

FOREIGN BUYERS SURCHARGE — RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

**970. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Treasurer:**

I refer to the McGowan government's foreign buyers surcharge, which requires foreign property buyers to make a contribution to the infrastructure from which they benefit. How much has been raised by the scheme to date; and is the Treasurer aware of any threats to the scheme that would see the burden fall back on the shoulders of Western Australian households?

**Mr B.S. WYATT replied:**

It is amazing how aware I am of these things, member! People will recall that we took to the election a foreign buyers surcharge, because we on this side of the house think that foreign nationals who buy residential properties in Western Australia should contribute to the infrastructure from which they benefit and which has been paid for by generations of Western Australians. This is not a new policy initiative; of course, all states in the nation have similar policies, and most of them are higher than ours. I note that some states even have an ongoing land tax obligation. We do not have that, but I think we have a fair policy. Until a couple of years ago in the lead-up to the implementation of our policy, between 1.5 and two per cent of buyers in the residential market were foreign buyers, and I am pleased to say that since the implementation of the surcharge, the foreign buyers are about 1.5 per cent, tracking exactly as it had in the lead-up to the implementation of the policy. Through to late October, 424 taxable transactions have taken place, raising around \$12 million, so we are very much on track to raising the sort of revenue that we expected. There has not been the Armageddon or catastrophe that was predicated by the member for Bateman and others on the other side. Indeed, I note that in an ABC interview on 23 October, the member for Bateman predicted that there would be no foreign buyers at all next year. I suspect that by Australia Day, the member for Bateman might be found incorrect. He will be incorrect. No foreign buyers at all is a bold prediction, member for Bateman. I note the contortion that the opposition has gone to to try to oppose a tax cut. It is unusual, I must admit, to see a Liberal Party opposing a tax cut. It is somewhat surreal to see the contortion in which the member for Bateman is arguing that we need to abolish the foreign buyers surcharge.

The Leader of the Opposition, in her radio interview—I found this curious—was asked, “Will you abolish the foreign buyers surcharge?” According to my notes, she said, “Well, that is certainly one of the policies that we are considering.” That does not sound so definitive, member for Bateman. Are we abolishing it or are we not, member for Bateman? Then the Leader of the Opposition goes on to say —

We need to cost it and what we are trying to get from the government is the actual figures.

Members, would it not be wonderful if there were a document that had the figures and the fiscal impacts of policies announced by the government, a document in which we could go and read how much revenue those sorts of things will raise or how much things will cost? It would be a wonderful document—say, something called a budget. Would it not be wonderful if there were something like that that the Leader of the Opposition could go to—rather like StudyPerth, to find out exactly how much StudyPerth has been given? But then again, of course, the complaint from the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Bateman is that foreigners are being unfairly benefited by this, but at the same time they are going to abolish the foreign buyers surcharge. This is the sort of bizarre scenario we find ourselves in with the opposition. It does not know whether it is Arthur or Martha.

I want to conclude with this, because the Minister for Transport described it better than I—often these are train-wreck interviews, Minister for Transport. The question was put to the Leader of the Opposition about the application of the first home buyers grant to existing properties. According to my notes, the Leader of the Opposition, never one to be across the details, said —

Well, that was certainly one of the policies that we had in the last year of our government—was to extend the first home buyers grant to existing properties, not just new builds.

Do you stand by that, Leader of the Opposition? No, I did not think so, because her government abolished that in 2015. If she is going to go on the radio and make claims about the policies of her government, which she seems to forget about, or our government, she has to be across the detail, because, again, she has been found wanting in that radio interview.