

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION, SOCIAL AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Motion

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [10.08 am] — without notice:
I move —

That this house condemns the government for its failure to ensure adequate levels of crisis accommodation and social and public housing.

The wording of this motion before us today was chosen quite deliberately because I fully expect government members to stand and say, “Here is the list of things we have done in the area of addressing crisis accommodation and social and public housing.” Indeed, when this government was first elected, the level of engagement with the sector that helped people needing public housing, social and crisis accommodation was very good, and the government set out a strategy. However, six years into this government’s term, including two years of a second term, it is clear that not enough has been done and there needs to be a real political commitment and drive to address this problem. That is not just the view of the opposition in the WA Parliament; that is the view of Western Australian Council of Social Service, the peak body, and many of the providers dealing with people at the pointy end who end up not being able to find accommodation.

I have been involved in a policy sense for a long time around some of the issues in the social policy area, and homelessness is one of those. I consider that I intellectually understand what leads people to become homeless. I understand the levers that governments are able to pull to adjust the settings to assist people in the various levels of social, community or crisis accommodation. At an intellectual level, I think I understand all of that. I financially support organisations that assist people in need of accommodation and I am engaged, I guess, in policy-making to the extent that I am able to be in this area. However, every now and again, we need to be reminded that there are real people behind these policies, and that happened to me about a month ago. I was walking my dog down by the river in South Perth at about a quarter past six in the morning. My dog is quite big and some might unkindly describe him as having a bit of a boofhead!

Hon Ken Travers: Don’t you talk about Ernie like that!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I never would!

Also, he has very broad shoulders. He is a big dog; he weighs 42 kilograms or something, but he is entirely lovable! Anyway, my point is serious. He was sniffing around this scrubby bush in the park and he was paying a bit more attention to it than seemed normal to me. He was off the lead, so I walked over to see what he was sniffing at. I could not see anything and I moved around the little bush and saw, about six inches away from my foot, the feet of someone who was sleeping under the bush. I pulled Ernie back and said to the person that I was sorry and that he did not need to be frightened because Ernie would not hurt him. What could I do? I asked whether there was anything I could do to help him and he grunted no at me and I walked away. There was really heavy dew on the grass that morning and it would have been a very cold night—this was about a month ago. From what I could observe he had what looked to me like a mattress out of a kid’s cot, a blanket and what looked like a towel—that was it. From what I saw, he was wearing trackie pants and runners on his feet. It did not look to me like he had a heavy coat on or anything like that. I found it really confronting because I wanted to do something about it, but what could I do? I offered the man help, but I did not think I could do anything more. It just gave me a little snapshot. Imagine the terror for that man, because my dog looks a bit scary. Imagine him lying there not knowing whether that dog was about to attack him and not knowing whether I, as the person walking there with the dog, was about to attack him or take what meagre belongings he had. It just made me think how on earth he would get a good night’s sleep, putting aside the question of the weather and the temperature, not knowing at any moment if he was about to be disturbed or attacked or a victim of something because he had nowhere to live. It was a really salient message for me that we think we are doing all we can in this area and we think we intellectually understand it, but, actually looking at it, I cannot imagine anything more uncomfortable and I cannot imagine how anyone could possibly get a moment’s peaceful sleep, not knowing at any time whether someone was going to come and disturb them in this bush in a park near the river near the Causeway. There are human people behind the policies and we need to seriously look at the policies that government is putting in place. I think the government really needs to step up. I will pay credit where credit is due: the government did do some things in the early years of its term that address this issue, but we are now at crisis point, and that is not me saying it—it is WACOSS and all of the organisations.

Members would be aware that Anglicare Western Australia plays a great role in the delivery of services to people who are homeless. One of the really useful things it does, which I think is useful for policymakers, is an annual national snapshot that looks at affordable housing. It is done in about April of every year. Therefore, on Saturday, 5 April 2014 it did its rental affordability snapshot to survey available rental properties. It looked at

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online listings—the cheapest of nearly 4 000 listings on Gumtree and also realestate.com.au. It looked on Gumtree because it is most likely that shared accommodation is listed on Gumtree as opposed to realestate.com.au. Anglicare was looking for and collecting data on someone's capacity, depending on their income, to find accommodation in the private rental market. For the Perth metropolitan area, Anglicare found the following. For single people on Newstart or the youth allowance, there were no properties that were affordable in Perth. No properties were affordable for singles on a disability support pension and only five properties were affordable for singles on an age pension. There was only one affordable property for age pension couples. There were no properties available for families on benefits. Families on a dual minimum wage—this is working families—are marginally better off. There were 175 properties available in Perth. That is slightly up from last year, but it is still drastically down from previous years and it is still not a hell of a lot of properties available in Perth. Singles and single-minimum-wage income families have very limited options. The average rent in Perth was \$535 per week and Anglicare makes the point that it has to be noted that even though the average and median rents in Perth are down from 2013, they have not reduced enough to make properties affordable. It is not enough to say that it is okay, that the market is adjusting itself and that rents are falling. It is clear to Anglicare, and other organisations, in its analysis of its snapshot of April this year, that rental prices have not reduced enough to make properties affordable.

Outside Perth in the south west and the great southern, the availability of suitable private rentals for people on pensions or benefits was very low. For single people on Newstart or the youth allowance, no properties were affordable. Only one property was affordable for singles on the age pension or a disability support pension. For working families on a minimum wage, there were 162 affordable properties for families with two children. Anglicare's snapshot states that although the median rent has gone up in the south of Western Australia, it results in the majority of housing options remaining unaffordable for anyone on a pension or benefit. In the north west, there was not a single suitable private rental property available for families and individuals on benefits or a minimum wage. Although the average rental price in the north west has gone down, it is not a significant enough decrease to make rent affordable to anyone on a low income.

According to Anglicare, there are policy implications that arise from increasing the level of benefits—it is an issue for the federal government and, of course, it is actually making benefits available to fewer people. At a state level, Anglicare's snapshot states —

Increasing the levels of benefits and accelerating investment in social and affordable housing programs should be priorities.

Priority must be given to:

- decreasing the long waiting lists for public housing for low income earners
- the sustainable development of affordable housing
- a recognition that low income earners are socially excluded due to lack of affordable housing

These are not novel solutions. They have been identified and required for years. Now they must be acted upon.

