

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 2) I refer to Question Number 27b asked prior to hearing regarding the number of people experiencing homelessness, and I ask:
- a) Has the Department considered undertaking its own survey/research? Or funding an organisation to undertake this, as it is obviously a growing problem; and
 - b) Why or why not?

Answer

(a)-(b)

The Department of Communities uses a range of data sources to understand homelessness across Western Australia including from the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia to undertake research to inform development of *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*.

The resulting report, *Homelessness in Western Australia: A Review of the Research and Statistical Evidence* was published in 2018.

Results of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing will provide a rigorous estimation of homelessness in Western Australia. It is anticipated that this data will be released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in early to mid-2023.

As noted in the previous response, capturing accurate data on the number, location and demographics of people experiencing homelessness is difficult due to the hidden and highly transient nature of the homeless population. No one single data source is reliable in its own right and therefore must be interpreted with caution. This remains the case across nearly all jurisdictions.

Minister's initials



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 4) I refer to Question Number 21c asked prior to hearing regarding the Regional Modular Build Program. The table provided does not make sense in the context of part a). Part a) says 35 total properties, but part c) says 35 are under contract and 3 have been delivered – totalling 38 properties. Which is it?
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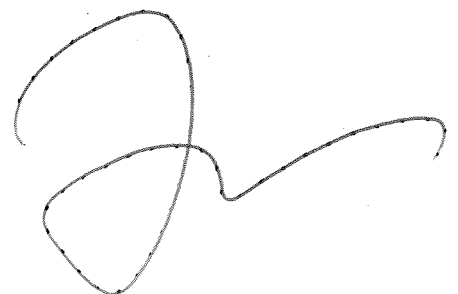
Answer

The Department of Communities has identified an error in the response to the Member's question prior to the hearing.

The response should read:

'23(a): As of 30 April 2022, a total of 35 modular dwellings have been contracted in the regions, in addition to three that have been completed.'

The total is the higher number of 38.

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Department of Communities

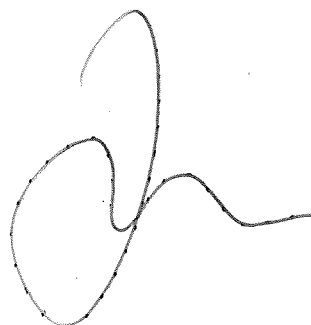
Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 5) I refer to Question Number 21a asked prior to hearing regarding the Regional Modular Build Program, and I ask:
- a) In which towns are these properties located;
 - b) Are they currently tenanted; and
 - c) How many people are currently living in these homes?

Answer

Assuming the question is referring to Question Prior 23(a);

- a) Kalgoorlie and South Hedland.
- b) Of the three completed dwellings, two are currently tenanted.
- c) There are 12 people living across the two tenanted dwellings

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 6) I refer to Question Number 21 asked prior to hearing regarding GROH – Builds, and I ask:
- a) How many properties are expected to be built or purchased up to 2025;
 - b) Will the Department please table the locations where a GROH property has been requested; and
 - c) As the GROH Program is managed by the Department, as explained in d), the Department should be able to advise how many, and which, departments currently have employees living in GROH properties, as well as how many people are waiting on properties. I ask the Department to table this information.

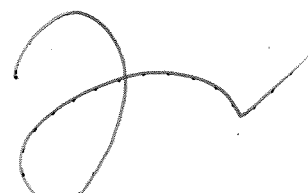
Answer

- a) On average, the investment in Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) will add approximately 40 properties to the portfolio per year via either construction or spot purchase.
- b) As at 30 June 2022, Client Agencies have requested additional GROH Properties in 91 locations:

