300 million investment. One of the critical issues raised with me by not just Indigenous organisations, but also small businesses in the Kimberley, particularly in Broome, was their view that they were locked out of any work from that program—that NPARIH \$300 million investment in housing in the Kimberley.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 October 2013]

p5420b-5432a

Mr Fran Logan; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bill Marmion

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I draw the minister's attention to the current "Buy Local Policy" that the minister's government applies, and in particular the wording on page 8 of the policy that I will read into *Hansard*. Under the heading "Tender Evaluations", it states —

Quotation and tender evaluation reports must clearly demonstrate the application of the Buy Local Policy in the calling of the quotation or tender and in the assessment of the bids.

I am unsure whether that was applied, and I would like to hear the minister's point of view on that. In the planning and practice of the Buy Local policy, I remind members of the following —

Government agencies must:

- Ensure that buying practices, procedures and specifications do not disadvantage local businesses.
- Ensure that where quotations (purchases below \$50,000) are being sought for delivery or use in a specific regional town or in a region other than the Perth region, local businesses within the region or specific town are invited to bid.
- ...
- Ensure that procurement plans address local business capability and local content ...
- Explore the capability of local businesses to meet requirements and ensure that quotations and tenders are designed to accommodate the capabilities of local businesses.

Provisions for Aboriginal economic development appear later in that policy. I will quote from the policy at length; the last part of this makes the most critical point —

One of the key objectives in the State Government's Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy is to achieve a sustained increase in the level of supply of services to government by enterprises that employ, or are owned and operated by, Aboriginal residents of Western Australia. Any increased access to service contracts by Aboriginal owned and operated enterprises or by enterprises with a strategy for employing Aboriginal people provides increased employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal Western Australians. It is therefore important for government agencies to encourage bids from, and give priority to, tenderers who are Aboriginal (solely or in partnership) or have in place or are prepared to consider implementing employment strategies and programs for Aboriginal people. This is especially important in cases where Aboriginal people will be the principal end user of goods and services to be purchased, particularly if such contracts provide for or anticipate maintenance work to be carried out in situ.

The Buy Local policy, with which the minister's government is supposed to comply, encourages and goes out of its way to assist local businesses, particularly in the north west and remote areas of Western Australia, to be part of any tender process. When it comes to Aboriginal businesses and the possibility of Aboriginal employment, it would go that further step to ensure that those Aboriginal organisations or people can be involved in either the tendering process or be employed as part of the workforce for that government contract, especially when they are the beneficiary of that contract and will be involved in the ongoing maintenance of whatever that contract involves—in this case it is housing. To supplement the Buy Local policy, in July 2013—I think this was under the encouragement of the Minister for Regional Development—the policy was amended to increase the regional business preference and regional content preference to a maximum of \$250 000 each for goods and services and \$500 000 for housing and works purchases. The policy that I have just referred to is a life policy that government must comply with, and it was only recently amended in July to increase the regional business preference particularly for housing and goods and services.

The issue raised with me by a number of groups, both Aboriginal organisations with the capacity to tender for work and also local businesses that employ Aboriginal people, is that they were not involved in the first round of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing funding, which has now concluded. They did not have an opportunity to tender, and those provisions that I just read out about how the extra step must be made to encourage businesses to be part of those local tenders as per the Buy Local policy were not complied with. It was put to me that Pindan did not buy a nut or bolt in the Kimberley; everything was bought in. The people were brought in and the suppliers were brought in, and the opportunity to get part of the contract was denied to both Aboriginal-owned organisations and also European-owned businesses that employ Aboriginal people in Kununurra and Broome. All of these companies complained that they could not get a foot in the door to be a part of this contract, and it was a huge contract worth \$300 million. That is a massive investment in the Kimberley, and the sole beneficiary of that investment was Aboriginal people. The Buy Local policy requires that they be involved in the process, and they were not.

To support my claim, I refer the minister to the Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation in Fitzroy Valley that will confirm what I am putting to the house. I also refer the minister to the Fitzroy Valley Men's Shed that

has now established a building corporation and at the time had a small building organisation in Halls Creek. A number of other companies in Broome, to which the member for Kimberley will also refer, also felt that they were cut out from being able to tender for any of that work, which was solely controlled by the Pindan group.

An example of this contract and how bad things got for the local people of the Kimberley was given to me while I was in Halls Creek. When Pindan came to Halls Creek, it established a work camp. There was already a work camp in Halls Creek that was not taken advantage of, which would have at least brought some money into town. Instead, Pindan constructed a new workers camp at a cost of \$2.6 million and operated its building and construction out of that work camp.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Was that Halls Creek or Fitzroy?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Sorry—Fitzroy Crossing. I apologise. I thank the minister.