The current rental market in Western Australia is clearly beyond the affordable price range of people on benefits, pensions or a minimum wage.

Members need to understand that this is not just people living on a fixed income. This is working families who are on low incomes. The Anglicare snapshot continues —

The level of income received by people on pensions and benefits is only sufficient to pay for extremely cheap accommodation, which simply does not exist. In particular the benefits paid through Newstart and the Youth Allowance are grossly inadequate.

Anglicare WA is asking for a commitment to significantly increase investment in appropriate public housing stock over the next five years. It says that this is urgently required if we want to make serious inroads into this fundamental social and community issue.

In terms of crisis accommodation, it also makes the point that secure funding is required to maintain support services. The issue is real and the issue is urgent. Despite the action that this government took in the early years after it was elected, it is not enough. The accommodation crisis still exists; in fact, it is getting worse. When I first reported to this house on Anglicare's snapshot, there were houses in Perth and regional Western Australia—a small number—that were affordable for people on fixed incomes and on low wages. That is no longer the case—there are no affordable properties. The situation is getting worse despite the fact that the nature of the market has driven rental prices down.

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 25 September 2014]

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The Western Australian Council of Social Service makes this point in “WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission: For the WA State Budget 2014–15” under the heading “Housing & Homelessness” —

Demand for housing continues to outstrip supply and the cost of housing has risen much faster than incomes for many disadvantaged Western Australians. We urgently need strategies to address the growing gaps at the critical end of our housing continuum to provide pathways to support vulnerable people to achieve sustainable housing outcomes.

Affordable housing has been the major priority of successive Pre-Budget Submissions —

WACOSS is saying that it has sent the message to government year after year after year that this issue is urgent, we are in crisis and we need to do more. The submission continues —

and remains the most frequent and pressing priority in our community consultations. The areas of greatest concern are the availability of social housing, the affordability of private rentals for low income and vulnerable people, growing rates of homelessness and the lack of crisis and transitional accommodation.

WACOSS went on in its pre-budget submission to say —

The need for more crisis and transitional accommodation is an emerging issue in WA. Recent successes with homelessness programs —

It gives credit where credit is due as well —

are being limited in a number of areas by their ability to transition clients to sustainable and affordable longer-term housing.

I visited Swan Valley Regional Initiative for a Strong Economy Inc. It provides a range of services including crisis accommodation. The issue for it, as is the issue for many crisis accommodation service providers, is that it cannot get people out of refuges because there is nowhere sustainable for them to go. It is a blockage. That is not new; that has been around for years.

I could have chosen a form of words in my motion that said “we encourage the government to do more”, but frankly I think we are beyond that. That is why the word “condemns” appears in the motion. The matter is urgent. It keeps being brought to the government’s attention. We need to do more across the spectrum. It is sound policy to have homelessness strategies in place that look at addressing wraparound services—to use the jargon—and the other issues that lead to homelessness, such as mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse. It is important to have those services. It is important to assist people to find employment and all those sorts of services, but we cannot lose sight of the fact that there are still people living under scrubby bush at the park near the Causeway in South Perth. We still need more crisis accommodation beds. I know that the government will say it has X and Y number of beds, but it is not only the Labor Party saying this problem is urgent—everybody who deals with people in crisis are saying this.

In its pre-budget submission, WACOSS went on to say —

The Council is concerned that as the cost of housing has risen and the continuum has been ‘stretched’ larger transitional gaps have opened up—particularly for those looking to transition from homelessness, crisis accommodation or public housing into the private rental market. If these issues aren’t addressed we risk seeing increasing churn between these services and private rental, —

It is talking about people being in a circle—not being able to sustain private rental and ending up back in crisis accommodation. The submission continues —

which is both more resource intensive and delivers poorer life outcomes.

...

There remains an urgent need for increased investment in public and community housing. Despite measures to prioritise those most in need, as of April 2013 there were 21,367 applicants on the WA public housing waitlist with an average wait time of 131 weeks, including 2,845 households on the priority waitlist with an average wait time of 96 weeks.

When it describes “households”, of course that includes children. There are children in Western Australia today who are in urgent need of accommodation but they do not have it. I have said before in this place that despite the ups and downs, Western Australia has a strong economy. There is a lot of money in our community. Revenue is higher than it has ever been for this government, yet it is still the case that there are children, in thousands of households, who are in need of priority accommodation in public housing but cannot get it. Every single day in Western Australia there are children and mums—predominantly mums—who are turned away from crisis

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accommodation when they have had to leave the family home because of family and domestic violence. That happens every single day. There are not enough crisis beds. WACOSS's submission continues —

With changes to income support for single parents seeing an estimated 8,000 families in WA losing between \$60–\$120 per week ... emergency relief services and financial counsellors are reporting rising rates of financial hardship and housing stress among this group, further increasing demand for social housing, crisis and transitional accommodation.

WACOSS makes the point that although that is driven by the federal government —

it is critical for the State Government to be mindful of income capacity issues in designing its own policy and program responses to achieve realistic outcomes.

...

The State Affordable Housing Strategy —

That was a good initiative taken by this government when it was first elected —

identified a number of '... initiatives' to increase the availability of affordable housing in the private market ...

And that is good. It continues —

The Council believes that these areas now need to be treated as major priorities ...

The state government needs to step up and actually implement all those things that are outstanding from that strategy, and do more. I am trying not to be too cynical about the Homeswest announcement that it is reviewing the way it manages the public housing waitlist. The reason I am concerned is that I hope it is not just about making the numbers look better. I hope it is about providing assistance to those who need it the most. This government needs to do more than just manage that list. It needs to do more than just manage the existing pool of money it is allocated to provide social housing. There is an ongoing and real need to increase the level of investment in crisis accommodation, transitional accommodation and social housing. I urge members to seriously get the government to lift its game in respect of the crisis accommodation issue.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [10.28 am]: In representing the Minister for Housing in answering this motion, it was very educational for me to see how much this government has put into social housing. Hon Sue Ellery's non-government business motion states —

That this house condemns the government for its failure to ensure adequate levels of crisis accommodation and social and public housing.

I will talk about those issues broadly. The member spoke about the person found under the tree by her dog sniffing around. Unfortunately, a lot of times I have seen people throughout the state who have fallen on hard times.