Albany, Badgingarra, Bidadanga (La Grange), Boddington, Bremer Bay, Bridgetown, Broome, Bruce Rock, Bunbury, Burringurrah, Busselton, Cape Arid, Cape Le Grand, Capel, Carnamah, Carnarvon, Collie, Coolgardie, Coral Bay, Corrigin, Cundern, Dampier, Dandaragan, Dawul (Doon Doon or Woolah), Denham, Denmark, Derby, Dongara, Donnybrook, Dunsborough, Esperance, Exmouth, Fitzroy Crossing, Gascoyne Junction, Geraldton, Gingin, Halls Creek, Harvey, Hopetoun, Jurien Bay, Kalbarri, Kalgoorlie, Kambalda, Karijini, Karratha, Katanning, Koorda, Kukerin, Kulin, Kununurra, Laverton, Leonora, Looma, Manjimup, Margaret River, Meekatharra, Merredin, Mount Barker, Mount Magnet, Munglinup, Nannup, Narrogin, Newman, Norseman, Northam, One Arm Point (Ardyaloon), Paraburdoo, Pemberton, Perenjori, Pingrup, Port Hedland, Roebourne, South Hedland, Southern Cross, Stirling Range National Park, Stokes National Park, Tjuntjuntjara, Tom Price, Toodyay, Trayning, Wagin, Warakurna, Warburton, Waroona, Wickham, Williams, Wongan Hills, Woodaniling, Wyndham, Yarloop, Yulga Jinna.

It is important to note that requests for additional GROH properties does not necessarily reflect the current demand of client agencies. Client agencies will often request GROH properties in planning for long term need and operational requirements.

- c) As at 30 June 2022, there are 5,023 properties in the portfolio with 4,798 properties allocated to Client Agencies with a head lease.



Of the 4,798 properties, a total of 4,300 were occupied at the reporting date. A degree of vacancy is expected as Client Agencies must have vacant properties while they recruit to positions. The Department of Communities monitors allocated properties for vacancies longer than six months.

Communities does not maintain a waitlist for people (i.e. individual employees of client agencies) waiting to be allocated to a Government Regional Officer Housing property.

Agency	Allocated GROH Properties
Broome Hospital	3
Central Regional TAFE	24
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions	74
Communities - Child Protection	242
Communities - Disability Services	2
Communities - Housing	97
Department of Education	2,156
Department of Finance	13
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	48
Department of Justice - Corrective Services	440
Department of Justice - Court and Tribunal Services	40
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries	3
Department of Mines and Petroleum	13
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage	4
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development	90
Department of Transport	8
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	7
Derby Hospital	6
Forest Products Commission	2
Gascoyne Development Commission	1
Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission	1
Halls Creek Hospital	11
Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Services	5
Kimberley Population Health Unit	15
Legal Aid Commission	16
Northern Regional TAFE	127
PathWest	23
Perth Dental Health Services	21
Pilbara Development Commission	1
South Regional TAFE	1
WA Country Health Services - Midwest	13
WA Country Health Services - Pilbara	10
WA Country Health Services - Wheatbelt	10
WA Police Force	1,228
WACHS - Great Southern	4
Water Corporation	39
Grand Total	4,798



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ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

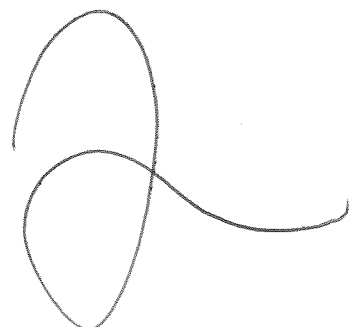
Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 7) I refer to Question Number 20d asked prior to hearing regarding GROH - Government Ownership. The answer provided does not answer the question. I ask, considering the Agency Portal, how many people, to the latest date available, are currently waiting on being allocated to a GROH property?

Answer

- 7) The Department of Communities does not maintain a waitlist of people (i.e.; individual employees of client agencies) waiting to be allocated to a Government Regional Officer Housing property.
- Client agencies request GROH properties to manage their own regional accommodation requirements. Agencies will often request GROH properties in planning for long term need and operational requirements. This may include requests for housing while client agencies are conducting recruitment, prior to employee commencement.
- It is not a waitlist of individual people in the same manner as the public housing waitlist.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

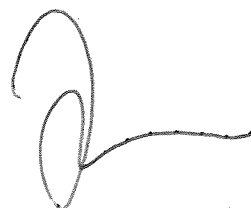
- 10) I refer to Question Number 14 asked prior to hearing regarding spot purchasing in regional WA. The answer provided does not answer the question. I ask:
- a) How many more dwellings does the Department expect to acquire in 2022-23;
 - b) Does the Department have a goal or a limit of the number of dwellings; and
 - c) In which regions is the Department planning to purchase these dwellings?

