

HOMELESS TELEPHONE HELPLINE

806. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Housing and Works:

I refer to contacts made through the homeless telephone helpline, and ask -

- (1) Is the applicant automatically allocated a place in crisis accommodation, private rental accommodation or Department of Housing and Works accommodation?
- (2) How are the bona fides of the callers established?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

- (1)-(2) Nothing automatic will apply in response to a helpline call; it will not automatically lead to a listing. The callers will have the opportunity to establish their homelessness status, probably with difficulty.

Hon Barry House: Who does that vetting?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The small number of officers who have been assigned that particular task in an office on Wellington Street attached to the Department of Housing and Works. I would be happy for the member to meet with the officers to see how the helpline works and how the officers process calls. It is an attempt to categorise a person who is sleeping rough or is in a particular housing crisis, for example, and is the basis upon which someone would get priority. The aim is to try to ensure that the system is not being used as a rort or as a queue-jumping exercise. That will not always be possible; I guess there will be times when people will slip through the process. We are trying to avoid that happening. No examples have been drawn to my attention of that happening, but if the member has a particular concern that someone has used the system in a way that they should not have - a system that has been set up to try to respond compassionately and appropriately to people in crisis - he should please let me know or, alternatively, take up my offer to be briefed by the officers and staff at the helpline office.