The Liberal–National government of course will not vote for this motion, but I will point out a few things that the government does. The Department of Housing is a \$1.7 billion housing operation that pours all its funds into the welfare of Western Australians, helping those most in need with subsidised rentals and bond-assistance loans, while helping thousands of others buy their own home. An amount of \$352 million was budgeted for new works in 2014–15, including \$55 million to turn 200 Department of Housing properties into 500 townhouses and units, because most applicants want a one or two-bedroom home. Twenty-eight new crisis units will be built from 2014 to 2016, on top of the 350 units for the homeless that have opened in the past two years.

Western Australia's population has increased from some 2.2 million people in 2008 to 2.5 million people in 2013, but despite the rapidly rising population, the waiting list has dropped by over 4 000 in the past four years. The department is focused on getting those most in need into its 43 000 highly subsidised social housing homes and helping home renters become homebuyers. The department has helped over 220 public housing renters to either buy their own homes or move into affordable private rentals in the past two years.

The honourable member touched on the affordable housing strategy. In 2011, the Liberal–National government released the "Affordable Housing Strategy 2010–2020: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing". This is an across-government strategy that aims to expand the supply and diversity of affordable housing, and at least 20 000 additional affordable homes will be delivered by 2020. Essentially, this will be achieved through developing private sector partnerships, using our land and housing assets more effectively, increasing the availability of affordable private rentals, and strengthening the community housing sector. Creating viable alternatives to social housing for low-income households is fundamental to the strategy. In doing so, it has reshaped the government's role from just providing public housing as the main solution to working more widely

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across government and the housing industry to increase the range of affordable housing options at all levels of the housing continuum.

It is important and significant for people to be able to afford a home, whether it is their first home, a bigger home for their family or a home for their retirement. We should not have a system that locks people into public housing and does not give them the opportunity of homeownership. The landmark affordable housing strategy is already ahead of schedule, with more than 16 800 of its planned 20 000 housing opportunities delivered for Western Australians. This includes 4 500 new social houses for low-income earners, 2 200 discounted private rental homes and 9 309 Keystart home loans. In concert with introducing the affordable housing strategy, the Liberal–National government has invested over \$600 million in the not-for-profit sector to support those affected by housing shortages.

The state’s appropriations are only one of the sources of funding for the Housing Authority. The state’s capital appropriation reduced by \$109 million in 2014–15 compared with the 2013–14 estimated actual. The reduction is a result of the scheduled completion of funding of \$64 million for the social housing boost program, \$14.4 million for the provision of 169 dwellings for clients of the Disability Services Commission program, \$2 million for domestic violence accommodation and \$3 million for the purchase of land for Government Regional Officers’ Housing properties at Onslow. The asset investment program for new works in 2014–15 amounts to \$352 million and \$1.5 billion over the forward estimates.

It is important to note that the Housing Authority is continuing the affordable housing program, including the SharedStart program and the public housing stock redevelopment program. This combined expenditure totals \$307 million in 2014–15. The land program, which is also funded from operating expenditure, has a separate accounting standard that allows the program to be included in the asset investment program. The \$113 million state equity injection represents 5.5 per cent of the Housing Authority’s funding sources in 2013–14. There are more affordable homeownership opportunities, with a \$55 million loan facility over two years from 2013–14 towards the public housing stock redevelopment program. Under this program, the Housing Authority is redeveloping 200 under-utilised public housing sites to deliver 500 new affordable homes by the end of 2015. Five hundred new affordable homes will be sold through the shared equity program and sold normally. The \$55 million borrowing facility will be repaid in three years and the program will be cost neutral. This will all be done without any loss of public housing.

There is \$3.5 million in state funding to assist those with mental health issues, with an additional 16 dwellings for the Mental Health Commission.

To invest in our regions, the department is helping Aboriginal people in the West Kimberley move out of public housing and towards homeownership. An amount of \$33 million in royalties for regions funding from 2013–14 to 2016–17 will go towards progressing the four-year West Kimberley transitional housing project. Up to 60 new homes—40 in Broome and 20 in Derby—will be delivered to help selected Aboriginal tenants move from public housing to independent housing options. There is \$355 million in royalties for regions funding over seven years for housing for workers. This will provide 608 affordable housing opportunities for 914 key workers in regional Western Australia and will help support vibrant regional communities. Of the \$355 million, \$200.9 million has been approved for eight projects in Karratha, Port Hedland, Onslow, Newman and the Avon Valley.

As we are helping young Aboriginal people in the Pilbara to gain apprenticeships, there is \$16 million in royalties for regions funding over three years from 2012–13 for a partnership to deliver apprentice and trainee employment-related accommodation in South Hedland and Newman as part of the Pilbara Cities program. The authority has partnered with the Department of Regional Development, the federal government, BHP Billiton Ltd and other private companies. In particular, it will provide opportunities for people aged between 16 and 25 years. The 48-bed complex in South Hedland will be opened soon. The supply of affordable rentals will be increased. In conjunction with commonwealth funding, \$30 million in funding will go towards the national rental affordability scheme from 2014–15 to 2015–16.

Through its own source funds, the Housing Authority will progress programs that continue to support the strategy, ensuring that public housing is a pathway, not a destination. The Housing Authority has freed up and reallocated over 1 700 public houses to applicants with higher needs.

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I ask that the minister identify the document that he is quoting from?

Hon KEN BASTON: They are notes given to me for this speech. Because I am not the Minister for Housing, I obviously need notes.

Debate Resumed

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): Order! The minister has the call.

Hon KEN BASTON: I am running out of time. This government has done so much that I am taking up a lot more time than I thought I would.

Hon Sue Ellery: Do you acknowledge that WACOSS says that that is not enough and that we are in crisis? That was the point of my speech. I acknowledged what you have done, but what further are you going to do?

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! The minister has the call.

Hon KEN BASTON: Making homeownership available makes other homes available for people who are in what the honourable member calls crisis care.

