

HOMELESSNESS

Ms SANDERSON (Adelaide) (15:00): My question is to the Minister for Social Housing. Besides the government's road map for homelessness, does the government have a long-term strategic plan to deal with homelessness and housing? If so, when was this written and is it publicly available? Figures revealed today by the Hutt St Centre show a record of 178 new clients in the past two months, a 44 per cent increase on the same time as last year, while the Anglicare CE states that 50 people are sleeping rough in the city and the Parklands, double that of last month.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion, Minister for Social Housing, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Youth, Minister for Volunteers) (15:00): I thank the member for Adelaide for her question. In South Australia, we spend about \$58 million a year—that is, both commonwealth and state money—in regard to homelessness. The vast majority is around specialist homelessness services, of which we have about 400 beds in the city.

One of the things that we have going forward is that we know that the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness only continues to the end of June 2017. I have been very concerned about this because this is matched funding between the feds and the state. So, when I attended the commonwealth state and territory Housing and Homelessness Ministers Meeting in March, I took a paper to that meeting to raise our concerns. One of the key issues, when we were leading up to the cessation of that national partnership previously, was discussed at the round tables I held with the homelessness sector.

Their concern is this short-term funding that we have going ahead and how that is going to impact us because people can only get one-year or two-year contracts, and it's very difficult for them to deliver their services. An agreement was reached at that national meeting to commission a report on future policy reforms and future options for homelessness beyond June 2017. Most importantly, what I have really sought is stability for this industry. I think we share a common interest in supporting people who find themselves experiencing homelessness and how we as a state and as a nation support people when they are most vulnerable.

What I am seeking, as the Minister for Social Housing in South Australia, is a five-year agreement, an agreement that is indexed to support people who find themselves in this situation. We have a sleeping rough report that we have had for more than six years in Adelaide; it's a rough sleep account. This enables us to look at the people who are using our services in the CBD. We have seen fluctuations. We know it was a high of about 107 when we started the count. We know that when winter approaches and it is wet and cold we have increases in numbers.

I will continue to work with homelessness sector not only about this future funding, but also how we can prevent homelessness, how we can support people who are at risk of homelessness to keep the homes that they are in. I have talked about this many times since I have been the minister, and I will continue to look at the continuum of housing in this state.

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON REMOTE HOUSING

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON (Ramsay—Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion, Minister for Social Housing, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Youth, Minister for Volunteers) (14:03): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Throughout 2015-16, negotiations have been underway between state governments and the commonwealth for a new National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing. The South Australian government has now agreed to sign the new agreement, which will replace the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) from 1 July 2016.

The capital funding and services delivered through these agreements are vital to improving quality of life for Aboriginal people in remote communities. Since the NPARIH commenced in 2009, 206 new homes have been constructed in remote Aboriginal communities in South Australia and 252 existing homes have been upgraded.

The capital works program serves two important purposes: firstly, to address housing shortages, restore the condition of dwellings and reduce overcrowding; and, secondly, to provide an opportunity for local residents to gain employment. Contractors will be required to provide an initial minimum 25 per cent of employment opportunities to local Aboriginal people, rising to 30 per cent in 2017-18. Employment targets will again be central to the new agreement. Over its two-year term, from 2016-18, \$26.8 million will be delivered to South Australia through the new agreement, with payments released based upon delivery of agreed milestones and targets.

The new agreement will deliver \$3.2 million less funding to South Australia than the former NPARIH, with the commonwealth government redirecting funds from all participating jurisdictions into their remote Work for the Dole program. This reduction in funding will place restrictions on remote housing service delivery and, unfortunately, indicates additional problems beyond the expiry of the agreement in 2018. This house should be aware that, without a meaningful and ongoing commonwealth government funding commitment, there will be a significant impact on South Australia's ability to deliver basic housing services to remote communities after the expiry of this agreement.

The gap between what it costs to deliver property and tenancy management services in remote Aboriginal communities and the income received through tenant rent has been estimated at \$8.9 million per annum from June 2018. In the absence of capital funding, maintenance costs are likely to escalate further as properties deteriorate with age, and all the gains that have been made since 2009, to reduce overcrowding and restore the condition of dwellings, may be lost.

The end of the agreement will also end funding for the Employment Related Accommodation program. This will limit our ability to provide affordable accommodation for Aboriginal people seeking to relocate to metro areas in order to access greater employment and education opportunities for themselves and their families. The state government will continue to negotiate essential long-term funding with the commonwealth in order to continue to provide remote communities with quality housing services.

