

HOMELESSNESS

551. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the Premier's mean-spirited refusal to meet with the homeless in his electorate and complete lack of empathy for those people struggling in the community.

- (1) Is the minister concerned about the growing issue of homelessness in Western Australia?
- (2) What immediate action is she taking to help these people?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

(1)–(2) I would like to make a couple of points about the issues and the approach that has been taken by the member for Carine on this issue. One is that as the minister responsible for the services that apply to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, I have received no correspondence or inquiries to my office from him. I understand the Minister for Housing is in the same position. We have had no advocacy from him or his side to advocate for those people.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Secondly, I ask the member whether he has advocated on behalf of people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in his own community? I do not think I have had any contact with him on behalf of his electorate about his own community.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.F. McGURK: There has been no advocacy from him. The reality is that no community in this state is not affected by the issue of homelessness. There is no electorate and no part of the state on which this issue is not impacting. A lot of work is already being done around the state. This government puts in about \$89 million a year for services for homeless people. A lot of good effort is made, and a lot of that effort ends well with very vulnerable people getting good accommodation and services to support them in that accommodation. Unfortunately, there is still demand. There are still people who are at risk, are either street-present or at risk of being in a very precarious homeless situation.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Ms S.F. McGURK: If the member for Carine would be quiet, I will answer his question.

There is still a lot of work to do. That is why we are joining together with the not-for-profit sector to do a 10-year strategy for homelessness. A lot of good work has been done to draw on good practice around the state so that we get vulnerable people into the right sort of accommodation and give them the supports they need for as long as they need so they can be stable.

In regard to the people in Rockingham, the Department of Communities is working with a range of stakeholders down there, including the local government, to visit those people to try to get them into good support. The overwhelming response for most people at present is that they do not want to move into other accommodation.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Ms S.F. McGURK: One of my other concerns about what is happening in that particular area in Rockingham is that some advocates are moving new people into that camp. That is saying it is a good thing that people can be moved into that camp. I think that should be discouraged. We are working very hard with those people who are camping in that area to make sure they can trust the services and supports that are available to them so that they can eventually find the right accommodation and the supports that they need.

I do not know how much exposure the member for Carine has had to this issue, except for his recent cheap political grandstanding —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Ms S.F. McGURK: He decided to head down to the Premier's electorate —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.F. McGURK: He decided to head down to the Premier's electorate to exploit those people's situation.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is right.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I recognise that there are people on the other side of this chamber who care about people who are homeless and street present and are having difficulties. I do not put the member for Carine in that category. Frankly, I do not put the member for Cottesloe in that category either. He said, very shamefully, during debate the other day that he is scared to go to Fremantle because there is so much homelessness there. Toughen up, member for Cottesloe! I will take the member down there. It is not that bad. I live in the middle of it. It is okay; I will walk with him. It will be all right!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: You precious petal!

The SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Members, I ask that this issue not be politicised and that we do work constructively with those people—about 9 000 people across our state—who are homeless to get them the right support and the right sort of accommodation so they can lead stable, healthy, safe lives.