

## URBAN DENSITY

### *Statement*

**HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan)** [6.34 pm]: I rise to make some brief remarks about a petition I submitted earlier today. I moved into the City of Swan local government area upon returning from Kalgoorlie. We came back to the metropolitan area for a variety of personal issues, and looked at areas that had the amenities we wanted—schools, green spaces, lower population densities and access to public transport. Over time and in a few short years, I have seen that area completely change. Lots with good-sized backyards that children can explore have become jam-packed developments through developers getting as many houses as possible into new land releases. What I would call traditional residential lots, with gardens and trees, have been replaced by concrete-dense developments and tiny residential blocks stuffed together. This reduces tree canopies, the green footprint and loses public amenity space. In short, it trashes the area.

The truth of the matter is that Australians have been spending much more on housing and receiving a lot less in return. For this we can thank mass immigration, in combination with the deliberate choking of land supply by Australia's state governments, forcing more people to be squeezed into Australia's existing urban footprint. My constituents have had flyers placed in their letterboxes that encourage them to sign petitions, come along to council meetings and rallies, and write to state government members. It seems like no-one is listening to these people.

Recently, a variety of local interest groups held a rally on the steps of Parliament House asking for a plan for community. I attended that event and spoke on behalf of my constituents, including the Save Midland's Green Heart committee that appears to have been bulldozed by the local government. These valued residents are devastated by the way their elected council has failed them. Residents are concerned their views have been ignored because the councillors they speak to are afraid to speak up out of fear of being persecuted by the local government standards panel. People are concerned that the powers vested in the city and shire staff to charge councillors has had a chilling effect on free and open debate by those with differing points of view.

The petition I submitted today supports the community's fears and concerns about the current local government that is destroying our suburbs, the environment and the public amenity and quality of life. If everyday people cannot voice their concerns to an elected official and have those concerns expressed to local government, I would suggest local government is failing.

### *Statement*

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan)** [6.37 pm]: Today we witnessed the tabling of petitions in, I think, identical terms by Hon Peter Collier and Hon Alison Xamon on behalf of a save Subiaco group calling for a general investigation into density targets and raising the issue of the apparent policy of successive governments to create greater density in residential areas, particularly inner suburban areas. At about the time those petitions were being tabled in respect of the Subiaco people, quite coincidentally I received correspondence about the question of density in South Perth. At the same time that is a hot issue in an area where my office is located, centrally in my region, in Applecross. The theme is relatively consistent across the board and it applies in other areas as well; that is, what on earth is being achieved here? Why are developers apparently being given carte blanche to do just about anything that they want to make a fast buck, totally change the demeanour and ambience of long-established residential areas, and then presumably trip off with their profits, leaving behind communities that suddenly find they have to cope with increased density by way of people, traffic and all the other things that go with it, which their suburbs have not been built for? Just next to my office, there is a zoning for what would have been an unheard of building with a maximum of 15 storeys. People are asking why, with a 15-storey or so maximum, according to R-codes or the town planning scheme, are three towers in excess of 30 storeys going up there? Where is the community benefit that gives the development assessment panels and the developers carte blanche to have an extra 15 or 20 storeys? Seriously, is it because a driveway has been added to Kintail Road? I can tell members that the people who live in Kintail Road do not think there is much community benefit in 485 dwellings being built across the road from them when there were two or three previously. That is the sort of thing that changes a suburb fundamentally. We have seen the ripple effect through recent inquiries into the strata titles legislation and other things.

Who is driving this and how far is it going to go? I think our community needs to have a look at what we are trying to achieve here in Perth, and where it is all going to end. Clearly, there is a market for people who want to live in high-rise apartments, but there is also an appetite for people in Perth to value the suburbs that make Perth unique and special. With that in mind, I rise to do a couple of things—firstly, to add the concerns of my constituent in South Perth to the petitioners from Subiaco. I will throw in the good folk of Applecross for good measure. I will be up again to talk about this in due course. I suggest, with respect, to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs that when it reviews the petitions tabled today, it might be a good thing to conduct an inquiry that contemplates the theme I have alluded to today, because it affects everywhere. It is an issue of the day and, at

the moment, the public is very rapidly losing confidence in the planning processes that give rise to these outcomes. I want to make sure that someone is going to be at the wheel as we continue down this path.