

PILOT HOUSING PROGRAM — GERALDTON

**334. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Homelessness:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant efforts to increase the availability of social housing across Western Australia, particularly in our regions. Can the minister update the house on the pilot housing program that is being launched in Geraldton and outline how it will support vulnerable rough sleepers and help break the cycle of homelessness?

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

I thank the member for her question and for her advocacy on local issues, particularly the suburb of Spalding.

I often start an answer by talking about the big picture, but today I want to reverse that and talk about a personal story. I had the honour to go to Geraldton with the member for Geraldton to meet with a woman called Natasha. She has experienced homelessness and rough sleeping for a significant period. In fact, she experienced homelessness in Kalgoorlie, in Perth and then in Geraldton. It was an honour to listen to her story and to have her share her story with me. She had her beautiful dog, Tippy, with her. As she told me her story, tears came down from her eyes. They were tears of joy because we were standing in her first social housing home. That home is part of a new program in Geraldton. I want to give a shout-out to Miranda and Grace at the Department of Communities. It is a pilot program that is a demonstration of Housing First. The program at its heart is about providing people with accommodation and intensive support so that they stay in that house over time. We made vacant housing stock in Spalding available. We brought it back online. Those six units are now housing 10 former rough sleepers, including three people from Batavia Motor Inn. The support is being provided by the ICARE health, drug and alcohol team in Geraldton. The program is a demonstration of our work and our progress in tackling a very complex issue. We are bringing vacant properties back online and tying them in with homelessness services. The story of Natasha and Tippy gives me confidence and faith about further progress on these issues.

We are doing everything we can as a government to create more social housing. Contrary to the opposition's claims, there is a genuine, sincere effort to accelerate and pivot every which way we can. We have around 100 homes in various stages of works as part of a timber construction program. We can knock out homes in 22 weeks. We have our program for 200 modular homes. We have our spot purchasing program. Again, the opposition has just realised we have that program. We have accelerated that program to get more stock into the system. We are also looking at how we can reform and better leverage our \$190 million investment this year in homelessness. It is my aspiration that we look at how we can better integrate that \$190 million homelessness investment with the increasing acceleration of social housing delivery. I am deeply proud that this government is at every opportunity seeking to drive reform and leverage on the enormous investment we are making so that we can give people like Natasha and Tippy a home.