




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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ADJOURNMENT

Member for Stretton; 4 Voices

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.09 pm): I also want to mention the very sad news today from the member for Stretton. It is a very sad day for him, clearly. Even though he tried to make us all feel better, it is a terribly sad day for him. It is a sad day for all of us, as his colleagues and friends. It is a really sad loss to this parliament. People of his calibre and his commitment to the job really keep us going. To the class of 2015, of which I am one, he feels like family. I feel like he will fight this illness that he has, just as he has fought for his electorate for so long.

We meet a lot of good and extraordinary people in this job. In my electorate a few weeks ago I met one called Jo Westh. She used to be the CEO of Orange Sky Laundry and she recently started an organisation along similar lines in support of women called 4 Voices.

Mr Russo: Hear, hear!

Ms HOWARD: I take that interjection from the member for Toohey. He clearly knows her as well. They do amazing work. 4 Voices was launched on International Women's Day last year. They have volunteers and a van and they set themselves up in locations across South-East Queensland. In my electorate they set up near Centrelink. While I was there on my first visit, a woman came in from the street. She was grinning from ear to ear. She was welcomed like an old friend. When she left, I was told her story. She had come past them and they could see that she was not in a good way. They called her over for a cup of tea and sat her down. They heard how she had been homeless for quite a few weeks after fleeing domestic violence. She was too embarrassed to go in to Centrelink because she had not bathed for a while and felt really ashamed. They talked to her, went in with her and within an hour had an emergency crisis payment for her and not long after that secured a house for her.

In their van they have computers and mobile phone chargers. Women who are homeless who may have a mobile phone but nowhere to charge it can go there to get it charged, have a cup of tea and receive support. The premise of what they do is to help women reskill and learn about technology. We know that these days digital connectivity is almost as important as social connectivity for people, and 4 Voices is an organisation that provides both. They really are quite remarkable. While I was there, another woman walked past very proudly modelling a dress they had given her to wear to an interview.

We know that there are around 50,000 girls and women who are experiencing homelessness in Australia. The number of homeless single women aged 55 and above is increasing, and with the affordable housing crisis we are seeing now that number is going to rise. Good on 4 Voices.