

HOMELESSNESS REFORM PACKAGE

**773. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Homelessness:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to reducing homelessness in Western Australia. Can the minister update the house on how this government's homelessness reform package will help rough sleepers into more secure housing and ensure that they have the wraparound services they need?

**Mr J.N. CAREY replied:**

I thank the member for her question.

We understand this simple truth: providing a roof over somebody's head is a critical way of transforming their life. It not only provides a sense of belonging and security, but also enables someone to actually reset their life and take a journey. That is why, as a government, we are investing \$2.4 billion over the next four years in social housing and homelessness. That is why we are spending \$225 million this year on homelessness programs.

But I know we can always do better, and we always look for opportunities for reforming and leveraging from that investment. Therefore, I was very pleased this morning to announce a package of \$24.2 million so that we can leverage the best we can and, in particular, in alignment with the 10-year homelessness strategy, focus on rough sleepers. Today, we announced a new program of 100 social homes that will be specifically allocated for rough sleepers, with a supported landlord model. The landlord will be Housing Choices—it will provide that supported landlord model—and the tenants will have access to the Housing First support services. We will spot purchase 50 homes and Housing Choices will provide 50 homes.

Given the heated construction market, we know that this is the fastest way that we can enable rough sleepers to transition to social housing. This is innovation. It is a bold step. It is a jump from a pilot program of eight homes in Bunbury to 100 homes. But I am very confident that Housing Choices will be able to deliver this initiative.

We have also announced other reforms and other parts of the package. That includes boosting transitional accommodation right now at St Bart's with 18 beds. We have also provided funding to boost data collection through the by-name list and transfer that to the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness. We are reforming the way we do assessments of rough sleepers. We have a lot of people working in this space. Each of the major centres of Albany, Geraldton, Bunbury, Mandurah and Perth will have one rough sleeper group that will provide a referral service. We are integrating outreach services to create one outreach service program in the city.

We are also boosting and extending the highly successful Homeless Engagement Assessment Response Team homelessness outreach program in the CBD.

It is really pleasing to see that the sector has embraced these reforms. I note that Deb Zanella from Ruah Community Services, a highly credible leader in the homelessness field, said today, and I paraphrase, that this government has been at the forefront in investing in an approach that has been proven in other jurisdictions around the world. I also note the editorial in today's *The West Australian*, which states in part —

It is heartening see real concrete solutions to a problem which has flummoxed policy-makers for decades.

This is bold. It is an innovative reform. But I have a strong belief in our homelessness sector, in Housing Choices and in St Bart's that together we can make a real difference to transform the lives of some of our most vulnerable Western Australians.