When stage 1 of the NPARIH funding contract came to a conclusion, Pindan put in for and won a tender to demolish the \$2.6 million camp that it constructed, and it was paid another \$860 000 to take away the camp. It has been put to me that components and modules of that camp were then sold on to other businesses in Port Hedland for a figure that was put to me of \$10 000 per module. I do not know whether that is true, but, certainly, Pindan's behaviour with the work camp is the talk of the Fitzroy Valley—the amount of money it got paid to put it up, pull it down, and then on-sell what was possibly a reusable camp for Fitzroy Crossing. That is an example of some of the problems associated with that contract. The point is that a second round of National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing funding is now available. I am advised that up to \$330 million will be spent on housing in the Kimberley and the Pilbara remote communities of Western Australia. I am also aware that the Department of Housing has been in Broome and has held meetings with Aboriginal organisations and other people who may well be interested in tendering for work on the second stage of the NPARIH funding. I commend the Department of Housing for doing that because it appears it was not done for the first stage. However, there has been criticism from local companies about the department's true commitment to ensuring that local businesses in the Kimberley get a chance to win some of the work for the second stage of the NPARIH funding. The view given to both me and the member for Kimberley is that it is window dressing and the department is not truly committed as per the Buy Local policy to encourage and assist particularly Aboriginal organisations to tender and win work out of that massive second round of NPARIH funding that will ultimately benefit Aboriginal communities. I put it to the minister that I hope in the second stage of the expenditure of \$300 million in the Kimberley that we see more than one Aboriginal apprentice employed. It is my understanding that one apprenticeship came out of the initial funding for Aboriginal people, who did not last very long.

In this private member's motion, I am seeking from the minister a commitment to ensure, firstly, that his own Buy Local policy and regional business preferences are met as a result of this second stage of NPARIH funding round. I refer the minister to the Marra Worra Worra organisation in Fitzroy Crossing, which has its own building company. As the Minister for Housing, the minister will know that that organisation looks after a significant number of houses in Fitzroy, Halls Creek and some of the remote communities in the Fitzroy Valley. That organisation has the capacity and the skills to tender for work out of NPARIH funding. The minister himself knows the impact it will have on the local community if it can win some of that work. It will create jobs for Aboriginal people and train Aboriginal people in apprenticeships in their own towns. It is critical that the minister ensure that those Aboriginal organisations have an opportunity to win that work and that, in complying with the Buy Local policy, the department assists those companies in successfully tendering for some of that work under the NPARIH funding round.

The second issue I would like to raise concerns empty housing. As the minister knows, there is still a significant demand for housing in the Kimberley. Despite the massive investments in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and remote communities as a result of this NPARIH funding, there is a huge demand for housing in the Kimberley. It is interesting that in places such as Wyndham a significant number of empty houses are capable of being renovated and prepared for use. I would like to table for the rest of the day's sitting some photographs of some of the housing.

[The papers were tabled for the information of members.]

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Is it private housing?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No. As the minister can see from the design, it is older Government Regional Officers' Housing.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** They are better than the houses I lived in when I was in the Kimberley.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** They are quite close to the hospital so I assume it was GROH housing for nurses at one point. They belong to the department now. I have a photograph of one of the empty houses. These houses have been empty for years. There is a photograph of a row of the houses, which shows that they are in a dilapidated

state. The final photograph shows the underneath of one of them and how the jarrah floor construction and the framework of the house is in perfect condition. I now want to bring to the minister's attention that, as pointed out to me by the member for Kimberley, while some of this housing might be 40 or 50 years old, it is very suitable for Aboriginal people. It is also very suitable for renovation. Next to the last house on this street is a house I stayed in while I was in Wyndham. It belongs to a friend of mine who is a doctor at Wyndham Hospital and who has just bought the house. I was talking to the builder who is going to renovate the house, and he took me around to another house that I presume belonged to the Department of Housing at one stage but had been transferred to an Aboriginal organisation and has since been sold. The builder has bought that house. He is part of the way through renovating it, and it will be a fabulous looking building when it is finished.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Is he a fisherman as well?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No; he is a builder.

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

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** He has not been long in town. He is a builder. He will do that full renovation for \$160 000. He will add an extra bedroom, so it will be a four-bedroom house with a bathroom, balcony and breezeways, for \$160 000. We can compare that with the \$600 000 to \$700 000 it costs the government to build a new place in Wyndham. Those figures were given to me by the minister's department. I think the renovation of this housing is an option the minister should look at, as was pointed out to me by the member for Kimberley, whom I disagreed with all the way from Kununurra to Wyndham. By the time she, my friend who lives up the road and the builder had laid into me, I had concurred with them. I acknowledged that this type of housing is very suitable for Aboriginal people. The family lives upstairs and, as the member for Kimberley said, when relatives are visiting or grandma is living there, there is space downstairs for an extended family who may visit, or for a permanent extended family, who, as the minister knows, may not wish to live —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I do not disagree. It was luxury in Derby in my day.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is right. I was initially dismissive because it is an old house.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It allows breezeways and shade from the sun.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member for Kimberley went through the way Aboriginal people live in the Kimberley, particularly with an extended family. At the end of the day, it seemed to be very suitable housing for Aboriginal people and that was confirmed by the builder. I bring to the minister's attention that a significant number of those houses and similar houses—some are on shorter stilts—are available in Wyndham to be renovated at a fraction of the cost of building new houses.