We are building the capacity of community housing organisations to enable them to provide more social and affordable housing growth by transferring housing assets and head leasing Housing Authority rental properties to community housing organisations. Currently, community housing organisations have forecast estimated growth of an additional 518 properties by 2019–20. As at 31 August 2014, 151 growth properties have already been delivered. The Housing Authority has transferred \$392 million worth of assets from 2010–11, with an additional \$205 million to be transferred from 2013–14 to 2014–15. Over the past four years, 46 new facilities costing approximately \$24 million have been delivered under this program. Several new crisis accommodation units will be delivered in 2014–15 from the Housing Authority’s internal revenue. The facilities include two transition houses in Ridgewood for women and children escaping domestic violence; six units for families in Calista; a three-unit youth refuge in Rockingham; the rebuild of a refuge in South Fremantle; a new six-bedroom refuge in Armadale; a three-unit youth refuge in South Hedland to replace the existing facilities; the completion of an acute homeless shelter for men; seven units in Broome for the clients of mental health services; and two units in Northam for women and children escaping domestic violence. The units in Ridgewood, Calista and South Fremantle are partly federally funded. In addition, government is spending \$2 million, funded via a grant related to an election commitment, to build six units in Ellenbrook for women and children escaping domestic violence. The crisis accommodation program is not the only way the Housing Authority assists those at risk of homelessness in our community. It provides information to homeless people through its Homeless Advisory Service to assist them to secure their own accommodation and link with crisis accommodation services. People can get a bond assistance loan to help them get into private rental accommodation. People are given information about public and community rental housing and how they can apply for priority assistance.

A number of new housing projects have also been built by the department over the past few years under other programs and partnerships to assist those at risk of homelessness. An additional 350 rooms are available through projects such as Lime Street, St Bartholomew’s in East Perth, the Beacon Salvation Army facility in Northbridge, and Foyer Oxford in partnership with Foundation Housing and Anglicare located on the Central TAFE Institute site in Oxford Street. All these projects are assisting those at risk of homelessness, and spending has totalled approximately \$60 million.

The state government has delivered 15 new respite properties costing \$8 million to provide accommodation for people exiting drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. Across the CAP and these other program areas, the department has delivered approximately 450 additional units of accommodation over the past four years at a cost of some \$107 million. A further 13 properties valued at \$13 million are currently under construction and another 19 units valued at \$8.5 million are yet to commence. The Housing Authority will continue to work closely with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and not-for-profit community organisations and charities to meet the ongoing demand for accommodation for those at risk of homelessness.

Hon Helen Morton: What a fantastic record.

Hon KEN BASTON: It is amazing.

Individual wait times will vary, and there will always be applicants who have waited longer or applicants who have waited a shorter length of time than average. This is because an applicant’s individual wait time is dependent on a number of factors, including the region in which the applicant is seeking housing, the turnover of tenants in an area and the type of housing an applicant is seeking; for example, they might have applied for a one-bedroom unit, but they find they have another family member, which will hold them up. The waitlist for public housing has progressively declined since peaking at 24 136 in 2009–10. As at 31 August 2014, the waitlist had 19 906 applications. There are also income and asset eligibility limits for public housing.

I am running out of time, so I will quickly sum up. Government has constructed over 4 520 new social houses. It has committed to redevelop 200 sites to deliver 500 new affordable homes over three years as part of the public

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housing stock redevelopment strategy announced in the 2013–14 state budget. This will be done with no loss of public housing. Government has provided an additional \$210.9 million over three years for housing and support services for 458 people with high-support needs to live in the community. It has freed up and reallocated over 1 700 public houses to applicants with higher needs. Government is about not only building houses, but also ensuring that those who are in those houses remain eligible for them. Under the National Rental Affordability Scheme, government has completed almost 2 547 homes, with Western Australia's total commitment being 5 403 new homes by 30 June 2016. Through Keystart, government has helped over 9 300 low to moderate-income households that could not otherwise access finance to own their own home. It has contracted over 1 600 entry-level affordable homes in partnership with the private sector, creating over \$1 billion in economic activity for the state. Government has assisted around 800 low-income households to purchase a home through SharedStart shared equity home loans. It continues to exceed targets for people in remote Aboriginal communities, having constructed almost 500 houses and refurbished over 1 000. It has completed 458 dwellings for Government Regional Officers' Housing and employees of non-government organisations. It has delivered two award-winning apartment developments in Perth's southern corridor and commenced construction on two CBD apartment developments in partnership with private sector funders and developers, bringing affordable housing back into the CBD. Government has produced over 7 400 building lots through the Housing Authority and its joint venture partners.

That is an excellent record. I will now listen to the rest of the debate.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [10.44 am]: I commend the Leader of the Opposition on the excellent motion she put forward today. I listened to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and also the minister representing the Minister for Housing. It is very clear that we are coming at this from two different directions. Housing is an area of great need in Western Australia; it is one of the staples of life. This motion points more to what the government is not doing, rather than what it is doing. From time immemorial, governments have provided housing for citizens. It is fair to say that the availability of public housing in Western Australia is going backwards rather than progressing. That is what conservative governments do, and what progressive governments will change when they are elected. It is fair to say that the Liberal–National government has failed the people of Western Australia in this area. I will quote several articles to back this up. These are comments that people have been prepared to put on the record in the public domain. I refer to an article in the *National Indigenous Times* of 18 June 2014 with the headline “Drop the largesse, and build houses for our people instead, declares Marianne Mackay”, which reads —

Western Australia, the nation's wealthiest State ... has the nation's highest homelessness rate and there are more than 20,000 applications on a waiting list for State housing which translates to about 43,000 people.

...

Rights advocate, Marianne Mackay said the majority of homeless people in Western Australia are First Peoples despite First Nations Peoples comprising less than 3 per cent of the State's total population.

That points to an area of great need that members opposite are not doing anything about. I will elaborate on that in some more detail soon. The motion refers to social and public housing as well as crisis accommodation. Public housing in the City of Geraldton, which is in my electorate, has a waiting list of over 18 months. I was able to work with Jonathan when he and his family experienced the unfortunate situation of their house burning down. It was great to work with Jonathan, who is married and has six young children. We worked with Jonathan and his family to find them somewhere else to live. As the local member of Parliament, I contacted the Department of Housing. I was told that the department could do nothing. I had learnt there were unoccupied houses in town awaiting maintenance, but the department was not flexible enough to give Jonathan a go in one of those houses until we found something more appropriate and longer term. I ended up contacting the Department of Housing in Perth and was told down the phone line by the person at the other end something that I will always remember. He said, “We get a sob story every week.” That illustrates the culture that is rife in the public housing area. I do not think it is getting any better. I was able to call in a favour through someone I knew and we eventually found Jonathan housing outside the public housing system; so the outcome was good. However, I could not help but note the lack of flexibility and willingness by the Department of Housing to help someone in genuine need.

