

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

**10. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to the dire housing shortages plaguing the state since 2017, with rental vacancies under one per cent, rents increasing by 45 per cent and the state's construction industry facing a crisis, with over 94 builders collapsing. What is the government doing to address this residential housing issue, with WA families unable to find affordable rental accommodation or to build their own home?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Over the last few years, a lot of people came home from overseas. A lot of people did not want to live overseas anymore, so a lot of Australians came back. We were one of only two states that had net migration from interstate over the COVID period. A lot of people from Victoria and New South Wales went to Queensland—to a lesser degree, but still—and Western Australia. Then we took the step of, basically, over the COVID period, closing down interstate FIFO. If people wanted to continue to work in the mining or energy industries, a lot of them had to move to Western Australia. There was a risk to the state. Those three things occurred. Then we had a period early in 2020 when basically new sign-ups for homes stopped completely and all the display villages closed. I do not know whether people remember that, but that is what happened. We then put in place a \$45 000 incentive package with the commonwealth government. It was not means-tested—just build a house.

We now have around 28 000 new builds underway. They have had trouble completing because of the sheer scale of activity going on in Western Australia. People only have to go out there and they will see cranes everywhere. Construction is rife in the suburbs and in the city—whenever we go. People can go to regional towns and see cranes. Construction is on a scale I have never seen before. Those new dwellings will complete over time. That will provide the people who are currently in rentals with the opportunity to move into their new home and it will provide new rental opportunities for other people to move into. On top of that, the state government is acquiring a huge number of new social properties for people. There is investment of over \$2 billion. I think it is the largest per capita. Then we have the \$350 million investment in remote housing around Western Australia. All that activity is underway to deal with this issue that has occurred.

Another thing that occurred over the COVID period is that there were high rates of family separation. When that happens, lots of people look for properties. All these things came together to exacerbate the issue. We are building 3 300 new social dwellings. We have thousands of properties—nearly 30 000—under construction and, hopefully, they will reach conclusion shortly. All those things are happening. But I do not deny that some people are having difficulty acquiring a rental property for the reasons that I just outlined to the member. The good thing is that lots of activity is happening.

I also note this: lots of new projects were often opposed. The opposition to them was from the Liberal Party. The Leader of the Liberal Party's predecessor made a point in his social media and commentary of attacking the Minister for Planning for building new housing. Whenever she tried to get some density—that evil word “density”—or tried to ensure that people could build properties for people to live in who might want to downsize from a bigger block into an apartment, the last Leader of the Liberal Party opposed it. The Leader of the Liberal Party cannot walk both sides of the fence. As Joh Bjelke-Petersen said, if you walk both sides of a barbed wire fence, you are going to get yourself in trouble! The member cannot walk both sides of a barbed wire fence, or, indeed, any fence. She has to decide which one she wants. Is she going to follow the anti-development, anti-activity route of her predecessor or is she going to support us when we are trying to get new investment, new activity and new places to live out there?