

CITY OF PERTH — REVITALISATION

Grievance

MS E. EVANGEL (Perth) [9.27 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The minister and all members of this chamber would be aware that under the stewardship of this Liberal–National government, Perth has transitioned into a vibrant, progressive international city. As the member for Perth, I am pleased to say that my electorate has been at the epicentre of this transformation. I was pleased to read the following review in the *New York Times* in late February, which states —

Conjure up a city embodying all things right about cities. Assuming you lean toward the progressive, I'll wager your rendering includes the following: multiple parks and waterfronts; spotless subways and free public buses; restaurant menus with organic, locally sourced food and wine; cool bars in heritage buildings; and pop-up everything, from farmers' markets to cinema and yoga.

Welcome to Perth.

The opening of Perth Arena has revitalised the western end of the CBD. The Perth Cultural Centre Precinct was once a dark and dangerous part of the city. After significant investment by this government, through the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Culture and the Arts, it is now the home of our festival season from January to February. Thousands of Western Australians now visit the cultural centre and it has changed the whole dynamic and atmosphere of Northbridge. It is worth noting the comments of WA Police inspector Craig Parkin, the officer in charge at Perth Police Station, who said that he did not allocate any extra resources to deal with the many thousands attending the cultural centre during the festival season, and that police officers did not have to attend a single incident stemming from either the Fringe World Festival or the Perth International Arts Festival.

Soon my electorate will also become home to the new Museum, which will be located in the cultural centre, and to Elizabeth Quay, Perth City Link and the Riverside project. When Elizabeth Quay is finished, it will provide more than 800 residential dwellings, 400 hotel rooms and 225 000 square metres of commercial and retail space, attracting more than \$2 billion of private sector investment into the state. I remind members that the public realm of Elizabeth Quay will be open towards the end of next year. When the Perth City Link project is completed, it will attract more than \$4 billion of investment, house up to 3 000 new residents in 1 650 new homes and up to 13 500 new workers in 244 000 square metres of new commercial space. The Riverside project will transform the eastern gateway to the city. It will deliver 4 000 new dwellings for 7 000 new residents, provide 90 000 square metres of retail and commercial space for 6 000 new workers and is expected to attract more than \$2 billion in private investment. These are the most significant developments in the state's capital since Federation. These developments will reinforce Perth's transformation from a city where people simply go to work, to a city where people live and visit as an entertainment destination in itself.

I welcome these developments and I am excited by the idea of our capital city growing to its potential. However, it is important that this growth is matched by an expansion of government services. I am aware of the commitment of the Minister for Emergency Services to ensuring the adequate provision of these services for our rapidly growing inner-city residential population, workforce and visitors. I understand that the state government is meeting the demand for some of these services with the expansion of the Perth train station and improvements to streets to improve traffic flow.

I can assure the minister that the completion of the Perth Police Centre in Northbridge has brought a welcome and reassuring boost to the local police presence; however, another critical element is emergency services. I had the pleasure of visiting Perth Fire Station on Wellington Street, East Perth last Monday and it is a fantastic facility. I would like to thank the Perth district officers, Mr Jon Broomhall and Mr Darren Martin, for taking time out of their busy schedules to take me on a tour of the station. I must admit I was impressed with the level of expertise, the quality of equipment and the training techniques demonstrated while I was there. It is very obvious to me that our firefighters are a dedicated team of people who are committed to optimising their abilities and techniques, ensuring best practice and service delivery.

While I was at the station the emergency alarm rang a number of times, and within seconds the teams were off to tend to the emergencies. The teams do an amazing job; however, I must admit that it became apparent to me that as Perth's growth continues, the current facilities will become increasingly overstretched. As well, I am concerned that with resources already stretched and at capacity, Perth Fire Station will be struggling to service the growing inner city demands. It is already servicing a large area that, along with the central business district, includes suburbs as far north as Maylands and Mt Lawley. Again, I congratulate the incredible work ethic and commitment of the team of firefighters at Perth Fire Station. They are all heroes in their own right, they do an incredible job and we all appreciate their efforts.