I want to talk today about crisis housing in Geraldton. I have a very sad tale to tell about that. I refer to an article in the *Geraldton Guardian* on 4 February 2013, which members will recall was just before the last state election when promises from Liberal and National Party candidates were flying thick and fast. The story is titled “Shane promises Aboriginal hostel”. Shane Van Styn was the National Party's candidate for Geraldton at the time. I refer to him as “the recorder” because of his propensity to record messages and circulate them to media

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without people's consent. The article included a photograph of the candidate for Geraldton with Ross Oakley, the chairman of the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation, which is available to members to look at. Mr Van Styn promised Bundiyarra a 138-room crisis hostel in Geraldton. The article reads —

The Nationals candidate for Geraldton Shane Van Styn says people are shying away from the issue of homelessness among Aborigines.

I agree with him, as that statement points out, the government's failing in its first term, and he is seeking to rectify the situation in the second term. The article continues —

In announcing his party's support to a proposed 138-room hostel on Friday, Mr Van Styn said the project underlined homelessness as a prominent issue in Geraldton.

“What we see is the tendency by the media and people —

Whoever they may be —

to keep dropping the word ‘Aboriginal’, and keep denying there is a problem and keep using the word ‘social’ for fear of offending anybody,” he said.

We heard words to that effect from the Minister for Agriculture and Food. The article continues —

“We're here today to embrace the fact that here's a project that absolutely will benefit the majority of people who will be Aboriginal,” he said.

The article continues in the same vein. Guess what, members? It is another of the government's broken promises, as it is not happening. I asked a question in the Parliament in November last year about this project. The Minister for Housing told me it was a National Party commitment and that the government would not be honouring that. I then asked the question of the Minister for Regional Development who, in a roundabout way, said he would not honour that commitment either. It was a commitment made by a National Party candidate and the National Party is in government, so this commitment should be honoured. It gets worse. In Geraldton, the only crisis accommodation available for Aboriginal people is the Boomerang Hostel, which has 17 beds. I am sure the Acting President (Hon Brian Ellis) is well aware of the good work done at the Boomerang Hostel for those in crisis—families, people fleeing domestic violence. All kinds of clientele go through the Boomerang Hostel in Geraldton. The Boomerang Hostel in Geraldton will close on 31 October due to federal government funding cuts and issues with its management. This government has given the people of Geraldton the hope that its 17-bed crisis accommodation hostel for Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal people I might add, will have an extra 138 beds built for this area of great need. That was acknowledged by the former National Party candidate for Geraldton.

Hon Paul Brown: He wasn't a member of Parliament, he was only a candidate.

Hon DARREN WEST: He made a commitment in this article in the paper —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis): Order, members! One person has the call. I am battling to hear that person and I am sure that Hansard is as well.

Hon DARREN WEST: That candidate made the commitment on behalf of the National Party and the government has failed to honour this commitment—that is a broken promise. It is as simple as that; that is what it is. The National Party is in government, and this commitment should be honoured. There should be no ifs or buts. If a National Party candidate makes a statement such as this in the media and gets their photo taken with the good people of Bundiyarra announcing support and \$10 million for a 138-bed hospital, they really should go ahead and do it. That is what they said they would do. We are losing not only this promise, which has evaporated into thin air, but also the 17 beds that we did have. That is a great failing by the Liberal–National government to the people of Geraldton in crisis hostel accommodation.

Hon Paul Brown interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I look forward to Hon Paul Brown's contribution to this debate.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! That is not the way to behave. If you are going to interject, you do not need to yell over the top of the member who has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: I look forward to Hon Paul Brown's contribution in a short while.

Last week, I met with Mr Ross Oakley, who is a really great man in the midwest. If government members want to know what is required in public housing, they should go and talk to the Department of Housing, but they should not forget to go and have a talk to Mr Ross Oakley. I met with him last week and we are forming a reference group about how to deal with the housing crisis in Geraldton. I look forward to members opposite

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being involved in this group, and will certainly invite all stakeholders to be involved. I heard firsthand about what this will mean for the Geraldton community. I reiterate that there was a promise to do this and the government has not delivered. I think it is time that everyone got serious about crisis, public and affordable housing in Geraldton. I work with many communities in the area, not just those in my electorate of Geraldton, and there certainly is a need for housing. There was false hope given by the Liberal–National government before the last election. It is a pattern that we have seen. I will ensure that that commitment goes on the brokenpromises.org.au website, so people can see it on top of the other 60 promises the Liberal–National government has broken.

Housing availability and affordability is an issue that is constantly raised with me and my office. It is a major impediment to economic development in regional Western Australia. I am sure that it will come up in Hon Mark Lewis' private members' business motion later today. It is certainly an economic impediment—we cannot get workers, students or professionals to the regions if we do not address the housing crisis in regional Western Australia. We are the richest jurisdiction in the world and we are emerging from the biggest boom ever seen in this stat; however, we have families with children who have nowhere to go and there will be nowhere in Geraldton for people to take their kids to get away from crisis situations after 31 October. That is a disgrace. Although I have heard about some of the good things the government has done that are very notable, we are going backwards in public housing availability, especially in the midwest and Geraldton. I will conclude my comments and I look forward to hearing what other members have to say. Make no mistake, this is a very good motion and I think members opposite should listen rather than try to talk over the top of members who care about addressing this very important issue in the regions.

