

PLANNING REFORM

96. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

Yesterday, the Premier announced further changes to our planning system, embedding the so-called COVID stimulus measures and further reducing the ability of local communities and councils to have any say over important planning decisions. Furthermore, the Premier claimed that these changes were the result of wide consultation.

- (1) Why does the government believe that local communities and councils should have no say in important planning decisions affecting their communities?
- (2) Did the Premier consult with anyone outside the property industry and, in particular, with the Western Australian Local Government Association, local councils and the local community groups that will be directly affected by these infill planning decisions?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) I have just a few things to say about that. First of all, the premise of the question is incorrect. We did, essentially, three major things. We increased funding, but I will leave that to one side. We made permanent the special development assessment unit, which is a pathway for projects over \$20 million to go through the Planning Commission, which then has regard to local town planning schemes and the like. That is because those major projects, which basically create thousands of jobs and/or are of state or regional significance, deserve enhanced consideration, in my view. They provide lots of opportunities and lots of jobs. I do not think it is appropriate to leave those sorts of projects in the hands of local councils, but they do take account of the local planning scheme.

In terms of the development assessment panels, some changes were made to them. DAPs were put in place by the last Barnett Liberal–National government. John Day, I think, was the Minister for Planning. He was a very a decent and honourable fellow who put in place the development assessment panels. We are changing them, to a degree. Over our time in office, we have increased and enhanced the transparency of the DAP process, but we are basically reducing the dollar amount to \$2 million and ensuring that if it is a residential project, it is not a single residential project. A project of more than one residence would be eligible to go to a DAP. Just so that the member knows, the DAPs have on them representatives from the local council. When the member says they have no say, it is factually wrong. They have local council representatives on them, but they also have technical advisers who take account of the rules. They do not just listen to the loudest complainer, and that is the difference. I do not know whether the member has been to some local council meetings. I started my career in politics in local council. I know what happens. A few people come along and complain, and lots of councillors go to water over it. We have to have processes that stop that from occurring and stop the stymieing of good projects and developments that create jobs and housing.

We constantly hear from members opposite, as we do from others, that we need more housing in Western Australia. Then we bring in measures to create more housing for Western Australians and they oppose that. You cannot win with these people. They oppose everything. The Liberal Party in this state opposes anything. I do not know what they stand for. We stand for jobs, opportunity, housing, more affordable housing, housing for ordinary people, housing for people who want to downsize in the member's suburb and housing for people who own a house worth whatever in Cottesloe or Nedlands—that is not in the member's suburb; that is the member for Nedlands' suburb. If they want to downsize, we want to provide them with that opportunity. Members opposite want to stop them. We want them to be able to live near their relatives, like in the Blackburne developments in the western suburbs that members opposite opposed. Those developments provide those opportunities for people. I note that the former Leader of the Liberal Party opposed them and then he turned up to the sod turning that I did.

There was extensive consultation with local councils and communities. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning undertook 13 forums around the state involving members of the public. I would like to thank the member for Kingsley. I actually saw her out in various communities listening to and getting feedback from councils and members of the community. I know that the opposition seems to have a visceral hatred of people who invest money, create jobs and do developments. It now seems to be in the Liberal Party's DNA to hate people who create jobs, invest money and create housing, but we want those people to be able to do that by making it affordable and achievable and to cut through red tape to get things done.