

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS WEEK

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services) [2.10 pm]: I rise to inform the house that this week is National Homelessness Week. It was a privilege to last night join community services, people with lived experience, the private sector and members of this place in launching National Homelessness Week in Western Australia.

It can be easy to forget that the collection of blankets and jackets in a sheltered doorway is hiding a person whose dreams and goals in life have given way to homelessness. Often, this situation has emerged due to circumstances outside of their control, such as family and domestic violence, employment issues, mental illness, or alcohol and drug use. Put simply, homelessness is not who these people are—it is something they are experiencing at a particular point in time.

Allan, whom I met at the launch last night, is living proof of this. He shared his story through a video developed by Shelter WA, available on its Facebook page, to provide insight into his experiences with homelessness. After his wife was diagnosed with cancer, Allan gave up work to be her full-time carer. Within six weeks she passed away and Allan, through his grief, lost everything. It took the intervention of a doctor, critical mental health support and crisis accommodation and support to turn things around and help Allan get back on his feet. As he says in the video, it can happen to anybody.

National Homelessness Week is an important time to think about how we can all work with the best interests of those who need our help as our primary concern. The McGowan government will continue its collaborative and evidence-based approach in working with people experiencing homelessness, instead of making decisions for them. In the coming months we will deliver the state's first ten-year strategy, which will provide a roadmap for fundamentally shifting our service system to strengthen the support we give to people, like Allan, who are experiencing homelessness.