The third issue I raise comes back again to the Buy Local policy. The member for Kimberley will talk about this more than I will, but I will just briefly touch on it. The issue is the way in which some tenders for the Department of Housing are structured. They are written in Perth with advice from architects, surveyors and advisers within the Department of Housing and from external architects and builders. Some of the tender specifications created in Perth tend to nominate not only the product required in the build but also the maker of the product. For example, tender specifications for housing will require Boral pavers or Brikmakers bricks. The tenders specify not only the product, but also the maker of the product. That may be in breach of the competitive neutrality provisions that all WA governments are bound to apply. This was raised with me by one of the building companies in Broome that complained about not getting access to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing funding tenders. A number of Aboriginal people work in the company's factory that makes pavers and building products. This company is specifically cut out from being able to tender because of the way in which the tenders are written. The tenders are written for Boral pavers and Brikmakers bricks, for instance.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** I am certainly not in favour of that sort of stuff.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Particularly when it runs absolutely counter to the Buy Local policy.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It is far better to have an end-use specification for the quality of the paver.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Absolutely. It is a purchaser requirement of the Department of Finance anyway, but the tenders coming out of the minister's department are specifying these products and thereby cutting out the ability of local businesses in the Kimberley to bid and to win that work and grow and employ more people.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** You touched on one of my favourite topics, member.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Good. I hope the minister takes up this issue. I will provide him with the name of that company at a later date so that he can talk to the company and clarify what I have said. There is also an issue

with the way in which specifications are structured around roofing and roof trusses, but I will leave that to the member for Kimberley to address. That relates to another Broome company.

The fourth issue was raised with me by Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd, the Yawuru organisation.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** In Broome?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is in Broome. The minister may well be aware that a joint venture financing arrangement is underway between NBY Ltd, Keystart and the Department of Housing for a home ownership scheme for registered Yawuru prescribed body corporate members. That is a great housing initiative and I am very pleased that Keystart is involved with that joint venture housing initiative with the Yawuru organisation as it steps slightly outside government to involve an Aboriginal organisation in the whole financing model, but it is aimed at Aboriginal people buying their own homes, which is also a fantastic initiative. I ask the minister to use his powers and intervene in the logjam that has occurred in signing off the agreement between the three parties. I am advised by Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd its financing is in place and ready to go and Keystart's financing is in place and ready to go so they can sign off on the agreement, but the Department of Housing continues to drag its feet. As of today, it is still dragging its feet in committing its finances to that joint venture. I am not too sure whether the minister is aware of that.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** My notes say that it has signed the MOU regarding the scheme and the draft tripartite agreement is to be signed off on internal approvals.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is the internal approvals that are causing the problem. The other two organisations' internal approvals have all been cleared. It is the Department of Housing —

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Is that the same scheme that is operating in Kununurra that is up and running with the —

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, that is with the Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation; it is a similar scheme. I ask the minister to ask his officers to intervene in this one and encourage the Department of Housing to conclude its internal assessment and sign off on that agreement, because both Keystart and the Yawuru organisation want to put that into place as quickly as they can and get people applying for home ownership in Broome.

Finally, the fifth issue I raise is income thresholds for public housing. I still have real problems with the income thresholds for public housing set by the department. I raised this with the minister's predecessor as Minister for Housing, the member for Vasse. I asked him to examine this issue and increase the thresholds. I strongly believe that they are too low and too inflexible to cater for the wide range of circumstances that face low-income earners who are public housing tenants. Currently, in the north west and remote parts of Western Australia, the public housing income threshold is \$610 a week for a single and \$940 a week for dual income. The minister will acknowledge that those figures are low and a disincentive for Aboriginal people in particular to get full-time work. As the minister knows, a growing number of Aboriginal people are able to gain work with the mining industry in the Pilbara, the Kimberley and the goldfields. They earn money that immediately puts them above the housing income threshold.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Way over, possibly.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** They are way over.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Even if you increase them a bit, it would still be way over.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not only a problem for them that they earn way above the housing income threshold; the money that they earn in the mining industry is quite often not enough for them to get into private rental.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** There are not any there.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** For example, some private rentals may be available in Fitzroy Crossing or Halls Creek, but no private rentals are available in remote communities. Warmun is a classic case; people work at Argyle Diamond Mine and earn way above the housing income threshold. It is a problem that was raised with me in many towns that I visited and with many Aboriginal organisations that I visited in the Kimberley; the income threshold for public housing in not only the Kimberley but also the Pilbara is set too low and is too inflexible. Even if the minister were to have a review of the housing income threshold for the north west and the remote areas of Western Australia and conclude that \$610 a week for a single person is an appropriate amount, some flexibility is required in the application of that threshold. For example, if Aboriginal people in Broome are successful in getting a job in the mining sector, that immediately puts them above the threshold for public housing. Through the Yawuru joint venture, they might have an opportunity to buy their own home. That is fantastic. In towns such as Broome, Wyndham and Kununurra, and possibly also Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, that will work. However, in remote communities, it just will not happen. I ask the minister to launch an investigation into the housing income threshold, because that threshold acts as a disincentive for Aboriginal people who are successful in getting work, particularly in the mining sector.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** It is not only Aboriginal people; it is any low-income person who gets a job.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes. As I have said, minister, there are problems with how the threshold applies in the metropolitan region as well, because I have constituents who are in the same position. However, the problem is very stark in regional Western Australia, because, as the minister has pointed out, a person who manages to get a job in the mining industry will be earning an income that is way above the threshold.

