

HOMELESSNESS

**32. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Homelessness:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented investment in tackling homelessness, which includes delivering evidence-based solutions to this complex issue.

- (1) Will the minister update the house on how this government's investment in tackling homelessness is providing long-term positive outcomes for homeless people in Western Australia, and outline how these solutions are crucial in getting people into a stable home?
- (2) Will the minister advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who opposes this government's commitment to address homelessness?

**Mr J.N. CAREY replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. We all know that homelessness is a very complex issue and that many people who are experiencing homelessness have deep social, health and economic issues. They can have trauma, family and domestic violence, mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependence and other issues in their lives. I am deeply proud to be part of the McGowan government, which has driven an evidence-based 10-year strategy that has been co-designed with the homelessness sector and is about tackling those underlying issues. We are backing it in with massive investment. Through the Department of Communities, the government is investing more than \$150 million in a range of homelessness and support services. There is ongoing expenditure of \$20 million from the Mental Health Commission in homelessness. The health department is also providing support at Royal Perth Hospital and a medical respite centre. The government is investing \$70 million in two Common Ground facilities—one in East Perth and one in Mandurah—under the Housing First Homelessness Initiative, which is about ending rough sleeping. I note that the Productivity Commission's recent review, the *Report on government services 2022*, found that WA is the most successful state at getting people off the street permanently, and that should always be our aim.

The latest initiative, which has received some media attention, is Boorloo Bidee Mia, which is unique, innovative and new. These are two Aboriginal-controlled organisations that are providing culturally appropriate accommodation for rough sleepers in our city. It is not an easy job, and I want to give a shout-out to Daniel Morrison and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation for their work. They are providing accommodation and support to a cohort, a group of people, with deep trauma.

What we have seen from the opposition is nothing but shameful attacks, misleading the public and the community. Hon Steve Martin, like a meerkat at Perth Zoo, pops his head up from his burrow, throws a lot of cheap political attacks for the worst headlines, then disappears. He has been shameful in his approach to this issue in attacking this organisation. He says, "Just throw the doors open." He is perplexed about why it is not just a drop-in centre. In fact, he said on the record that he had no idea why the minister could not get more people into the building. Well, I will explain that for Hon Steve "Missing in Action" Martin. It is very simple. These are, as I have said, people with deep trauma and complex issues. This is a new model. If we want it to work, it has to be a gradual process, as the model develops. There are now 47 rough sleepers in that accommodation, which is extraordinary, given their complexities. I say to Hon Steve Martin: perhaps the reason you have no idea why we cannot get more people in the building is that you have never been there. Surely, if you are doing your job, doing your work and you want to understand the issues, you might actually show basic respect and courtesy to the organisations by actually going down there and meeting them and talking to them about the issues. He had to gall to say that he wished the new minister all the best, and that this was too important to play politics with. That is all he has done! This is symptomatic of the opposition. It does not do the work.

I have gone to Mission Australia for its Christmas lunch for the last five years to recognise volunteers and a service for our most vulnerable people. There are 15 members of the opposition, and not one of them bothered to turn up. In fact, over those five years I have seen one, and that was before the state election. That says something about their lack of humanity, their lack of care and actual, genuine engagement with the homelessness sector. There is a real difference between our approach and the opposition's approach. The opposition's approach is glib political attack; it is missing in action, and it is not doing the work and engaging the homelessness sector on these complex issues.