



## HOMELESSNESS

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light): Today, I would like to bring to the house's attention what I believe is probably one of the most important issues in my electorate. I am saddened that I actually have to talk about these sorts of issues because I think what I am about to talk about is a blight on any civil society. Of course, I am talking about homelessness.

There are an increasing number of people who approach my electorate offices and other services in Gawler and the Barossa to seek support for housing. The number of rough sleepers in my community has increased immensely.

Even though there were people rough sleeping 10 years ago, you would hardly see them and there were not huge numbers. Today, they are much more visible and the number has certainly increased. The problem of rough sleeping is quite obvious: the

health and safety issues. The health of the people who unfortunately sleep in our streets or on our park benches or by our rivers or at the back of stores, etc., is impacted upon, having to sleep out in the open all the time, particularly in poor weather conditions. In terms of their safety, often they are on the receiving end of violence, quite sadly. It is just sad to see people in those circumstances. Our local churches try to do the best they can in supporting these individuals.

They do provide, for example, opportunities for showers and washing clothes, etc. The number of people on our streets who actually have mental health issues is high and it is certainly an indictment of the way we live in this society that people have to live like that.

We also get an increasing number of people who say, 'I am rough sleeping. Where can I get a shower? Where can I get some food?' etc. As I said earlier, our churches are doing their best, but

certainly they do not have the resources to support these people to the standard required. In addition to rough sleeping, which is, if you like, the worst end of homelessness, we also have people who are couch surfing. I understand that is quite common and an increasing problem amongst young people.

There are a whole range of reasons, including family breakdowns, why they might be doing that. It is particularly worrying when young people, and particularly in their senior years of education, are trying to do the best they can in maintaining their schooling and also preparing for examinations at the end of the year while they are moving from house to house and friends' couches. It is not a good environment.

We also have reports of people sleeping in cars in the community, particularly people who are sleeping in cars with young children because they have been evicted from their housing, which is an issue I would like to mention in a second.

At the moment, with the price of properties skyrocketing, a number of landlords are using this opportunity to sell. It is certainly a seller's market and the number of people selling their properties is increasing. Often, tenants are evicted from these properties to make them easier to sell. We have an increasing number of people who just cannot afford private accommodation.

Not only are they being evicted but private rent has gone up as well. Because the cost of housing has gone up, private rent has gone up as well. It is particularly a problem in the Barossa. Foundation Barossa have told us about the increasing number of youths sleeping rough or couch surfing. Another issue around housing is that we are getting an increasing number of complaints about the maintenance of Housing SA properties.

We are receiving an increasing number of complaints about housing maintenance not being done or being delayed. We had a lady in our office the other day who complained about not having hot water for over a week. I did not have hot water for a day and that was hard to cope with; not having hot water in a house for over a week is very difficult in these conditions, and she also had children. What has been the government's response to our housing crisis?

In Gawler, they closed the Housing SA office. I suppose if you do not talk to people and hear about it, it does not exist, so they closed the Housing SA office to make it even harder for the most vulnerable people in our community to get access to services and support.

In closing, I would like to thank Anglicare SA homelessness services, who are doing a wonderful job, as much as they can, to support people in our community. Homelessness is not

only about having a place to sleep but also, if you are trying to get a job, having a place to get washed and get ready for work. It is a major poverty issue and we need to address it.