I want to raise one final issue with the Minister for Housing. This is not the minister's responsibility, because it comes under the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the other place; however, I am sure the minister is aware of it. It is the role of the Aboriginal Lands Trust and the ability for Aboriginal people to transfer title of land from the ALT to their own organisations for the purpose of local community development. There are many examples across the north west, but I will give the minister one example, and that is the Red Hill community, which is on the Kununurra side of Halls Creek. That community is located on an old town reserve, and the title to that land is vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust. The housing on that land is effectively vested in the Red Hill community, but it is owned by the Department of Housing.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Are they new houses?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, they have been there for some time.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** Is it national partnership housing?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No. There is no national partnership housing in Red Hill at the moment, and that is a pity, because they need it, so I certainly hope they get it.

The housing in that community was built by a range of sources over the years, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Housing, and probably from some other funding that came along, and the rent is paid to the Department of Housing. The problem is that the lack of infrastructure around this small community is appalling. There are no roads, and there is no kerbing or pavement, and the park in the centre of the community is basically just one large concrete block. If this community was part of Halls Creek, it would pay rates, and the responsibility for that infrastructure would fall to the Halls Creek council. However, the town is not part of Halls Creek, because the land is owned by the ALT. I understand that there are mechanisms by which land can be transferred from the ALT to community organisations such as Red Hill. That community is actually working very well at the moment. As the minister knows, Aboriginal organisations go up and down in terms of their governance and capacity. However, that community is working very well indeed under its great new young leader, Darryl Minga. If the community could get that land transferred into its own organisation, it could then negotiate with the local council to pick up the responsibility for the infrastructure that is made available to every other ratepayer. This community is not far from the town of Halls Creek; it is almost an outer suburb of the town. This community is not the only place in the Kimberley and the Pilbara in which this problem occurs. If the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Regional Development would take up that matter with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the other house, that would go a long way towards addressing the issues that are faced by the people in these communities. I will leave the remainder to my colleague the member for Kimberley.

**MS J. FARRER (Kimberley)** [6.16 pm]: I rise in support of this motion. This is a very, very important motion that I hope the ministers across the chamber will take notice of, particularly the members of the National Party, who say they support the region but are now part of a government that does not enforce this Buy Local policy as it should.

Over the last break in Parliament, I travelled with Fran Logan and I took him to see these places so that he would have a better picture of what we are talking about. I took him to Kununurra, where we met with the Department of Housing people and talked at great length about some of the issues that Aboriginal communities face and the issues with the houses in town that belong to the Department of Housing. After we had spoken to those people for the day, we went to Wyndham, because we had been told that there are not enough houses to accommodate the needs of the people in Wyndham, and we spoke with a number of Aboriginal people who were sitting under trees and camping under trees because they still had not been housed by the Department of Housing. We also met with a couple of residents. One was the sergeant in charge of the police department, and the other was a lady who works with the community of Wyndham. We were informed about a lot of issues that I guess we are all familiar with. Those issues exist across the Kimberley. The stories are the same, and they are very disturbing. One of those issues is the number of job opportunities that are being lost to the region because of the lack of political will to give locals and local companies valid government contracts and businesses.

Some of our young people who are living in Wyndham have started work with one of the mining companies; I think it is called Kimberley Mining. Some of the young people who have come from Oombulgurri are now employed by that company. However, a lot of these people have not been able to get a home. I guess that because of the amount of money they earn, they are not eligible for public housing. There is a shortage of houses

for a lot of these people. When we went to Wyndham, we saw a number of houses that are not being utilised and have not been lived in for a number of years. As the shadow Minister for Housing pointed out, some of these houses are in good condition, and because they are not being lived in, people are asking whether they could buy one of these houses so that they could have a home of their own. I think that is something that might be of interest to the Department of Housing. It would enable these young people and families, some of whom are employed, to own their own house in which to live. A couple of the younger people and families who are working at this mining company have said that they are living in a house that belongs to somebody else but they are paying the mortgage on the house when they could be buying their own home. That is one of the things we heard from the community at Wyndham. And it was not just Aboriginal people, but also non-Indigenous people who said things like that.

There is an issue in the Kimberley of people saying they want to own their own home but some of these houses are beyond the scope of them getting into them. I am speaking particularly about the ex-Government Regional Officers' Housing. Some of them must be sitting vacant. Something has to be done to create the possibility for families to buy their own homes.

I would like to touch on another matter. There is the Buy Local policy, the Department of Housing Kimberley Employment and Enterprise Program, and all the policies that have lofty ideals but are not being followed through. KEEP sounds great. If members read the program outline, they will see that it states —

The aim of the Kimberley Employment & Enterprise Program ... is to maximise employment and economic development opportunities for local Aboriginal people ... living in the Kimberley region ... that arise through the Department of Housing's procurement of building and civil construction projects undertaken in the Kimberley.

We heard right through the Kimberley that in a lot of these projects introduced for building new houses for some of those communities, there has been no employment of local Indigenous people and that non-Indigenous people are looking for work. . That is something that is really important to our people in the Kimberley, especially to a lot of people who live on a Centrelink pension, which is their only form of financial support.