Answer

- a-c) Whilst prices and the size of dwellings will vary, an initial target of 124 dwellings has been set.

Spot purchasing in the 2021/22 financial year exceeded initial delivery expectations and provided value for money housing options given the current challenges in the construction market as well as general market volatility

The Department of Communities is consistently assessing properties across all regions that may be suitable for spot purchase. However, spot purchasing is not suitable for all housing markets. The Department must consider the suitability of available housing stock to purchase including value for money, the cost of required refurbishments, the age of housing stock and the availability of stock in smaller towns and remote locations.



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

- 12) I refer to Question Number 10 asked prior to hearing regarding public housing sell-offs and I ask:
- a) Why were the other 5 mentioned in a) sold off; and
 - b) Will the Department expand more on the process for public housing tenants to purchase these homes?

Answer

- a) The other five homes were sold on the open market, with the funds reinvested back into spot purchasing more social houses. Houses are sold when it is uneconomical to return them to service. For example a \$35,000 property requiring \$150,000 in refurbishments to be deemed suitable is not viable.
- b) The Department of Communities offers the Rental Sales Scheme which is open to eligible Communities' tenants who are interested in purchasing their rental property. To be eligible for the scheme tenants must have:
 - A minimum period of three years continuous tenancy with Communities.
 - No interest in any lot of residential land (improved or unimproved).
 - No current arrears or other debts to Communities (including water consumption debts) at the time of application and settlement.

Public information regarding scheme can be found on the Department of Communities website for interested tenants.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

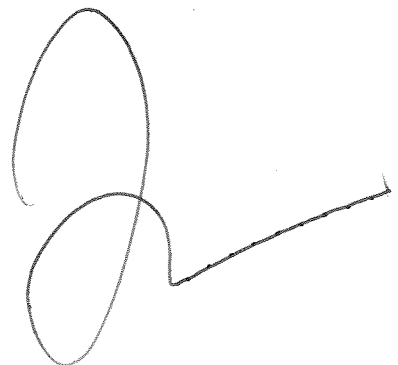
Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

14)

- (a) I refer to Question Number 6 asked prior to hearing regarding the Digital Capability Fund, and I ask: (a) Is this the system the Department uses to monitor maintenance requests from tenants;
- (b) Has the Department seen an increase in the number of tenants requesting maintenance to their homes; and
- (c) If so, why is this?

Answer

- a) No.
- b-c) In the 2021/22 financial year, a statistically insignificant increase of 0.3% of work orders was observed compared to 2020/21. However, both years are a decrease compared to 2019/20.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

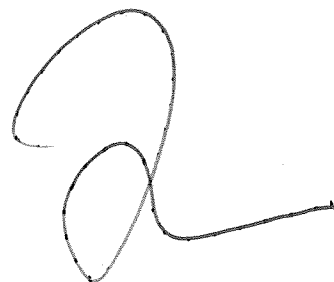
Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:

17) I refer to Budget Paper 2, Volume 2, Page 536, 'Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation - Geraldton' and ask:

- a) What has the estimated expenditure to 30 June (\$349,000) been spent on so far;
- b) In light of these delays, will any expected costs from the 21-22BY be carried over to 22-23;
- c) Will there be any increase in costs in light of these delays; and
- d) When can the people of Geraldton expect to have a completed facility?

ANSWER

- a) Regional stakeholder engagement and research to inform the needs analysis and business case for the Short Stay project, as well as architectural and other services associated with building design development.
- b) Yes, costs will be reflowed to forward estimates, and project budget will be retained.
- c) Project costs are yet to be finalised.
- d) The Geraldton Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation is still scheduled to commence service delivery in late 2024.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

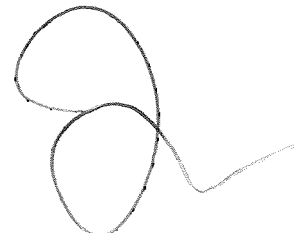
3) I refer to page 520 of Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, point 2.1 and the \$11.3 million for emergency self-isolation accommodation, and I ask:

- a) How many individuals have been supported through this scheme;
- b) Of these individuals supported how many identify as homeless; and
- c) How many individuals were released from emergency self-isolation accommodation back into homelessness and why wasn't this used as an opportunity to support them into crisis or transitional accommodation?