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [10.54 am]: I was not going to say anything about this motion, but as normal we have just heard comments that have nothing to do with people not having housing. It was just a bit of a dig at a National Party candidate in Geraldton. We might as well put that contribution away; it was a waste of 10 minutes. I want to talk about something that I know about—any member on the other side of the chamber can challenge me on this—Aboriginal housing, the lack of housing and the way things operate in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. I can tell members that I know about that because I have spent some time in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. When we talk about people who need housing, we forget that in places such as Warburton, Tjukayirla and Kiwirrkurra, people are provided with homes that let them live in those communities. But when they come to Kalgoorlie–Boulder, they do not have homes so they stay with friends. We have built a short-stay facility that we think will help these people, but these people will go and live elsewhere because they have to pay to live in the short-stay facility. When we talk about the lack of housing, we are talking about people who have come from other communities to Kalgoorlie–Boulder who put pressure on the facilities and services. The facilities and services are for the people who live in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and not people who come from other places. They are there to help. I am talking about people who have houses somewhere else.

I have thought about this issue for a long time. I think something we could do to fix this problem is to have a transport system. It is a logistics issue most of the time: people get to the town whichever way they can, they do not make the best use of their money and then they cannot get home. This is something that all members should think about: there are people in Warburton and Kalgoorlie, with Tjukayirla halfway between the towns, and we should create a small business with the Aboriginal people in those communities. Let us buy a bus and stick it in Warburton. Let us buy a bus and stick it in Kalgoorlie. Let us make a bus stop at Tjukayirla, which is halfway between Warburton and Kalgoorlie. We could say to these people that if they wish to go to Kalgoorlie for medical services or something that they want, the bus will run at certain times. They will do that. If we allow these people the opportunity to access transport to get them where they need to go, they will utilise it. It is like Perth: it is very hard for a person to get home to somewhere in the bush without money or anybody to help them, so they take advantage of the soup kitchen and things such as that. That is the point that we are missing here; we would rather stand in this place and make political points about the things that we think are important. Hon Darren West can shake his head; he has no idea.

Hon Darren West: It was promised.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Forget what we promised! This is the Parliament where we can do things! All that the member can do is sit there because he has no idea. Where do you come from?

The PRESIDENT: Order, members.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: We are here to solve issues, not talk about how good members are and what they have or have not done. The Minister for Agriculture and Food read a list—all that money. I tell members that if I took that money and put it into something a little bit different, we would get a better bang for the buck. We need to listen and work together to get better outcomes, not to just sit here and make political points. Members talk about people who have not got this and have not got that, but we have the facility and the capacity in this place to

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change that. Instead of sitting here and making political points, think of all the things that we could do and have the ability to change. If we turned around and said “Let’s get a bus and create the opportunity for an Aboriginal business —

Hon Kate Doust: Why doesn’t the member do it, he’s in government?

Hon DAVE GRILLS: I am saying this because this is a political thing.

The PRESIDENT: Order.

Several members interjected.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: The member has no idea. That is why the member is in opposition.

We need to sit and say “Let’s do something and let’s support it.”, so that when a member stands in this place and says they want to do or support something, we do not get the guffaw, “What about this? This bloke promised that, and it is a broken promise”, we sit here and say “Yes, what a great idea” because it will help people. The whole point is that it is so simple.

Hon Sue Ellery: If the government promises to help, it should do it.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: I did not promise anything. All I promised to the people who voted for me was to do the best job I could in this place, and that is what I am doing.

Hon Sue Ellery: You’re not doing it.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: How does the Leader of the Opposition know I am not doing it?

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! I just want to bring the temperature down a little. The member on his feet is perfectly entitled to put his points of view without interjections.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Thank you, Mr President. Yes, the member is right; I am passionate about this because I spent a lot of time as a police officer doing things that the member would never ever dream of doing—she would have no idea about doing things like that. The member talks about it as though she knows—what a pious attitude. All I am saying is that we should get out there and do something positive. I will talk to whomever I need to talk to improve this situation. I talk to these people all the time but sometimes they do not listen, and I do my best, which is what I am doing now. I am standing here and saying this because they need to listen and the member needs to listen. It is as simple as that.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: The member should just sit there and do what she is doing on her phone.

The whole point is that we need to do something better. We do not need interjections like that. I challenge whoever’s job this is in government to get a bus and get something going. Let us try something and see whether we can do something about this matter. That is all it is; it is not that hard. Why am I standing here saying this? It does not influence people like members opposite because they never listen—they have never done it. They just sit there and talk about it. They should just listen for once. All we need to do is work together to do something. I do not often get up and talk like this —

Hon Sue Ellery: Good.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Yes, good; she has no idea. I am here because people voted for me, not because of members opposite. I am standing up for those people in the community who voted for me. The Leader of the Opposition has no idea. She should stick to what she knows—nothing. The whole point is that we need to do better, and this government needs to do better.

Point of Order

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not mind vigorous debate. However, I object to the honourable member continually pointing his finger at me and telling me that I do not know what I am doing. A more parliamentary way to express his passionately held views would be appropriate. He should stop pointing his finger at me and telling me that I do not know anything because, on this matter, I actually do.

The PRESIDENT: I think that will be resolved if the member directs his comments through the Chair, and that is precisely why that practice is followed in this house. All members need to direct their comments through the Chair.

Debate Resumed

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Hon DAVE GRILLS: I do apologise for that, but if we are going to have this conversation and members on the other side are going to interject, they should expect to get back what they put forward. If they want to say something, they should stand and say it. If they want to interject, that is fine too. I will put my comments through you, Mr President. I do apologise.

Back to what I was saying; yes, we are the government. Yes, I am a member of this alliance government and I want to change this—I want to do this.

Hon Helen Morton: And the member is very proud of it, too.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: I am proud of being a Western Australian National Party member, and I want to do something so I will talk to people.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, member! Let the member continue his comments without interjection.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: That is the whole point; when a person talks the truth and is passionate, he or she starts to talk a bit of commonsense. People who do not understand interject and carry on. Elvis Presley once said that when a person talks to another person about something that the person does not know about, it is thought that that person is an idiot, which is true. However, I am here to tell members that I have worked in this area and I have been on many committees in Kalgoorlie and Boulder with regard to getting people housed and doing stuff like that, and that is what we came up with. As a police officer, I could not do anything about it because the members of Parliament from both sides with whom I spoke—even my colleagues in the National Party—did not have their ears on. The whole point is that I have to stand here and say this because I am sick of listening to bits and pieces about how they did this, how they did that, and how that is a broken promise. We are not here for that; we are here to provide good governance for the people who elected us into this job.

