

PLANNING — MARINE PARADE, COTTESLOE

Statement

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.06 pm]: I rise tonight to report on my meeting with senior members of the Town of Cottesloe on 30 July. I met with the CEO and the deputy mayor and they discussed their grave concerns about the state government approach to the proposed seven-storey development at 120 Marine Parade. That has been the subject of a number of articles in *WAtoday* and *Business News Western Australia*.

We all know local governments and we all admire local governments. I hope the members of this house admire the people in local government because in my experience with local government, particularly in my region—I do not think it would be any different in the metropolitan area—I have found local government officers, planners, admin staff, economic development staff, social workers, councillors and other staff to be very hardworking and dedicated people who are right at the coalface of local politics. There were references to local government in our most recent debate on the Metropolitan Region Scheme (Beeliar Wetlands) Bill 2021. Whatever members' position in politics, I think they would accept the importance of local government.

However, there is concern about the Western Australian Planning Commission's consideration of this project on, I believe, Friday. My apologies to the President; I understand that she has other business to attend to, but I am speaking tonight because I made a commitment to raise this issue. There was a council meeting tonight on this matter, along with other issues. I also made a commitment to the council to ask a question in Parliament today on its behalf. I must say, I was very disappointed with the response. Maybe there was some technicality in relation to the question I asked. I referred to the recent decision of the state development assessment unit, and there were a number of sub-questions. The answer was that the state development assessment unit did not make a decision on this development.

I can only assume that goes to the interpretation of "decision". I will stand corrected, but I am asking questions in good faith. Maybe the state development assessment decision was simply that it made a recommendation, not a decision, and that therefore there is no need to answer the other questions I put in good faith. For example, I asked questions such as why was the Town of Cottesloe not consulted on the third iteration of the development, which was recently approved by the State Development Assessment Unit. The answer was "not applicable". It was reported to me, and I was trying to confirm this with the minister, that the Western Australian Planning Commission had in no way consulted on the third iteration. If members look at the Planning and Development Act, they will see that it is a requirement to consult local government. There was no consultation. The first the local government heard of that third iteration of the development, the seven-storey iteration, was when it was being recommended, by the sound of it, to the commission for decision. The second question was whether the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage publicised the latest iteration on its website under the assessment category prior to consideration. Again, I was trying to ascertain the facts. Clearly, I was not able to do that through the process of asking questions in Parliament, because, I can only assume, there was some technicality in my question. I say to the Town of Cottesloe and its good members that I was unable to ascertain that result. I can only say what they believed to be the case; that is, that it was not uploaded. It is a lesson to me. I understand that I will need to take a snapshot of everything that is on that SDAU website on a daily basis and keep track of what is and what is not going on there, because I am not able to find that answer in a simple way just by asking questions in Parliament.

In answer to the third matter that I raised, again "NA" was the response, "given that the development could not have been approved by a development assessment panel". Advice I got from a planner in that discussion was that in fact a development assessment panel would not be able to approve that development because it did not conform with local planning scheme 3. I raise that with genuine interest and concern and I think we should all reflect on that. As members of Parliament, we have a job to do, to go out and try to do our best to ascertain the results of people's concerns and queries, but according to the minister, that matter is not applicable. If it is the case that a development assessment panel could not consider that matter because it was not conforming to the scheme, I think that is a major concern, because there is a history to the scheme. Local planning scheme 3 was put in place with a considerable amount of community consultation. It was put in place after an inquiry by design that was undertaken with exhaustive consultation with local members of the community. Many members of the community thought that on that particular location the development should have been only three storeys. After some discussion with experts and bringing them into this process, it came to five storeys.

We have a developer who feels so confident in the government's intervention, and in the ministerial intervention through the process now in place under these COVID arrangements, that it can put up proposals that are significantly higher than the scheme. After some iterations back and forth, it came to seven storeys. The local government was completely bypassed in the process and the people of Cottesloe were completely bypassed. Members might say "That's just the people in Cottesloe. They're the wealthy end of town; it doesn't matter. Those people don't matter", but this is an attitude that I think needs to be considered in relation to local government and the role of local government. The question I had is: does it set a dangerous precedent for local governments across Western Australia? If I were in local government, and I do speak to many people in local government, I would have a grave concern

about the role that they have and the roles their schemes play after incredible consultation and involvement. I call on the Planning Commission to consider that and my words tonight. I hope that it reflects on those words. I also say to the Town of Cottesloe, to the good people out there who volunteer as councillors and get involved, that I was unable to answer their questions today, but I will continue to pursue this matter with vigour, and I will continue to defend the rights of community to have their say in planning outcomes in Western Australia.