Locals have asked why no local contractors are engaged to do work. In Fitzroy Crossing Aboriginal people have asked about that, as they have their own fellows working in what they call "men's sheds". They have been supported by Andrew Forrest for the last few years and they are capable of doing this sort of work. They have built a great little enterprise in the region working with some of the men, especially men who have, I guess, been through the court system, helping them to find work and to get back their driver's licence. So there is a big need for employment in the whole area.

The issue of Buy Local is another issue that was raised. I was approached by McKeno Blocks and Pavers and Kimberley Roof Design. They are both family-run Broome businesses that manufacture locally and take on local trainees and provide fantastic services to the Kimberley. A tender document states the things that the roofing business does in providing work. The business employs local people and says that it has now been passed over and cut out of contracts simply on the basis of the tender document. I have a copy of the tender document with me. It lists cold-formed, zinc-coated steel as the standard material.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order members!

**Ms J. FARRER:** Now it manufactures treated timber tresses locally in Broome. They are cheaper for the taxpayer, as the materials are cheaper to freight to Broome and do not have to be manufactured in Perth. There is no issue with treated timber trusses in the Kimberley. Yet throughout the Kimberley we have Perth-based architects and departments cutting out local businesses with the stroke of a pen because large contractors do not want to file a non-conforming alternative tender document. Why, if timber is as good as steel, do the tender documents list it only as an alternative, requiring more paperwork and making it easier for contractors to seek non-local manufacturers even at great cost to taxpayers? Especially at a time when Broome is experiencing an economic slump, we should be doing everything we can to help these local businesses stay in town and bolster local employment.

The other business, McKeno paving, is regularly cut out of contracts because Perth-based architects specify Boral or Midland Brick brands of bricks or pavers, even though they can usually match that product with a local one. I would really like to sit down some time and talk to the Minister for Housing, and take him to the Kimberley and talk to some of these businesses and work out how we can do this better so that towns such as Broome and Fitzroy and all the others in my electorate can have jobs for the young people coming through.

The motion before us addresses cuts to education funding in the Kimberley region. I cannot express how devastating these massive cuts will be to most of the schools in my electorate. Schools in the Kimberley will lose an estimated \$1.7 million a year in funding as a result of the Barnett government's cuts to education spending.

That includes a reduction in the base allocation of teachers to every school; a reduction in the number of teachers per student for years 8 to 12; a cut to education assistants; a 30 per cent cut to school support programs; a tax on schools of \$600 per teacher and \$400 for other employees a year; and a 1.5 per cent cut to procurement.

I recently received a letter from a young mother, who states —

I am a young mother caring for 3 sons. Two boys aged 5 attending pre-primary and one aged 9 in year 4.

I am extremely disappointed in the Barnett Government for placing such immense pressure on schools which are already under staffed and on teachers who are not suitably resourced.

One of my 5 year olds has high needs. Since commencing Kindy in 2012 I have attended numerous parent teacher meetings, meetings with the principal and with the school ... trying to devise plans and work out how to divide their time so that my son can be provided with the support he needs at school to gain a meaningful education.

He has not been diagnosed at this stage however; he may be in the very near future. If this does occur, due to Barnett's funding cuts it is unlikely he will receive the support and or aid time he would thrive from receiving.

In the Kimberley there are many children with high needs, due to various factors specific to living in rural locations. Lack of appropriate service delivery by Dept of Health to adequately treat or diagnose children in a timely manner, many children go un-diagnosed throughout their entire lives. FASD is an issue which is not given proper recognition and support for those students and families are minimal. English as a second or even third language, transit living (moving frequently between towns), and cultural diversity are all matters which affect our schools and require the extra attention of staff.

The link that holds community to education is the local assistants. No teacher can manage diversity of needs in a classroom on their own. They need support, they need help, and they need the expertise of local knowledge provided particularly by indigenous teacher assistants in the room.

Unfortunately as teachers struggle to cope, many children are thrown in the 'too hard basket' and are not provided with the support or alternative teaching methods which would greatly benefit them. I truly worry that my son will be put into that category.

My child would thrive if there were more assistants in the room. My son will now be even more disadvantaged because of Barnett's thoughtless funding cuts and complete deprivation of support to teachers, assistants, students, parents and the wider community.

...

We speak about real change, supporting youth, preventing suicide, reducing the rates of incarceration, providing suitable services to all Australians, improving the quality of life for the disadvantaged, closing the gap.

Earlier on I spoke about the baton and the high rate of suicide in the Kimberley. The Derby and Mowanjumb communities have been badly affected by suicide, so why have there been cuts to the community action plan funding? While the CAP funding was in place, it slowed the suicide rate in the Derby area. It seemed to be working because it was led by the community, so why are there cuts to the funding that supports these initiatives that people are now working on?