Hon Kate Doust: That is not happening with this government —

Hon DAVE GRILLS: I do not care whether it is happening. There she goes interjecting again.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let us do without the continuous interjections. If a member wants to interject, make it relevant and pertinent at a certain point in time. A continuous dialogue running alongside a member on his or her feet is not helpful to firstly, getting it recorded, or, secondly, getting the point across.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Once again, I have not been in this place for long. Members on the other side of the chamber have been in this place for a long time, but I do not know why they are still here. Sometimes I shake my head when I hear some of their stuff. That aside, I am talking about my constituents and about an issue in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. I will stand and argue with anybody about it, because I know what I am talking about.

The whole point is to get somebody from the government to listen, which is why I am talking about this, and to say, “Yes, that is not a bad idea; we should maybe look at doing something like that.” In that way we would get the money to spend and we would all spend a lot less time talking about people who do not have places to live. Broome is a classic example at the moment. It has the community and it is tearing down houses because the people who live there legitimately are being overrun by people who come in from other places and take over the place, which then starts to deteriorate from what they do. The consequence of those people moving into Broome and doing that without any regulation or management detracts from those people who want to live in that community and make that community work; so what do they do? They pull down the houses.

I thank all members for listening to my 10-minute speech because I am very passionate about this matter and I do not mind having a say. I thank opposition members because this has just proven that they really do not know what they are talking about.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan) 11.06 am]: I stand to support the motion, which reads —

That this house condemns the government for its failure to ensure adequate levels of crisis accommodation and social and public housing.

When I talk about the government, I mean the Liberal–National government that was elected at the last election. When I talk about government, I talk about all those parts of government, including the National Party part of government that has a responsibility to address this situation that is growing to a crisis level. I thank Hon Sue Ellery for bringing this motion to the house for discussion, and I particularly thank her for reminding us in the introduction to her contribution that this crisis in adequate levels of accommodation, including public and social housing, is actually about people. In addition to our experiences at a personal level, we also experience this issue in our electorate office. The most number of issues raised with my office are about accessing public or affordable housing, or crisis accommodation, which is why Hon Sue Ellery’s example is very important in that it brings us back to what this motion is really all about. This motion is important because right now we are hearing

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a lot in the national press about the role of government in protecting its citizens, in particular around threats of terrorism. However, the role of government, in particular the Liberal–National government, is to protect citizens by ensuring that they have at the very minimum a roof over their head. I also think that the role of government is to achieve a better quality of life for all citizens, particularly those who are vulnerable. I am here to point out to government that more things need to be done about this matter. I take Hon Sue Ellery’s point that the government started off by making a good contribution back in 2009, but I also point out that the state government had the capacity to do that because of the significant contribution made by the federal government, particularly in relation to the national affordable housing strategy and the increase in funding for social housing. But things have gone downhill quite rapidly since that time. There has been a significant increase in the length of time that people have to wait for public and priority housing. I have some statistics from the Department of Housing about those waiting times. I represent the East Metropolitan Region. The problem in looking at those statistics is that the electoral regions do not correspond with the Department of Housing regions. However, the Minister for Housing, in answering one of my questions about the waitlist for public housing, pointed out that the best way to look at it is to take the north metropolitan and the south east metropolitan regions of the Department of Housing. In 2008–09, in the north metropolitan region, the median wait time was 37.75 weeks. In 2013, just last year, the median wait time was 57.14 weeks. That is an increase of 20 weeks from 2008 to 2013 in the waitlist for public housing in the north metropolitan region. Similarly in the south east metropolitan region, the median wait time for priority housing—that is, housing for people who have an urgent need to be housed—was 41 weeks. Last year, the wait time was nearly 48 weeks. That is the current situation, and that is why this motion has been brought to the house. People now have to wait much longer for public housing. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of people on the waitlist for public housing. In the last two years, an average of 1 600 people were on the priority housing waitlist across the north metropolitan and south east metropolitan regions of the Department of Housing. That is the problem. That is the real issue.

In addition, there has been an increase in the number of homeless people. That is despite the fact that there has been a significant contribution to homeless services, particularly by the federal government, over the last few years. The Western Australian Council of Social Service estimates the number of homeless in Western Australia to be 15 000 people. That includes people who are sleeping rough, people who are sleeping on other people’s couches, and people who are sleeping in the open. In addition—this is the third part of the problem—the need for crisis accommodation is increasing dramatically. The number of reported domestic assaults has increased dramatically over the last few years, yet the number of services to support people who report domestic assault has not increased at the same level. Some figures that I pulled out from the Western Australia Police monthly verified crime statistics indicate that over the five years from 2007–08 to 2012–13, in the East Metropolitan Region, there has been a 60 per cent increase in the number of reported domestic assaults—60 per cent over those few years. That is by any measure an incredible increase. I recognise that not all people who report domestic assault look for crisis accommodation. But it is fair to assume that a significant proportion of those people will at some stage be looking for crisis accommodation. To come back to that statistic for the year 2012–13, that equates to about 1 186 reported domestic assaults. That is three reported domestic assaults in the East Metropolitan Region every day of the week. Those are only the assaults that are reported. So it is fairly safe to assume that there is a real need for crisis accommodation. The problem is that the need for crisis accommodation has not been matched by the state government.

In addition to that, the federal government is withdrawing significant housing funding. That includes funding for the national affordable housing strategy, the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which are all under threat and up for review in the next 12 months. It is unlikely, given the commitments of the federal government, that that funding will continue. That means that unless the state government does something, there will continue to be an increase in the need for crisis accommodation.

HON PETER KATSAMBANIS (North Metropolitan) [11.16 am]: It was not initially my intention to rise to speak on this motion, because I think the minister quite adequately dealt with the facts that would point any reasonable member in this place to the conclusion that this motion should not be supported; and I do not support the motion before the house. However, I rise today because I was appalled with the reaction from some people in this place to the contribution of my colleague Hon Dave Grills. The motion before the house essentially says that there is not enough crisis accommodation and social and public housing in this state, and one member of this place took it upon himself to provide an idea from his own experience—his vast experience—in dealing with people in search of crisis accommodation, and offered a solution that might be slightly out of the square and slightly out of the realm of the usual bureaucrats and other people who get involved in this space —

Hon Darren West interjected.

