

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [9.13 am]: Last week was Homelessness Week, which is an important time to pause and reflect on how we can better support those in our community who are struggling. On census night in 2016, it is estimated that over 9 000 people were experiencing homelessness in WA, and 1 083 of those were sleeping rough. Our most vulnerable populations, such as women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, represented 42 per cent of all clients seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in this state in 2016–17.

I have asked the Department of Communities to commence developing a 10-year homelessness strategy that articulates a whole-of-government plan to identify and create linkages across the service delivery system. Current projects, reforms, policy development, and shifts occurring across government and within the homelessness sector, including the work of the End Homelessness WA alliance, provide a strong base to build upon over the next 12 months.

The new strategy, developed in line with the supporting communities election commitment, will improve communication, collaboration and coordination and, most importantly, identify evidence-based services that will best support those who are experiencing homelessness. I am also pleased that the development of the strategy will focus on the lived experiences of people who have experienced homelessness. This work is underway in partnership with the community services sector through a co-design process involving the supporting communities forum.

As I said very publicly across Homelessness Prevention Week, I am confident that if we work together—the community, individuals, government, the business sector and service providers—we will have a significant impact on ending homelessness. I believe this strategy is an important step in that process, and I thank all involved in its development.