Today in Parliament I had the pleasure of having some of the girls from the Halls Creek District High School come to visit. The teacher pointed out that the school has a psychologist visit once a fortnight. We know that most metropolitan schools have this sort of visit full-time or four days a week. Psychologists who work with schools help to highlight the mental health needs that our young people require, but there is a lack of psychologists to visit a lot of those areas. A lot of those young people who came to Parliament today were very concerned about the state of their school and the way that the cuts have affected the community. They said that they would like to put a petition together to outline some of the services that they feel should be given to their school. I will end on that note.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [6.32 pm]: I would like to make a few comments on the motion moved by the member for Cockburn about the issues associated with the need for greater effort and action by the government in the Kimberley region. I congratulate the member for Kimberley for bringing to Parliament since her election a number of key issues that are of concern to the people of the magnificent Kimberley region in Western Australia. The member for Kimberley is obviously concerned about the health and wellbeing of many people in the Kimberley, particularly indicated by the poignant tabling today of a petition and a message baton from the various families in Beagle Bay. It highlighted very starkly to this Parliament the tragic loss of life of

young Indigenous people in the Kimberley to suicide. There is no more important issue for government to respond to than the mental health and wellbeing of people in Western Australia. When we have such tragic and appalling statistics of young people taking their lives, this Parliament and, indeed, this government cannot ignore the issue. I applaud the member for Kimberley for bringing these issues to Parliament, as is her responsibility as the member. I know that she wants to work with the government and the relevant ministers to effect lasting positive change.

I visited the Kimberley, in particular the communities of Derby and Broome, in my capacity as shadow Minister for Local Government; Community Services in July this year. As has been highlighted to this house in the member for Kimberley's speech, and also in some previous comments from the shadow Minister for Housing, a number of key issues affect communities in the Kimberley, including housing, poverty, sustainable employment, access to appropriate and timely health services and education. The member for Kimberley was spot-on when she highlighted through a question to the Premier last week during question time the genuine impact of cuts to education in schools. I think the question that the member for Kimberley asked last Thursday related in particular to the Kununurra District High School. The cuts that the Liberal–National government has imposed are lasting cuts to the budgets of schools, many of which are needy schools. The cuts are not just for this year; they will move into next year and beyond. Last Thursday the member for Kimberley highlighted that the cuts in Kununurra could mean the loss of a number of education assistants. Those of us who have close associations with our schools will know that the role of education assistants is increasingly important, particularly when dealing with children and young people who have disabilities, learning problems or developmental delays or who just need one-on-one support to ensure that they grasp the concepts being taught in the classroom.

The Premier and the Minister for Education keep saying in Parliament that they have allocated in this budget an extra \$300 million—blah, blah, blah—yet the cuts will cut deeply, particularly in many schools that have particular ongoing needs for more resources rather than fewer. The Premier and the education minister must understand what it means when cuts are made so savagely to schools such as those in the Kimberley and the school in Kununurra that the member for Kimberley mentioned in her question last week. If those resources are lost, it is even more difficult for teachers and non-teaching staff to deliver the quality education that they want to deliver, and know they need to deliver, to give young people every opportunity to participate effectively in their community. In many respects, it is all linked. It is linked to the mental health and to the physical health of young people. It is linked to their capacity to participate in and feel part of their community. If those resources are taken away, it is all linked.

The motion that the member for Cockburn has moved in this place today highlights a number of genuine areas in which the Barnett government has failed to support the people in the north, particularly in the Kimberley region. The member for Cockburn eloquently outlined the issues regarding the Department of Housing, particularly the Buy Local policy. I am not sure whether this has been resolved, but I hope it has been. When I was in Broome, the CEO of Save the Children Australia was there as well. Save the Children, of which I am a proud member, delivers a range of programs throughout the Kimberley, including in Kununurra and Beagle Bay and in Broome itself.

In July the Helping Young People Engage program, which is a program that Save the Children has delivered for some years, was under threat in both Kununurra and Broome. During the estimates hearings, I highlighted to the Minister for Regional Development that these are the sorts of programs that should be strongly supported by the royalties for regions program because they deliver genuine outcomes for young people and their families while helping to protect them and deliver a safer mechanism for them to prosper in their own communities. I hope that will be resolved, but it is an example of where the government has fallen down. That program and others delivered by Save the Children should not be under threat because they are delivering to children and young people in need in the Kimberley region.

Another issue is the local employment aspect and the Buy Local policy, which were very, very clearly and eloquently outlined by the members for Cockburn and Kimberley, and of course the cuts to schools and the mental health issues. This government stands condemned, as the motion highlights, for its failure to support the people. We need to make sure that we and this government listen closely to and act immediately on the range of issues that the member for Kimberley and others highlighted to this Parliament, because we are talking about real people in need. If those needs are met, it will help them to ensure in the future that they reach the potential that is so possible for all people up there.

**MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Housing)** [6.42 pm]: I thank all the contributors to the motion that I will now talk against. I will direct my first points to the shadow Minister for Housing. I acknowledge that I suppose all issues except the sixth are directly related to my portfolio. I thank the member for Cockburn for his comments about access to my department. My department gave me some feedback after the member's visit to Broome and Kununurra, so he went to both the West and East Kimberley. Obviously, the member has a pretty good idea of what is going on up there.

