




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 19 April 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Next Step Home Program

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (10.15 am): Ensuring all Queenslanders have a roof over their head and a stable place to call home is a priority for the Palaszczuk government. Housing insecurity can lead to significant impacts on a person's physical, mental and social wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable Queenslanders. For women leaving custody, a lack of stable accommodation can have a profound impact on their successful integration back into the community. I am pleased to announce today that the Palaszczuk government is investing \$1.6 million to extend a program that will help these vulnerable women rebuild their lives and avoid recidivism.

Contract arrangements have now been finalised with two organisations, Sisters Inside and MARA Project, to provide support for women through the Next Step Home—Women on Parole initiative in South-East Queensland and in Townsville. Next Step Home provides critical housing support for women who are on parole or at risk of being remanded in custody. Through this initiative, women who are leaving custody are supported with a one-year headleased home combined with appropriate supports. Next Step Home has already supported more than 200 women, including 170 in South-East Queensland and 35 in Townsville.

We know that having access to stable housing can affect the timing of a woman's release from custody, her risk of homelessness and her ability to find work and be reunified with children. Next Step Home will work with women exiting custody by providing timely access to safe, secure and appropriate housing combined with coordinated support. This initiative will provide stability and access to positive support networks, ensuring women leaving custody have the best possible chance to successfully rebuild their lives.

The \$1.6 million extension of this program is further evidence of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to addressing housing and homelessness challenges on all fronts. Access to a safe place to call home is important for every Queenslanders, and we will continue to invest in that outcome.