




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Homeless Persons Week

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (9.49 am): This week is Homeless Persons Week. The theme of this year's events is 'The Hidden Homeless'. Understandably, most of us think of homeless people as those who are living on the streets or sleeping rough, as it is known. But while those people may be the most visible, they account for only a small percentage of the overall homeless population. When we think of homelessness we often forget about the young people who are being forced to rely on the goodwill of their friends or family to put them up, or the younger families who are living out of their cars, or the kids who are forced to live in severely overcrowded homes just to have a roof over their head.

Fixing this problem is something governments of all stripes have spoken about for years. Kevin Rudd famously made homelessness a priority in the early days of his first stint as Prime Minister. How tragic is it that his government now point-blank refuses to commit to a long-term funding agreement that might help achieve our goals? Despite the repeated urging from state governments and from the sector, the federal Labor government has refused to sign up to any funding agreement beyond the middle of next year. Fair suck of the sauce bottle, Kevin! This is an insult to vulnerable Queenslanders and it has created a great deal of uncertainty for homelessness support services, many of which operate on an extremely tight budget.

Unlike federal Labor, the Newman government is interested in more than pretty words and empty gestures. Back in June I launched the Homelessness-to-Housing Strategy 2020—a new approach that seeks to find the root causes of homelessness and helps people to break the cycle and get their lives back on track. On Tuesday night I went out with the Street to Home team from Micah Projects to get a firsthand look at the challenges that we face. I met a young bloke by the name of Christopher, who sadly lost his parents when he was young, moved to Queensland from Sydney and for one reason or another has ended up homeless. Christopher is a normal guy with regular dreams and aspirations who simply needs some support to break out of the cycle he is in.

It would be nice to think we would be able to completely eliminate rough sleeping, but the situation is never quite that simple. One thing we can do, however, is make sure that if people do sleep rough it is not because they have no other option. The Homelessness-to-Housing Strategy will emphasise bricks-and-mortar solutions as well as overhaul the way we engage with homeless Queenslanders by putting in place a triage style intake system. Highlights of our strategy include building additional supported accommodation facilities, starting in Cairns with a 40-bed facility, Townsville with a 40-bed facility and Redcliffe with a 20-bed facility; providing additional dwellings for the Street to Home program to reinforce our housing-first emphasis; and entering into 10 joint ventures with the non-government sector to deliver new housing and support initiatives.

The new triage system I mentioned will allow us to tailor an individual case managed plan to connect vulnerable people with the support they need. This will mean that wherever you first enter the system—be it through one of our housing service centres, a community housing organisation, the Street to Home providers, the health system or the child safety system—wherever you first come to the attention of the government, we will be able to apply a consistent assessment of individuals' needs and put in place an appropriate case management plan to help them get their lives back on track. While there is a great deal governments can do in this space, in the end Homeless Persons Week reminds us that ending homelessness is everybody's responsibility.