I could not agree more with the member for Cockburn's comments about the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. It has been a fantastic program; in fact, for housing in Western Australia there has probably been no greater program for the delivery of new houses and refurbishments. An amazing amount has been done in the Kimberley. Regarding the delivery of that program, although the commonwealth provided the money, it also put forward a whole lot of conditions that had to be met by the delivering agency, which was my department. It was quite difficult to do because some of the conditions around the delivery of these houses required the local Aboriginal communities to sign up to the houses being managed by the department. In terms of ownership of the land, there was sometimes some land issues that had to be addressed. It has been a good program, and there has been good cooperation with the commonwealth minister until recent times. We have not actually signed up to the next stage yet, but we wanted to adjust the agreement a little with the previous federal minister. We can get to a stage of putting new houses on, but we have no services. We wanted a little flexibility, which I think is very reasonable, so that some of that money can go towards providing some services such as connecting water and power to the homes. I think the member for Cockburn understands that. I have had a chat with the new federal minister, who happens to come from the Northern Territory so he understands the issues. As a bonus, he worked just out of Kalgoorlie for Pancontinental as the mine manager, so he sort of picks up another aspect of my other portfolio. I am confident that going forward this program will continue, with a tiny bit more flexibility to suit Western Australia and indeed the Kimberley region.

I have not been up to that area since my recent appointment as Minister for Housing, but I had extensive tours of the Kimberley when I was previously Minister for Housing, and I met with Pindan and some of the Aboriginal housing providers up there. My advice is that Pindan is not the only tenderer that got the contract. My understanding is that at least five builders are up there with contracts. As the member mentioned, under the Kimberley Employment and Enterprise Program, there has been quite a lot of Indigenous employment. I have some figures here. As the member said, the capital works program was more than \$300 million, and there have been 1 032 refurbishments and 373 new houses completed in 58 remote Aboriginal communities. The commonwealth set a target, which was 1 025 refurbishments and 295 new houses in four years. We went over that, and we are the only state that met our target, as the member knows.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** There was a bonus.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes; I think we were expecting a lot bigger bonus than \$4 million. But, anyway, we managed to deliver that.

In terms of boosting Aboriginal employment, in 2012–13, the department averaged a 33 per cent Aboriginal employment rate against the target of 20 per cent, and there were 204 Aboriginal people, including 13 apprentices and nine Aboriginal trainees, employed during both the refurbishment and construction phases of those projects. A total of 1 126 Aboriginal employment opportunities were generated during the year; 1 064 in construction projects, and 62 in property and tenancy management. So that is the other side the member touched on. In terms of that program —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** On those five contractors you referred to, obviously I was informed about one of them.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Yes, Pindan.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** How many of those were local contractors?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I do not have the details. My notes are about the actual houses, and I have no details of the contracts, but I can touch on some of the matters off the top of my head. But I did not know the member was going to talk about the contracts, so I have just been advised by text message that there were five. I do not know the detail, but I certainly can delve into that and indeed read the contracts myself.

Before I get on to the local content issue, which I have some good notes on, I will talk about KEEP. Under that program, any housing construction projects in the Kimberley region that have a contract value of more than \$600 000 are required to demonstrate how they will meet the department's 20 per cent Aboriginal labour content by identifying the Aboriginal involvement. The rules around that are that the 20 per cent target can include labour from within the tendering contractor's company, and also from a subcontractor, where that subcontracted labour can be directly connected to the project they are undertaking. So it is not only the actual person who wins the contract; the subcontractor also has to comply, provided they are working on the project. We have well over 20 per cent; I understand that 33 per cent is what we managed to deliver.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** For that housing contract?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** For right across the whole national partnership agreement. I understand that is across the board.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** That is certainly —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** What they averaged in 2012-13 was 33 per cent against target. I will just read all that out. There were 204 Aboriginal people employed during the refurbishment and construction projects in that financial year.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** These were the words that were put to me—you can check them yourself with the Marra Worra Worra organisation. Yes, the KEEP targets were met and Aboriginal people were employed, but most of them were employed in non-trades areas, in pushing the brooms.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, member. If the interjection is going to be accepted, can you please speak up? I do not think Hansard can hear you terribly well.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You can check this out yourself with the Marra Worra Worra organisation, but the way it was put to me was that, yes, the key targets for Aboriginal employment were met with the contracts —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** But they were not from the local —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** They were mainly non-trades—broom pushers and stuff like that. What they were upset about was, firstly, that they did not get the opportunity to get some of that work themselves; and, secondly, that there were no opportunities for higher skill sets to be developed—that is, for tradespeople.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I can look into that. In terms of some of the things that have been built up there, including employment-related accommodation, according to my notes the authority has built 58 accommodation units across four facilities in the Kimberley—I have visited the Halls Creek one and the Kununurra one—Fitzroy Crossing and Broome. Aboriginal organisations have been engaged to manage these facilities. We actually have Aboriginal organisations managing those facilities, including the Wunan Aboriginal Corporation in Halls Creek, Madalah Ltd in Broome and Derby, and Nyaarla Projects Pty Ltd in Fitzroy Crossing. Certainly, there is employment there, because they are actually managing those accommodation units. I will get onto local government, because I notice we have only 10 minutes. I might leave five minutes, if I can, to the Minister for Regional Development if he is keen.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** You keep going.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I will keep going; okay. I will do the empty housing one first, because that is important. The member showed me an image of an empty house—an elevated house that, if refurbished, would be quite a good house, certainly from a cyclone point of view if things are flying around. After his visit, the member mentioned empty houses and I did not realise that some needed refurbishing, but certainly I am happy for any empty government regional officer housing that can be used to be used now if it is not currently tenanted.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** I think there is a bit of housing like that at Wyndham, but the health department employees, when they were in Wyndham Hospital, I think made the point that that was unacceptable and actually moved out, so they're empty now and I think that's the reason why, if it's the same building I'm thinking of.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** They've been empty for a few years.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** The health department said, "We need new and better housing if we're going to attract and retain people." They moved out, and I'm assuming off the back of that that if GROH or Health decided that that housing wasn't up to scratch for their employees, at that point you don't move people back in.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** I think that might be right. New GRO housing has been built.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** If that is true, the next thing we do is build a new GROH house, if we can find a block of land to build it on, and sell it. In fact, that is a routine process —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** It is, minister; sorry to interject, but it is, and I think that's the view of the Department of Housing—that we can actually knock that house down and put, say, two or three houses there. But given the capacity to actually renovate that house at a very reasonable cost to the department —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The department should look at that as well as another option, if land is available; it quite often depends on how much land is available. In Onslow, where land is not available, I would recommend knocking it down and building three houses—a new social house, and a new house for the private sector to cover the costs, and the third one would be the transitional house, which I think is one of the best programs that we are doing up in the Kimberley, and it is working already in Kununurra. I will take up the member's point to follow up the contract and make sure it progresses in Broome. Certainly, we have to look at all the options for housing. If someone is willing to buy that house, it means we have another house in Wyndham that is being utilised. It is something that improves the economy and also the affordability of housing in that area.

