

HOMELESSNESS

9. Dr K. STRATTON to the Minister for Homelessness:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to providing support to vulnerable members of our community, including people experiencing homelessness.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government's significant funding for homeless services across Western Australia has provided long-term certainty for critical programs across the state?
- (2) Can the minister advise how this government's record spending in housing and homelessness initiatives has had a real impact on our community?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I thank the member for her question and commitment to supporting social housing and homelessness services in her electorate.

- (1)–(2) As I have said many a time, our state government is very cognisant of the pressures that are currently being faced in the housing and rental markets. That is why this government has taken unprecedented measures to not only drive and boost housing supply, but also provide relief. That includes, of course, our record investment of \$2.6 billion over four years on social housing and homelessness services and also on a range of other measures, including our rental relief scheme and our changes and reforms around short-term rentals.

It was my pleasure in January this year to announce further assistance to key services in the homelessness sector. We recognise that there are pressures. Every state is facing the same pressures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic radically reshaping our housing and rental markets. That is why I was very pleased to announce nearly \$50 million in new funding into key areas. The first was actually locking in and backing in key government initiatives that we had announced and that had been funded by grants. That included Boorloo Bidee Mia, the great work of the previous minister, and Koort Boodja, both of which provide transitional accommodation for rough sleepers. It includes also \$7.8 million to continue the HEART effort, which is the outreach teams that have been expanded to Joondalup and Midland. The government has provided \$5.4 million for the Safe Perth City initiative, which includes return-to-country functions, and, for the first time, locked-in funding for the Passages Youth Engagement Hub in the Peel area.

We also provided an additional \$13.4 million for 10 key services, which is a lift in the baseload funding of 23 per cent. That was for Uniting WA's St Bart's Tranby Engagement Hub, the Foyer Oxford organisation, the Beacon accommodation, St Vincent de Paul's Fusion Australia Perth's youth accommodation and Accordwest's Collie crisis accommodation.

This also provides additional funding of \$900 000 for the by-name list, which is critical as we seek to get more rough sleepers onto that list, to assist those efforts. Of course, all that continues our work around the supported landlord model. While it does not get much media attention, I am pleased to report that since January last year, as part of this new innovative program, 75 homes have been purchased, supporting 115 people who were previously rough sleeping. We will now continue to expand that program into regional Western Australia with the first in Geraldton, where I announced \$5.2 million in funding. It is substantial work and major reforms.

But I say this: contrast that with the opposition. It is clocking up now to seven years—seven years! It wants to be a serious alternative for government, and in seven years, it has not announced one social housing policy. I repeat: in seven years, not one social housing and not one homelessness policy has been announced, but it will knock everything. Hon Steve Martin has mastered the art. Any measure we announce, he condemns it, criticises it, and says it is useless. I point to what he said about our rental relief scheme. The rental relief program is an important addition to the measures that we have provided to address cost-of-living pressures for WA families. We are extremely grateful for this amazing program. Do members know what Hon Steve Martin called a cost-of-living measure to assist renters in need? He called it "a bad joke". That is his level of analysis. That is the opposition's level of policy commitment. Every initiative that we release and announce, it criticises or condemns, yet it has nothing to offer the Western Australian public. There is a very clear line between this government and its ambitious reform agenda to boost housing supply, and an alternative that has no policies and is not fit to govern.