

URBAN MISSION WA — STREET CHAPLAINS IN NORTHBRIDGE

Statement by Member for Southern River

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [12.52 pm]: We hear much about the drunken and violent behaviour that is making Northbridge a no-go zone for sensible, law-abiding citizens after about 11.00 pm on Friday and Saturday nights. I draw this house's attention to the fact that Urban Mission WA, under the leadership of Dr Garth Eichhorn, who is associated with the Perth Bible College, has trained volunteer chaplains from various church communities throughout Perth to go out into the streets of Northbridge. The volunteers work in pairs, wearing safety vests clearly marked "Street Chaplain". They walk the streets from 11.00 pm until dawn to be there for the weak and vulnerable, to provide counselling to those who seek it and to provide a listening ear. Each volunteer is a "safe" person—a person who can point out the various services available to people in trouble or to help them examine where their lives are going. They work in close association with police, whom I understand greatly value their presence and the role they fill. They work in difficult circumstances but happily do this work out of love for God and their fellow human beings. Many people who hit the streets of Northbridge when the various hotels and clubs close find that time spent having a coffee and a chat with a volunteer chaplain helps them gain a fresh perspective on life.

I put on public record my sincere appreciation for the work done by the volunteer Christian chaplains trained by Urban Mission WA, and to Dr Eichhorn in taking this initiative.