

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
THURSDAY 26TH MAY 2016

HOMELESSNESS:

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:27): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I always appreciate your protection. I am just a wilting violet in this house.

The Hon. S.W. Key: Shrinking.

Mr PEDERICK: Shrinking—thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: He may be wilting.

Mr PEDERICK: I note the motion from the member for Chaffey:

That this house—

(a) Calls on the state government to further address the long-term waiting lists for affordable housing and homelessness in South Australia —

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: You had your go.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am on my feet. Member for Wright, member for Chaffey, go outside and talk to each other. You can go for 15 minutes, if you like: 15 minutes together of sin bin. Member for Hammond.

The honourable member for Wright having withdrawn from the chamber:

Mr PEDERICK: They do not appear to want to have a cup of tea together. The member for Chaffey's motion continues:

(b) Urges the state government to take decisive action to help reduce the cost of living pressures in this state; and

(c) Acknowledges the outstanding work undertaken by service groups across the state to help the less fortunate.

In speaking to this motion, it is well known across the state that there is so much homelessness and so much more work that needs to be done. Certainly, that came to the fore during the Social Development Committee in regard to domestic violence and the issues of homelessness around domestic violence, when women and children have to get out of their home for their own safety and find emergency accommodation and then longer term accommodation. It is an absolutely vital service for those people in those situations.

It is to be noted that the rising client debt levels of Housing SA have risen by \$1 million a year since 2012 and trebled to a \$3 million increase last financial year, 2014-15, to \$25.3 million. This does not include bad debts that have been

written off. There is a category 1 waiting list. Certainly, in my electorate I have people who, for a range of reasons—generally health reasons and some with homelessness reasons—try to get on that category 1 waiting list so that they can find the appropriate accommodation. We have those services in my electorate, but there is certainly not enough of them.

We note that the category 1 waiting list has increased by 10 per cent from 3,069, in the years 2013-14, to 3,368 in 2014-15. These are our people who need the most support, and they are our most vulnerable. There are 21,190 people who are on the Housing SA waiting list in South Australia, which is a very slight improvement of 37 less than in the previous year. At this rate, it will take 572 years to fulfil the waiting list.

I have quite a few constituents who come to me from time to time with issues. Sadly, I have a case at the moment of a disabled lady whose accommodation is just not working out. I have actually taken that issue directly to the Minister for Mental Health to see that we get the appropriate outcome. I am trusting that we will get the appropriate outcome because there has been quite a bad situation with the housemate in this current care house. I just hope we get that sorted out appropriately.

You have issues with people living in some of these houses with neighbours they are not happy with or neighbours who are disgruntled, so they apply for another house. It takes time sometimes, but I think the issue is: where is the money to go in to help these most vulnerable people in the state? They certainly need support right across all of our electorates. If they do not get that support, it just becomes something that we cannot be proud of. They are the most vulnerable, and we should be doing more to help these people.

I take my hat off to the non-government officers who support this work in assisting the homeless, including ac.care, UnitingCare, Centacare and others who get on board to make sure we get the right outcomes but, at the end of the day, you need that base government support and that base finance to be in place. It is ridiculous to have nearly 600 years' of people on waiting lists—it is just crazy. We need the investment in the right place to make sure we can help these most vulnerable right across the state, wherever they may be.

We note what is going on in the state at the moment, and there are not too many bright lights. As I indicated only this week in the house, agriculture is probably the last bright light in the state. Agriculture always has its issues, and we are struggling to get enough rain at the minute for the dryland farmers. I note, for the week at home, we have only had 10.5 millimetres of rain, so we are a long way down from Mount Hope in Flinders. We would certainly love the 51 millimetres they have had down there.

I think the South-East has had some good rains in the last few weeks. I heard of 50 millimetres in one place down there the other day. They certainly need it because, quite frankly, on a recent trip to Lucindale for the field days I had never seen the South-East looking the way it did before these recent rains. I have been travelling down there for over 30 years, and it was almost horrifying to see how bare the ground was.

There are issues for everyone, but what we are seeing in this state now is the wind-down of the steel industry and mining. We have seen what has happened at Leigh Creek and what is going to happen when Holden closes. Detroit said they were going to leave South Australia, and they are leaving South Australia. No matter what subsidies were paid to them, it was their decision at the end of the day. There is a big transformation, and I must say there are some very smart companies aligned with the car industry that are undergoing transformation. It is a lot of work trying to keep their employees on.

I note that in regard to employment the Ingham proposal could employ many hundreds of people, or close to 100,000 all-up, with building facilities in the north of Adelaide through Monarto, and up to 20 full-time jobs at Yumali in my area, with close to the same number of part-time jobs in that area. There will also be a net increase of not just five but 20 jobs created at the local feed mill that is going to be built at Murray Bridge.

That is great news, but we are seeing so many people who are losing their jobs and who are losing faith in the economy, struggling with their power bills, struggling with the cost of living, struggling with the ever-increasing emergency services levy, which has gone up another 1½ per cent. I really fear for the good citizens of this state, especially those who do our emergency services work—the CFS members (and there are quite a few of us on this side who are in the CFS), the SES members and the MFS—and who do great work in protecting our homes, our buildings, our lives and our properties, yet everyone is being hit with more and more land tax increases with this emergency services levy. Reality has to come into play. The government just has to stop looking upon the population of this state as a tax cash cow and do far more to assist the vulnerable, the homeless, and those looking for other housing options, especially those on the category 1 list.