

HOMELESSNESS — GERALDTON

Grievance

MS L. DALTON (Geraldton) [9.16 am]: My grievance this morning is to the Minister for Housing on social housing in my electorate of Geraldton, and in particular in the suburb of Spalding. I want to thank the minister for his engagement on the issue and for taking this grievance today. I have had a number of meetings with the minister and his staff to address these important issues for my constituents. The minister took the time to come up and visit the electorate, and Spalding in particular. I know that he is a passionate advocate for social housing and he has taken the time to really understand the local issues that we face in the suburb of Spalding.

For those who are not familiar with Spalding, it is a northeast suburb of Geraldton; just under 3 000 residents live there. Minister Carey spoke about Spalding last week in this chamber, and he was right; there are well-known issues in the suburb and anecdotal examples of why people do not want to move to Spalding for a variety of reasons. In saying that, I also know that a lot of families really love living in Spalding and love their local community; they have lived there for a very long time and they are proud of that.

Although Spalding, sadly, gets a lot of bad press, it really has great community spirit and assets, like the community garden and the Mitchell Street Community Centre, which could form the heart of what could be a vibrant community with renewal. A number of the problems can be traced back to poor urban and environmental design combined with pockets of high concentration of public housing that has contributed to antisocial behaviour. Renewal in Spalding has been on the agenda for quite a while, and I have spoken to the City of Greater Geraldton on a number of occasions about the existing *Spalding precinct plan* and listened to its concerns about the process of renewal in the area. As the local member, I recognise that there has been some frustration from the community regarding the lack of progress on the precinct plan, given that consultation occurred in 2018 and 2019. That was a great process, and when I spoke to those residents, they were really keen to see it move forward.

I am raising this issue today with the minister again to advocate on behalf of my constituents and community. I hope the minister can outline what the state government is doing to progress renewal in Spalding and housing in Geraldton more broadly.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [9.19 am]: I want to thank the member for Geraldton for her advocacy on both this issue and for her constituents. I think it is fair to say—I have joked about it in this place before—that the member for Geraldton has been giving me a significant ear-bashing on this issue. She is an incredible advocate for her community, and she has made it clear that she wants to see renewal and action in the suburb of Spalding. She asked me to come up to Geraldton to look at the suburb and the particular streets and get a very clear understanding. I thank her for that. She got me up there, and I met with the regional staff. They are doing an incredible job. I give a shout-out to Miranda and the whole team of regional staff. Despite the sometimes simplistic understanding in the broader media, and I understand where that comes from, there are complex and challenging issues that our regional staff have to face.

I have tried to have an honest and up-front conversation with the community about the challenges that we face in Spalding. As the member has said, this comes back, in part, to the significant challenges and issues that result from poor urban design. We know that good planning and good urban design can make suburbs incredibly liveable. When we go to Spalding, we note the lack of footpaths, and lighting. There are design flaws in the roads and throughways. For example, there are some cul-de-sacs that limit entry and exit. That means that we cannot get that great passive surveillance that can be used to tackle antisocial behaviour. There is one particular site, Bogle Way—did I say that right?

Ms L. Dalton interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I am sorry. I will be forever in trouble now! I will get another ear-bashing from the member for Geraldton. My staff are probably watching on the television screen and throwing darts!

This cul-de-sac is particularly poorly designed. The fact that there is only one road in and out leads to some significant issues, and some residents feel unsafe. There is also another challenge that I have talked about, not just for Spalding but for many other suburbs and precincts, and that is the high density of social housing. This is sometimes concentrated in particular streets. As the member for Geraldton has stated, in 2018–19 there was significant consultation on the development of the Spalding precinct plan. I have made it a key priority to focus on and look at the poor design of the Spalding precinct, based on the strong advocacy of the member for Geraldton. As I said, I went up to Geraldton in July. I met with the regional staff. I also met with the City of Greater Geraldton, including the mayor and CEO. It is very clear, based on the advocacy of the local member, that the suburb needs renewal. That includes refurbishment of the public housing in Spalding. However, we also need to tackle the urban planning issues. I had a very productive meeting with the City of Greater Geraldton. Some of those issues are obviously not

a state government responsibility. We want to work with the City of Greater Geraldton to see a significant investment by the local government in things like lighting, footpaths, parks and other amenities.

This government is investing a huge sum—as I have said, nearly \$1 billion—on social housing refurbishment, affordable homes and homelessness initiatives. That includes \$97 million to build 250 new social housing dwellings, which will include eight new dwellings in Geraldton. We also have the housing and homelessness investment package of \$125 million to build 300 new social housing dwellings. That will include up to 10 new dwellings in the midwest–Gascoyne region, of which eight will be in Geraldton.

We also have the social housing economic recovery package program of \$142 million to assist with the ageing housing stock in Western Australia. It is estimated that up to 80 social homes will be refurbished in the midwest–Gascoyne region through SHERP. To date, refurbishment works have begun on 15 dwellings in the midwest–Gascoyne region, nine of which are located in Geraldton.

This is to make sure, as I have talked about, that our ageing housing stock does not fall out of the system. It is a huge challenge that we inherited from the previous government, and we should not underestimate it. This \$142 million investment includes Spalding. A 12-unit complex in Spalding is planned to be refurbished, with both internal and external works, including painting and flooring throughout, and refurbishment of kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and toilets. Through SHERP, we are also investing \$80 million for regional maintenance works, which will target social housing, government workers' housing and remote Aboriginal housing. It is estimated that around 300 existing social homes in the midwest–Gascoyne region will receive maintenance works through SHERP. To date, 12 local businesses have commenced maintenance works to 516 dwellings throughout the midwest–Gascoyne region. This record investment in ageing stock will ensure that we do not lose those homes from the system.

I will end on this. I want to thank the member for Geraldton. She has been an incredibly strong voice on the issues facing Spalding. We all want to see the best result. I share what the member wants. We want to invest in that suburb to make it a very positive and liveable area. We know that people are proud to live in Spalding. We want to make it even better for them. My commitment is to work with the member for Geraldton to achieve that goal.