

SMALL BUSINESS — HOUSING INDUSTRY

299. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Small Business:

I refer to the tens of thousands of small business owners in the housing and construction industry who are struggling, including mortgage brokers, sales representatives, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers and carpenters. Can the minister please explain to the house which of the following policies the government has put in place to support the housing industry: is it the removal of the boost to the first home owner grant, the new foreign buyers surcharge or the 40 per cent increase to electricity prices for 20 000 small businesses?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her repetitive question. I repeat: the thing we will not be doing, so that we help small businesses across the state, particularly in the construction sector, is to put up land tax three times in a row. That is your record!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the record of the man sitting in the front row there. The Leader of the Opposition was responsible for three repeated increases in land tax, which smashed the construction industry and small businesses across the state. Those costs were all passed on by landlords to small businesses in just about every field of endeavour.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is extraordinary that the member has the gall to stand in this place and talk about small business. It is ridiculous! We are doing things for small business. There is a lot going on. Yesterday, I referred to the biggest amendment to the liquor act since the last time the Labor Party was in office and did the biggest amendment to the liquor act, which enabled small bars. We did that last time. Thousands of small businesses across the state are benefiting from that change. We are about to address the bane of subcontractors across Western Australia, particularly in the field of government contracts. We have created the subcontractor support unit. We will be empowering the Small Business Commissioner to enforce payments to subcontractors in government contracts—I look forward to the support from you on that one! The Minister for Commerce informed me only about an hour ago that he is working flat out on legislation to enable cascading trusts to protect subcontractors right across the state. We are doing more than you ever dreamt of doing. What we will not be doing is to put up land tax three times.