

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

905. Dr K. STRATTON to the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record \$2.6 billion investment in housing and homelessness services. Can the minister outline to the house how this record investment is supporting vulnerable Western Australians across our state to secure housing?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I thank the member for Nedlands for her strong commitment to assisting the most vulnerable in Western Australia. We know that COVID has radically reshaped our housing markets and rental markets. Members have seen from our government a range of announcements by the Premier only recently with regard to rental relief and short-term rental reform, but we are continuing to deliver our social housing agenda. To date, despite the toughest construction market, we have delivered just over 1 700 social homes with more than 1 000 under contract or construction.

Another part of the story that gets less attention is our work in the homelessness sector. I am deeply proud of the sector's leadership and work and our partnership with it to assist the most vulnerable. I want to go through it because we are strongly committed to the Housing First Homelessness Initiative approach, which at its heart is about providing people with a roof and a home, but also the intensive wraparound support services to sustain their tenancy. Boorloo Bidee Mia has been an outstanding success that was launched by the previous Minister for Community Services. The former Murray Street hotel that we purchased I am pleased to say demonstrates thinking outside the box. Koort Boodja is now almost at capacity with 24 residents who had previously been rough sleeping now at that accommodation.

Our supported landlord model is part of the Housing First approach. We spot purchase a unit and then Housing Choices as the landlord provides the support to sustain the tenancy with Housing First wraparound services available. This goes from Perth and Peel to the Bunbury region. We started in January, and to date we have added 70 properties supporting 112 individuals who were sleeping rough at the beginning of the year. It is helping to change lives. Of course, we made a \$49 million commitment to extend that program at a slower pace because of some of the constraints in regional Western Australia.

As part of our community cabinet, I was yesterday out with the Stirling outreach team and Uniting WA and provided a grant of around \$180 000 to provide an outreach service five days a week in the northern suburbs. I give a shout-out to the leadership of the City of Stirling and the mayor who take a caring, kind and compassionate approach and are really endorsing this outreach program.

That is in contrast, I have to say, to what we are seeing in the Safe Night Space for Women service. I want to put this on the record once and for all about Safe Night Space. We have seen a vast range of excuses made by the City of Perth. First, it was about a lack of funding. We believe there is an expectation that a capital city council has a responsibility to fund that service. When it decided not to fund that service, the state stepped in and said, "Okay, you've made your decision. Despite every other capital city supporting services, you've made that decision so we will provide you the \$3.14 million over two years." Secondly, the City then said it is about the location and it is not warranted. I put on the public record that it was not the state that picked the location; it was the City of Perth. I want to put this on the public record because this is not politics here. I said this on 14 January 2022 —

I want to personally recognise the Perth Lord Mayor for championing this proposal and the council for supporting it — it's clearly working, and has assisted some women transition into housing.

That is what I said and I had a picture taken with the mayor outside Ruah headquarters. The councillors are now complaining about the location. They picked it; they determined it.

Thirdly, they are now saying that homelessness is not a responsibility of local government. Ask the City of Stirling, because I see the leadership at the City of Stirling standing up. The mayor said to me yesterday: "All tiers are responsible for this critical issue." We sought to assist Ruah—we are, through the Office of Homelessness, working to find an alternative location. I want to put that on the record. I note this, and the media have not run this. At a council meeting on 28 February 2023 this year, the Perth city council endorsed this motion —

REQUESTS the CEO to investigate the feasibility of continuing this service or a version of this service at another location and present this report to elected members at an EMES in due course.

The council endorsed a motion, despite flagging of the closure, that it would report back on the feasibility of a different location. I have spoken to Ruah, and it has indicated to me that there has been no assistance and no advice from the City of Perth administration, and the minutes speak for themselves because there is no report back to council.

We have a last-minute chance. There is a last-minute chance for the City of Perth leadership at a moment in time. Put aside some of the Liberal activists like Councillor Fleeton who takes photos of homeless people in the city and posts them on Twitter; I will get to that at a different stage of political discourse and debate. But the political leadership of the council has a clear choice. There is a choice about continuing a service in the 16 Days in WA

period for women, the majority of whom are fleeing domestic violence. We have stepped up. We have said that we will provide the funding now. What we ask is that the City of Perth provides that location, which it provided and selected previously, that was vacant at that time and help us to continue this service at this critical time in our state's history.