Answer

- a) Between 1 July 2021 and 7 July 2022, the Department of Communities has supported 2,386 individuals into emergency self-isolation accommodation.
- b) Communities provides self-isolation accommodation for people who do not have suitable accommodation to self-isolate under the parameters established by the WA Department of Health. Communities does not capture information relating to the support provided to individuals who may identify as homeless.
- c) Communities' emergency welfare functions are prescribed in the *State Emergency Management Act (2005)* and include the provision of emergency accommodation. Self-isolation accommodation for COVID-19 is provided for 7-10 days or as directed by WA Health as the Hazard Management Agency.

While in self-isolation accommodation, and upon exit, individuals are assisted to remain connected with their existing support services and to connect to additional support services according to their needs.



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

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Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

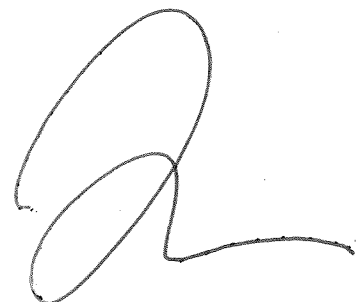
4) I refer to page 527 of Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators. In response to a 'question prior' regarding whether the government has any plans to publish a Public Housing performance dashboard including information on the public housing waitlist length, average waitlist time by region, net increase or decrease in housing stock, the Department responded: "No". I ask:

(a) What are the Department's reasons for not publishing this data on a performance dashboard, given that it used to do so up until 2018 and other states, such as Tasmania, publish a dashboard for regular accountability; and

(b) Is this data made publicly available elsewhere, and if so where and how often?

Answer

a-b) Performance on public housing is reported in the Annual Report and there is currently no intention to amend the reporting framework. In addition, waitlist times by region are routinely made publicly available.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

6) I refer to page 527, Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators. In a response given to a 'question prior' from the Hon Steve Martin MLC about the housing waitlist, the Department stated: "Most applicants have a roof over their head while they wait to be housed." I ask:

- a) How many of the applicants on the public housing waitlist and priority waitlist, respectively, don't have a roof over their head while they wait to be housed;
- b) How is the state government ensuring there is enough crisis, transitional and emergency accommodation for the those without a roof on the waitlist, while they wait the targeted average time of 115 weeks and sometimes longer; and
- c) What contact and support does the Department provide to people on the housing waitlist without accommodation, particularly given the lack of available crisis, transitional and emergency accommodation due to services often operating at capacity?

Answer

- a) As at 30 June 2022, there were 19,070 applications in the Public Housing Wait List, of these 2,289 (12 per cent) applications are classified as applicants who are 'Homeless'.

'Homelessness' is categorised as follows:


- Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation.
- Secondary homelessness: people living in and/or moving between various forms of temporary shelter.
- Tertiary homelessness: people who live in boarding houses.
- Multiple Homeless: where the priority need includes Primary, Secondary or Tertiary 'Homelessness' category and other (i.e. Homelessness and Medical).

Even people classed as homeless may have a roof over their head while awaiting permanent accommodation. As above, homelessness includes people in transitional or crisis accommodation.

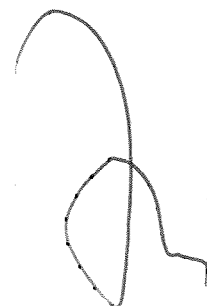
- b) The State Government is investing \$2.4 billion over the next four years, to improve the quality and accessibility of social housing and homelessness services across the State.

