

W. Amundson

Can you please explain what you have done to resolve the situation where a mother housed her three children in a tent despite offers of accommodation from Government?

I thank the member for the question

gives me the opportunity - It would be to put on the record the facts about this issue

Late yesterday afternoon, I asked the Director General of Housing to provide Ms O'Connor with temporary access to her mother's former house until the Department can find her a new home.

The only reason I have made this decision is for the sake of Ms O'Connor's three children. I do not condone dealing with these complex issues through the media. Many people deal with often harsh and distressing situations, **ones that tear at the hearts of all members in this house.**

Successive governments have learnt there are no easy solutions.

Our response today should not be seen as condoning what has taken place here. It is unfortunate that this mother ~~has~~ chose not to co-operated with Government agencies.

We offered this family financial assistance and temporary accommodation but disappointingly these offers were refused.

Despite the government's best efforts, this mother made the choice to stay in a tent at this property.

There has been a lot of misinformation on the subject and that is why I take this opportunity to put the record straight today.

Expectations have been raised and the matter has become a political game for the Opposition.

It is my view that we need to assist Ms O'Connor in looking after the best interests of her children.

I reiterate / Ms O'Connor was offered emergency shelter which she refused. /

This offer was intended to provide a roof over her family's heads / while the Department allocated her a home from the priority waiting list / which was expected to happen within the next 2 weeks. /

There are difficult family circumstances in the case / which I will not go into, / except to say:

- it is not, / and cannot be government policy / to allow State owned social housing to be passed from one family member to the next. /
- in this case, / Ms O'Connor's mother asked to be moved. / An offer was made for her to stay a little longer / until her daughter had a new place allocated / ~~She chose not to accept this offer.~~ /

I reiterate, / I do not support people who circumvent the system or attempt to "queue jump" / which has been the case here / but the circumstances here have got out of hand. /

That is why I chose to intervene with the Department of Housing. /

This situation has been made worse / by the inappropriate comments of the Opposition Leader yesterday, / who on Channel 10 news said: /

~~"next they will be taking her children off her"~~

In making this statement, / the Opposition Leader showed a lack of judgement. / Did the Leader of the Opposition think of how his words could affect Ms O'Connor's children / when he made that statement? /

I consider these comments extremely insensitive. /

I take matters of child welfare extremely seriously. / However, a situation has arisen where a mother has been prepared to use her

children to get a particular housing outcome /

In answering the member's question I would like to put on the record the facts surrounding this case

away from her.

~~children to get a particular housing outcome~~ and where the Leader of the Opposition uses this situation for political gain. /

This is unacceptable and could not continue, / for the sake of the children. /

Hence my decision / to provide a safe environment for the children / and buy time for an outcome / in accordance with proper policy and process. /

As I touched on yesterday, / this State Government is working extremely hard to ease the pressures on public and social housing. / We ~~have~~ ^{are} building new properties at an unprecedented rate. /

Between now and Christmas we will deliver over 1000 new properties to the State. /

2000 by 2026

And to finish, / I would request that the members opposite begin working with this government on these type of sensitive matters / rather than against us. /

It is not appropriate to make a political game out of a family's difficult situation / to promote yourself / or to have a run at the leadership of your party. /