

HOUSING — PLANNING REFORM

766. Mr S.N. AUBREY to the Minister for Planning:

Before I ask my question, I would like to acknowledge Newborough Primary School student leaders and deputy principal Nick Stenhouse and especially acknowledge principal John Worthy, who is retiring at the end of this year after 42 years as an educator in the WA education system.

The SPEAKER: Congratulations!

[Applause.]

Mr S.N. AUBREY: Also, as the member for Balcatta's year 6 teacher, thank you for your service to WA!

I refer to the Cook Labor government's planning reforms introduced to Parliament today.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this modernisation of Western Australia's planning system will accelerate the delivery of housing across WA?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who opposes these important reforms that will boost housing supply?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I thank the member for his question.

- (1)–(2) As I have said many times in this Parliament, COVID has radically reshaped housing markets, and Western Australia is not alone. Every state is currently grappling with significant challenges, and Western Australia perhaps more so because it is such a popular place to live. In fact, as we have heard in the media, people are leaving New South Wales and Victoria and are making Queensland and Western Australia their home, because they are great places to live and are affordable places to live. Under the national cabinet plan, every state is working towards planning reform, and we have announced our response today.

At the heart of this reforming plan is a very clear focus to cut red tape and to streamline processes and make them more efficient so that we can accelerate the delivery of housing across the continuum across Western Australia. That is the laser focus. As the Premier mentioned today, there was something quite extraordinary; that is, a large number of stakeholders endorsed these planning reforms and embraced this vision. I think it is important that we put on the record that the Western Australian division of the Urban Development Institute of Australia; the Planning Institute of Australia; Housing Choices, which is a very credible and big community housing provider; Shelter WA, which is the advocacy group for community housing; the Local Government Planners' Association; the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia; and the Western Australian division of the Property Council of Australia have all publicly endorsed them today. In fact, I cannot think of a time when such a number of stakeholders have come together to endorse planning reform in these unprecedented times.

The Premier has gone through these reforms, but one that is very important is that a family who is building a home can have more confidence because their building home plans will now go through a streamlined process whereby they will be assessed by planning professionals rather than by elected officials. The point here is that in the current scenario for some local governments—I acknowledge very good local governments like Stirling that are working hard to accelerate delivery—there are some ongoing cases of people's approvals going to council and taking months. The point is that we have to look at all aspects to streamline approvals.

I note what members and stakeholders said today. It is very critical. Michael McGowan, the executive director of the Housing Industry Association, said that when people go through the home building process, uncertainty and time are the two biggest frustrations that he constantly hears from builders and consumers as they look to build their first homes and that the announcement in the bill today will provide clarity that major projects, group multi-dwellings and single dwellings can go through that process in a speedy time frame, reducing holding costs for builders and ultimately supporting affordability and housing supply across Western Australia. That is the organisation that represents mum-and-dad builders who are working hard—yes, they are not the big developments, but they are a critical part of housing supply.

I note that Amanda Sheers from the WA division of the Planning Institute, who is deeply respected, said that it will give councils the opportunity to focus on the more strategic, bigger issues and that it is important to note that the community will still have an important role to play in this process and that will not change.

I think they are ringing endorsements. Of course, there is only one voice of dissent—one voice that wants more red tape for housing in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: It is funny because the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Vasse, recently talked about private property rights and championed private property rights, yet her colleagues Hon Neil Thomson and the member for Cottesloe are running off in the completely opposite direction. They want to block significant pathways and kill major housing projects. They want more red tape and to weaken the development assessment panel system, which is critical for medium-density builds. In nearly seven years, members opposite have provided no housing policy solutions—nothing to accelerate the delivery of social housing. I can tell members this: they are announcing policies in their favourite publication, the *Subiaco Post*, that will create more red tape for housing in Western Australia. That is in total opposition to every other state in the national cabinet, and to planning reform to streamline and cut red tape for housing delivery in Western Australia.