Over the last 18 months the Department of Communities has led the development and implementation of new initiatives and partnerships to address homelessness and improve outcomes for individuals. These include:

- Housing First Homelessness Initiative.
- Online Homelessness Services Portal.
- Common Ground facilities (East Perth and Mandurah).
- Aboriginal Short Stay facilities (Kununurra, Geraldton and Perth).



- HEART (Homelessness Engagement, Assessment and Response Team) as part of the Housing First Rapid Response Project and the establishment of the Homelessness Integrated Action Group.
 - Boorloo Bidee Mia and Koort Boodja supported low-barrier accommodation, and
 - The Safe Perth City Initiative.
- c) There are a range of crisis and transitional accommodation services available to people experiencing homelessness and Entrypoint Perth provides individuals with information and referrals to available crisis and transitional accommodation in the area. People without accommodation and housing are also referred to accommodation through outreach and by accessing day centres and engagement hubs.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

9) I refer to point 7 Rental Housing on page 533, Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, and I ask:

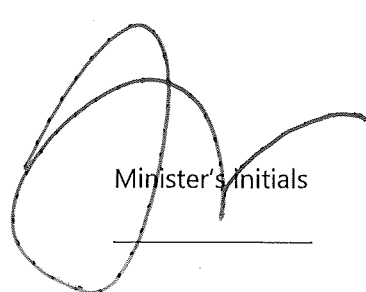
- (a) What is the current eviction rate in public housing in WA; and
- (b) For the 2021-22 financial year, can you please provide the total number of:
 - (i) termination notices that have been issued;
 - (ii) tenancies that have been terminated; and
 - (iii) evictions.

Answer

9)

- (a) Eviction is the last resort for the Department of Communities when working with tenants. In line with this, the State Government has invested in programs such as THRIVE which helps individuals to sustain their tenancies where possible. As at 30 June 2022, there was a total of 43 bailiff evictions for the 2021-22 Financial Year. There are more than 35,000 public housing properties in Western Australia.
- (b) For the 2021-22 financial year:
 - (i) 1,877 termination notices issued;
 - (ii) 256 tenancies terminated; including
 - (iii) 43 evictions.

Minister's Initials



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

11. I refer to page 529, Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, point 2 Homelessness Support Services:

- (a) When was the Office of Homelessness established within the Department, and why was the need for an Office of Homelessness identified;
- (b) How many FTEs are allocated to the Office of Homelessness, and:
 - (i) what level is each FTE;
 - (ii) how many FTE's are vacant and what level are they;
 - (iii) what is the maximum term of employment for each FTE; and
 - (iv) what term of employment is each employee engaged on for their role in the Office of Homelessness; and
- (c) What are the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Homelessness, and what key performance indicators have been assigned to the Office of Homelessness?

Answer

- a) On 17 December 2021, the McGowan Government elevated the issue of homelessness and established a new portfolio dedicated entirely to addressing these challenges. To support the new portfolio, the Department of Communities established the Office of Homelessness in February 2022, to focus on stewardship, coordination, strategic planning, and practices relating to homelessness in Western Australia.
- b)
 - (i)-(iv)
The organisational structure and resourcing requirements for the Office of Homelessness is still being finalised. There are currently 10 FTE across levels 5, 6, 7, 8 and an Executive Director (Class 1). While some positions are currently temporary, it is intended that all positions will be permanent, subject to relevant approval processes.
- c) The Office of Homelessness provides a dedicated focus on stewardship, coordination, strategic planning, and practices relating to homelessness in Western Australia. The Office works closely with the community services sector, Aboriginal organisations and Elders, people with lived experience, and local and state government agencies across Western Australia to take a systems approach to progress the priorities under the Strategy.

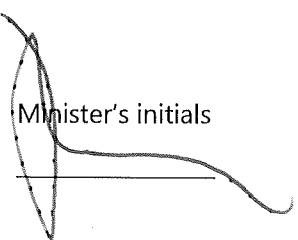
The Office of Homelessness seeks to enhance interagency collaboration and better coordinate supports, particularly for people rough sleeping.

As the custodian and sponsor of the whole-of-community strategy, *All Paths Lead to Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*, the Office of Homelessness is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. The

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Office of Homelessness is also leading the development and implementation of the Homelessness Commissioning Plan.

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