

PLANNING — TOWN OF EAST FREMANTLE

Statement

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [5.12 pm]: The house should not rise for the break until I acquaint it with the following concern that has been expressed to me by both residents and representatives of the Town of East Fremantle. Several scheme amendments are currently being put up for consideration by the WA Planning Commission, and I am concerned that it appears that the work that has been done by the East Fremantle council, the community and others who are stakeholders in respect of these specific proposed amendments are being given short shrift. I will be raising in the house on another occasion the detail of these concerns. My purpose in standing now is to address the Leader of the House, as the leading minister in the government, to indicate my concerns about these matters, and hope that we can have some constructive engagement with the Western Australian government to resolve some of these matters.

When local governments in my region, or indeed in any region, approach these processes in good faith, at great length and at no small amount of expense, I think it is reasonable that they should be taken seriously and given a fair go. I hope that the government will listen to the matter I am raising, and perhaps we can pursue it to the mutual benefit of all concerned outside the chamber in the near future. That is a matter I will leave in the first instance with the government.

The second matter is a related matter that I also raise in the presence of the Leader of the House, I think in her capacity of representing the Minister Local Government; Heritage; Culture and the Arts. Although the matter that I have already raised is very much about local government interests, the next issue is about a heritage matter. The Royal George Hotel in East Fremantle has closed, as the minister would be well aware. I think it was 1978 when I last had a beer in those particular premises, but I am looking forward to doing so again, as are many members of the community. However, the Royal George Hotel currently stands empty. I would hesitate to call it derelict; I think it is in pretty good condition and it is ripe for refurbishment and preservation as part of our heritage estate. So it concerns me greatly that according to advice given to me, it appears that the state government and the Heritage Council are not particularly interested in anything happening with the Royal George Hotel site. This is an important issue. Its future relies in part on one of the scheme amendments I referred to just now that has been frustrated by the Western Australian Planning Commission, and that is not good enough. We have a real gem, a real asset to the community, and something needs to be done.

If I just advise members in these terms, perhaps my remarks now will attain a greater currency. We all remember the saga of the Guildford Hotel, another heritage pub, which in past times I might have had a beer at as well, and I am looking forward to going out there at the invitation of East Metropolitan Region members and having another one in due course. The Guildford Hotel is a very strong parallel to the Royal George. The Guildford Hotel sat derelict after a fire, members might recall, but in due course, and with some good work by a lot of people, the Guildford Hotel is now back better than ever. It has been refurbished. It is beautiful. It is functional. I understand that it is doing an absolutely roaring trade and it is self-sustaining. Do you know what? There is still no sign of the five or six-storey new building that was meant to be built out the back to raise the capital to pay for the refurbishment. It does not seem to be needed. The Royal George is in as good, if not better, a position to be refurbished and redeveloped. It was sold recently by the state to a private interest for \$570 000. If a few of us had known they were flogging the Royal George pub for \$570 000, plus tax, I think I could have got a syndicate together pretty quickly just from my colleagues here. In fact, it might have been a syndicate of one! But that is another story. The community would welcome it.

To bring all of this together, the East Fremantle town community is very sensitive to new development; it is very sensitive to redevelopment and it is very sensitive to higher density development. Have a look at what is happening now in East Fremantle. Members will see a very civilised form of higher density development happening not only in the town centre, but also elsewhere, and of course there is the old Leeuwin Barracks site on the horizon as well. The Town of East Fremantle council, through its mayor, Jim O'Neill; its CEO, Gary Tuffin; and all the team—councillors and indeed ratepayers—is doing a great job to be proactive in these matters. Yet they are being frustrated; they are not receiving the support that is required to get certain entities that are within the control of government to come to the party. I think that is a pity. That is why I raise this now, to seek to engage with the government. I hope that it will be able to respond and perhaps we can proceed with these matters outside of the house.