

HOMELESSNESS

**507. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer to the size and nature of homelessness in Western Australia, which is being reported as a major problem that is increasing across several areas of the state.

- (1) Can the minister please outline the true extent of homelessness by advising whether information on the number of people sleeping rough is being captured; and, if it is —
  - (a) the estimated number of people sleeping on the streets;
  - (b) in which areas the problem is most evident;
  - (c) the long-term trends; and
  - (d) are any government funds allocated to assisting those without anywhere to call home?
- (2) What is currently being done to help homeless people get off the streets?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) This information is captured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its census. The closest definition of “rough sleepers” is persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out.
  - (a) As at the 2016 census, there were 1 083 persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out in Western Australia.
  - (b) This information is available from the 2016 census at the ABS geography of statistical area level 3. The highest number of persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out was recorded in Perth city, with 271, followed by the Kimberley, with 147.
  - (c) The 2016 census shows the following trend in persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out: in 2001, it was 1 410; in 2006, 1 016; in 2011, 929; and in 2016, 1 083.
  - (d) Yes.
- (2) In 2018–19, the Department of Communities will fund approximately \$98.2 million to deliver a range of homelessness services including crisis accommodation, such as family and domestic violence services that assist with the prevention of homelessness, and outreach for those sleeping rough. The Department of Communities also offers significant support, including bond assistance and rental subsidies, across the housing continuum that enables individuals to find a home of their own.

Homelessness is a complex social issue that requires a collaborative response from all levels of government and the community. The Department of Communities is leading the development of a 10-year strategy on homelessness, which will be a whole-of-community plan that looks at better ways to help people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to access accommodation and support.