

TOM FISHER HOUSE

**596. Mr J.N. CAREY to the Minister for Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I refer to the almost \$4 million service agreement awarded last week for Tom Fisher House within my electorate that supports those most in need.

- (1) Can the minister outline the importance of this funding for those doing it tough?
- (2) How is this government striving to break the cycle of disadvantage?

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

- (1)–(2) I am very pleased to answer this question and I particularly acknowledge the work of the member for Perth in looking at innovative ways that we can address some of these difficult issues in our metropolitan area and indeed through our state.

When it comes to homeless services we need a variety of entry points for people who are vulnerable and are doing it tough. I know that many members in this house will receive either complaints or concerns through their electorate offices of the number of people sleeping rough, who are homeless and disadvantaged through our state. Homeless people are not just sleeping rough; there are various forms of homelessness. People might be sleeping in cars, or they might be couch surfing. They are in all sorts of precarious situations. As I said, it is important that we have a variety of entry points for people so that they can be kept safe and they can then link up with services that are needed. I was very pleased to go with the member for Perth to Tom Fisher House in his electorate. Tom Fisher House is an acute homeless night shelter. It is there for people to get a safe place, a roof over their heads for the night and it is cleared during the day. There are 12 beds in Tom Fisher House, mostly for singles, but there are two rooms available for couples. That is an important service run by St Vincent de Paul Society of WA, which also runs Passages Resource Centres in Northbridge and Mandurah. That is a similar entry point for young people at any stage, no matter their condition. There are no questions asked; the door is open for them to come in through Passages. I was very pleased to help facilitate the agreement of assistance for Tom Fisher House. As the member said, it is for \$4 million and what is significant is that it is a five-year contract. We went to this election with a supporting communities policy whereby we made a range of commitments to work in a much more sophisticated way across government and also with the community sector so that we can begin to work a lot more effectively for those in our community who are vulnerable, including the homeless. I was very pleased to enter into a five-year contract with St Vincent de Paul. It is now under the leadership of Susan Rooney, a very capable CEO, as are many of our community sector organisations.

One of the reasons that we have to be innovative in the way that we spend our dollars in the community sector and in working alongside the Western Australian Council of Social Service, its membership and across government agencies is that the other side left our finances in such a parlous state. Yesterday, there was a matter of public interest debate over the opposition's ludicrous proposition that as a government we had targeted pensioners. Nothing could be further from the truth.

**Mr J.E. McGrath** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for South Perth!

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We are dealing with very difficult and complex issues that face vulnerable families and individuals, including the homeless and families that are impacted by child protection, and I am very pleased to work with organisations such as St Vincent de Paul to do that.