

20 October 2010

HOUSEHOLD BILLS

Matter of Public Interest

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton) [3.38 pm]: I would like to make a few comments to the debate and also refer to other comments, focusing on housing. Members opposite raised the issue of homelessness, the problem of getting houses and the growing waiting lists, which are all real and big issues.

In debates last week we discussed the repair of maintenance of Homeswest homes and a large number of members opposite talked passionately about the importance of having public housing and increasing its accessibility, and well they might. It is a big issue, particularly in a fast-growing economy. Many people in public housing are on fixed incomes and struggle with general increases in the cost of living.

Of course, members opposite generally have a higher concentration of public housing in their electorates. Indeed many of them owe their seats to the votes that come from residents of public housing. It is a statistical fact that many people in public housing vote Labor.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Is that why you are not running then?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No. Given that fact, members opposite say that they would actually do something to help their own electorates. They should concentrate on this. Passion in opposition is cheap, what counts is what the Labor Party did when it was in government. Let us start with the basics—most people do not want to live in public housing, they want to own their own houses.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Members I cannot hear the member for Riverton.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You are lucky!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cannington I call you to order for the second time.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Let us look at Labor's track record in government under Gallop and Carpenter. In that period, the former member for Armadale, who probably did not know what she was doing, administered and put in place one of the greatest land shortages in modern history, which led to a doubling of house prices and a doubling of rent. This was during the period in which people, particularly on lower incomes, struggled to keep with costs generally, and were crowded out of the housing market.

I might add that during this period the Labor government of the day experienced a large increase in stamp duties and also very rapid population growth. We had a Labor government supposedly concerned about public housing, awash with money from the sale of houses, experiencing doubling house and rental prices, and what did it do? Not what did it talk about doing—what did it do?

It put a stop to building new houses in public housing estates; that is, over the period 2000–01 to 2007–08, the then Labor government increased Homeswest housing stock by 362 houses, or 51 extra dwellings a year. What happened to the waiting list? It went up by 50 per cent. Surprise! Why was the minister surprised that, with a doubling of housing prices, a doubling of rental prices, an increasing population and a government that does not build any housing, the number on the waiting list increased?

Did we hear impassioned pleas from the then Labor government backbenchers about this? No! Did they talk to the responsible ministers about this? We did not hear anything. Look in the *Hansard*—where were the complaints? It is the priority waiting list and what happened to it that is interesting.

People on the priority waiting list are destitute. They are the real problem; as local members we see the people who are in real trouble for a variety of reasons, who need a roof over their head and who would otherwise face homelessness. How many people were on the priority waiting list in 2001–02?

There were 280 people. In 2008–09, when Labor left government, 3 306 people were on the priority waiting list. That is a 1 000 per cent increase in the number of people on the priority waiting list. And what did the Labor government do? Nothing! It duded its own people.

It is easy to stand in this house and be passionate about homelessness, the need to get a roof over people's heads and people on low incomes. What is done is what counts. Members opposite duded their own people! Do not say anything about this.

Mr W.J. Johnston: So what have you done?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We have, with the assistance of the Rudd government —

Mr W.J. Johnston: With commonwealth government money.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It does not matter; we did it! The then Labor government had \$2 billion surpluses and did nothing. It did nothing for the housing waiting list. It had \$2 billion surpluses and what did it do? It did not help the people it claims to look after. Do not give me compassion for the people on the waiting list; members opposite caused them to be on it. Members opposite caused the waiting list. Members opposite should blame themselves.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is a disgrace; members opposite are disgraceful! The then government engineered a housing shortage, doubled the housing prices, took a \$1 billion in stamp duty and did not look after the people it should have looked after—the people on the waiting list. The government duded them. Do not talk about this; we are fixing up the mess.