It is imperative that constituents in my electorate, whether they live on the eastern, western or northern side, continue to feel assured that we have adequate emergency services resources, including human resources, able to protect my community and promptly attend to emergencies. The concern I have is that in this rapidly growing city environment, Perth's emergency services must be able to cope and grow with the expansion of the city so that my electorate does not suffer any decline in service. I respectfully call on the Minister for Emergency Services to have the government urgently investigate the requirement for an increase in emergency services in the Perth area so as to adequately service the growing needs of my electorate.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [9.33 am]: I thank the member for Perth for her grievance. She raised some very interesting points. I start by saying that it is wonderful that the member visited Perth Fire Station in her electorate. I am not sure how many other members of Parliament visit their fire stations. I know that the member for Bateman has visited the fire station in Murdoch, which was formerly in my electorate. I know that some members go and visit fire stations and, without any slight on members, I encourage all members to visit fire stations in their electorates. I always find it very interesting—I think everyone else would as well—listening to their stories, including very recent events and the emergency services' responses. The member is right; they do an awesome job and a very, very tough job. Sometimes they can just sit around the fire station doing administration work waiting for the bell to ring, but when it does ring, when the alarm goes off, seconds are critical.

The member for Perth raised some interesting points about the expansion of the central business district. Obviously, a number of projects in many areas of the CBD will put increasing pressure on resources. There is the Elizabeth Quay project where we will see the first stages opening in about a year. Obviously, there is the Perth City Link and other significant developments and, as I understand, there will be 5 700 new dwellings over the next 10 years just in East Perth. There will be 1 000 new dwellings a year across the whole CBD area. We are seeing a massive dynamic change in the number of people moving to the CBD, which is not like any other part of the Perth metropolitan area. Unlike my electorate, there are high-rise dwellings, a high density of accommodation, narrower streets to a large degree, and an awful lot more traffic. No matter what people may say, there is no silver bullet to solving traffic problems in the CBD; it is just a part of life that we have to tolerate.

Many new, exciting projects are happening in the member's electorate and anyone would be proud to be the member for Perth and watch these things unfold. As I said, as more people move into the CBD, demands on resources delivered by government increase. This includes emergency services. There has only ever been the one fire station to service the people of Perth. Last year, the crew of Perth Fire Station responded to over 1 200 callouts, which equates to about five incidents a day. The demand on that fire station has increased by about five per cent a year. This reflects the increase in population in the new dynamic CBD, which the member knows well. To put that into perspective, Belmont Fire Station, which is a full-time career fire station and one of the busier metropolitan stations that services a fairly large industrial area as well as residential areas that sit along Great Eastern Highway from Ascot and towards Welshpool, averaged about 1 050 callouts last year. That is a little less than the CBD. Essentially, changes in demographics means that we are seeing changes in demands for resources. When required, Perth Fire Station will go into other areas outside its normal callout area. If it was required to send fire trucks to Belmont, for example, it would do so. That could be at the detriment of the western side of the CBD.

Along with the increase in demand, obviously there is a limit on the resources that the government can put into emergency services. The budget for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is about \$320 million, of which 80 per cent is funded by the emergency services levy. As far as my personal view of levies and taxes goes, I think this is one of the more transparent and fairer ones out there. People know exactly where their money goes. Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Gregson runs a pretty tight ship and I do not think anyone could accuse the Department of Fire and Emergency Services of being wasteful with taxpayers' money. It provides a great service to the community, but it has a limited pool of funds.

I say to the member for Perth that I very well realise the change in demographics, the increase in demand and requirements for services in much of the new development on the western side of her electorate. I cannot make any promises about what the future holds. I can tell the member for Perth that she raised a very good point and if we look into the future, as any good government department should with forward planning and forward estimates of growth, we should do everything we can to ensure that resources are delivered where demands are going to occur. I will take up with the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner everything the member has said today; I will raise these issues with him. Certainly, the member makes a very good argument for increasing the resources of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in her electorate. We can all see that it is growing. We can all see that it will have to happen in some form or another. I will keep her well and truly informed of how those negotiations and that conversation progresses in the future.