**Mr B.J. Grylls:** I think that's actually the best outcome. There's a lot of time between making the decision to empty the house out and what are we going to do with it. We'd be far better off to quickly make the decision to dispose of it, get some more land and develop on it, otherwise you've got this valid concern raised that we've got

a shortage of housing; here's one that's empty, and you could have made a much better outcome by quickly moving to disposal, even though that might not be perfect, because, as I said, GROH will say, "Let's try to keep the block", but I think in the time that ensues in the middle, we could have settled native title and developed a new lot on crown land on the outskirts of town.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** This looks like a particularly good one, and I think a lot of people in the community would say, "Yeah, I'll buy that".

**Mr F.M. Logan:** There's a few of them; there's quite a few in a row.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I want to touch on the Buy Local policy because it seems we are doing quite well in that regard. The policy that the member mentioned applies to all state government purchasing and contracting departments and requires state agencies to adopt the philosophy of buying as close to home as possible. From January 2012 to date, there have been 94 regional tenders advertised by the Department of Housing. The Buy Local policy was applied in 79 of those tenders. Preferences were not applied to 15 of these tenders due to interstate submissions and that is because, under a free trade agreement, if an interstate tender submission is received, we cannot use the Buy Local process; I think it is a mutual recognition across the states issue. Nevertheless, in 79 of 94 tenders, the Buy Local policy was considered. On that point, there was some direct fostering of Aboriginal businesses in the Kimberley, including the Broad joint venture, which includes Kallari; Muway, a joint venture between Eco Construction and Bunuba in the Fitzroy Valley; the one I remember witnessing, Fitzroy Frames, which is a venture between Pindan and Marra Worra Worra; and the Mowanjum community construction team. Whether through direct tender or as subcontractors, they have work, and I know from my experience in Fitzroy that they would be doing the refurbishments. They are pretty extensive refurbishments, I might point out. While I am on that point, in respect of the continuation of phase 2 of the national partnership agreement, the commonwealth government prior to the recent election stipulated new housing rather than refurbishments; it wanted to cut down on the refurbishments. We want to make sure there is a bit more flexibility, so any support in that regard would be appreciated going forward.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** I would stress though, minister, that some of the companies you highlighted across the Kimberley complained about not getting work out of those contracts. A good example of an interstate company was the regrading and upgrade of the Fitzroy airfield, which was won by a Victorian company that sourced its plant and equipment from Western Australia and local companies, so all it did was basically project manage it, and everyone was very happy with that.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It makes sense; it would have been the cheapest way to do it, one would assume, which is probably why it put in the cheapest tender.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** But the national agreement they were particularly upset about.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The member raised a very good point about procurement. It probably happens in a lot of contracts that people who perhaps are not experienced in the full process of tendering go for the safe option, specifying something like a Boral paver. They should just go that extra yard and find out whether the Boral paver is, indeed, suitable; and, if it is, they need to know the strength capability of that concrete paver and specify it. They should at least put in the tender document, "Boral paver or equivalent" to give that flexibility. Indeed, if there is a truss, it might be a bit tricky in respect of steel versus timber, as raised by the member for Kimberley. This demonstrates that termites were not at those timbers, but I know that termites and white ants are certainly an issue —

**Mr F.M. Logan:** The private sector is using significant amounts of timber in Broome and it meets the national building regulations.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** It makes good sense; it is cheaper if it is not a non-conforming timber. I agree that that is something we will look at and I am happy to do that.

I have already addressed the Yawuru agreement; I will find out what is happening there. Did the member have the impression that the Yawuru were ready to sign off?

**Mr F.M. Logan:** They had a meeting only yesterday and they are still dragging that on.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Okay; it might be only fairly new.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.