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Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: — and the reaction of the opposition, led by the Leader of the Opposition, was to howl him down and shout him out.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! During the last 10-minute contribution, I do not recall one interjection. I think it is fair that that standard be carried across to the whole of this debate.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Thank you, Mr President.

In his contribution, Hon Dave Grills used the term, if I am not mistaken, that the people that he spoke to about this idea—the bureaucrats, I guess; the people on the ground who put these things together—closed their ears to these sorts of ideas. That is what the opposition was doing today. That demonstrates that there is a group of people who play in various spaces within government and are far more interested in their own place in the sun than in listening to ideas that might just work. Hon Dave Grills was not offering a complete solution to all the problems associated with the difficulty that some people face in finding housing accommodation in this state, or across Australia, for that matter. He was offering a practical solution to a problem that is real, and a practical solution that would go to the heart of not requiring the building of more bricks and mortar in that space but simply would provide a transport route for people who might be stuck in a place in which they do not have any accommodation and that would enable them to get to accommodation somewhere else. It is a solution that would free up some of the short-stay accommodation that has been built around Boulder and Kalgoorlie, and it would ensure that people do not become a nuisance in a place where they cannot find their own accommodation. It is practical, sensible and logical. That is what this place should be about. However, the reaction from the other side was the sort of reaction that condemns us as a profession or as a vocation in the eyes of many members of the public. They see Parliaments—this place, the Assembly and other Parliaments across Australia—as some sort of Peyton Place where people yell and scream at each other for no purpose or good reason. That is what we saw today. I am appalled by that sort of behaviour. It behoves all of us to pull up our socks and understand that we are here to make a difference. I hope people in positions to make a difference in accommodation and in transport listen to people like Hon Dave Grills when they offer these sensible solutions. I hope the responsible ministers in these areas—it crosses portfolios—listen to him and sit down with him to see whether they can pick up and utilise his idea because it would free up some accommodation and, practically, it would do some of the things the Leader of the Opposition referred to in her motion.

I could talk a lot about where I see the failures in the provision of housing, because there are many failures in the provision of housing across this country. I could start with the so-called national rental affordability scheme introduced by the former Labor government, which was meant to be the it-and-a-bit in the solution of low-cost and social housing. We know how successful the NRAS has been! Under that scheme, 50 000 houses were supposed to be built in five or six years. I am not sure how many have been built but it is certainly nowhere near 50 000. Governments of all persuasions have tried a lot of things to deal with crisis accommodation and social and public housing. A lot have been successful. The minister outlined some of the successes today. I have not heard the opposition come in here and congratulate the government on its successes.

Hon Sue Ellery: I did.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: If she did, it was rather mealy mouthed. That is okay; I am happy to put on the record that Hon Sue Ellery congratulated the government —

Hon Sue Ellery: Good. I said it about three times.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: — for helping to provide more crisis accommodation and more social and public housing. I am happy to put that on the record, and I point out that that is not what this motion says. It does not say that at all, which proves once more that this opposition is not about good outcomes; it is about base politics when it comes into this place and yells and screams at the government.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Who is doing the yelling?

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Opposition members yelled and screamed at the government for no good reason. If the Leader of the Opposition has congratulated the government for what it has achieved, perhaps she could have put up a motion that says, “I congratulate the government on its achievements so far and call on it to do (a), (b) and (c)” — as a self-professed practical expert in this space, whatever she thinks might be needed — and put on the record a few points about how the government could do even better than it is doing already. Instead, we get a tawdry exercise of a cobbled-together motion and members opposite yelling and screaming at the government. When one member of this house comes up with a practical idea, a different idea, but one that could actually contribute and could work in this space, he gets howled down.

I do not want to take up any more time because I know that other members want to speak on this motion. I am appalled at the treatment of my colleague and friend Hon Dave Grills. I hope that those people who are in

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positions of decision-making in this space heard what he had to say and will attempt to work with him to implement that solution. I hope that in the future, opposition members will come up with some bright ideas of their own, rather than coming up with a motion of condemnation, when their lead spokesperson and Leader of the Opposition in this house tells me now that they have congratulated the government for what it is doing. I, too, congratulate the government for what it is doing. I know a lot more needs to be done, but I do not support the motion before the house.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [11.24 am]: I rise to support the motion and I have to say that I am not as generous as Hon Sue Ellery in congratulating the government because the investment we have seen to tackle homelessness over the last six years has been the result of \$6.2 billion of former federal Labor government funding that has been invested into tackling the problem. Very little state government funding has gone into addressing the problem over that period. If we want to acknowledge that there has been a concerted effort in recent years, we need to acknowledge the contributors to that concerted effort, and that was the former federal Labor government's commitment to address homelessness with a \$6.2 billion funding commitment in this area.

In WA in recent years we have seen failure of the income growth of low and moderate income earners to keep pace with the rise in rent costs. As a result, these people have no longer been able to rely on the private rental sector for their long-term housing accommodation. As a result, they now have to turn to public and social housing options and are therefore putting a huge amount of pressure on public and social housing and crisis accommodation. The magnitude of that disconnect is that over about 10 years, the rental market has increased more than four times the growth in low incomes. That is a significantly disproportionate outcome that is placing huge financial stresses on families and leading more people into homelessness. In the last six years, the government has failed to do anything at all to address this significant cause of homelessness. The minister in his address—I have only a few minutes, so I have to keep this very short—talked a lot about the affordable housing strategy and how a number of properties have been transferred into the social housing sector and into affordable housing. All that is well and good, but it ignores the fact that these properties have been removed from the public housing pool. Although there may be some more social housing, it has been taken out of public housing and that is why the waiting lists continue to balloon, in addition to the other problem I mentioned earlier.

The main issue I want to draw members' attention to is the current federal Liberal government's welfare reform strategy, which proposes with its earn-or-learn policy that if people under the age of 30 are not earning an income or studying, they will not receive any income for six months of the year. As a result, all those people who now rely on social housing will not be able to get social housing because they need to earn an income to access social housing. Social housing providers rely on 20 per cent of a person's pension or benefit, in addition to commonwealth rent assistance, to maintain those properties and to enable them to put more money into building that social housing pool. As a result of this really bad policy, there will be a significantly higher amount of homelessness in this state, and the state government is doing nothing to address the problem looming before us. I wish I had more time to pursue this issue.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.