



The Hon. Jan Barham MLC

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The Greens NSW Parliamentary Record on Homelessness as at May 10th 2012

Jan Barham is the Greens Parliamentary spokesperson on **Housing and Homelessness**. Below is a list of activities that have been undertaken as she advocates for further action to address issues of homelessness. A full copy of the Greens policy on housing is available on the Greens website at www.nsw.greens.org.au. Jan was elected to Byron Shire Council in 1999, Mayor since 2004 and has been an advocate for homelessness services, policy and protocols in the region.

If you have any particular issues and or concerns or if you would like to suggest a particular action or project, please don't hesitate to make contact..

- 10/5/2012** Motion regarding homelessness in NSW placed on the Notice Paper
- 10/5/2012** QWN – Homeless Person's Protocol
- 8/5/2012** QWN – Remote Indigenous Housing (Implementation plan agreement)
- 3/5/2012** QWN – Homelessness Action Plan Report Card
- 1/5/2012** QoN - 2009/10 allocation for NSW Homelessness Action Plan
- 1/5/2012** QWN – National Partnership Agreement: Remote Indigenous Housing
- 18/4/2012** Meeting with North Coast / Byron Bay homeless service providers
- 4/4/2012** Meeting with Minister Goward
- 4/4/2012** QWN – Residential and Holiday Parks (Plans of Management)
- 27/3/2012** QWN - Homelessness Action Plan – balance of Funds from 2009/10
- 14/3/2012** Meeting – Homelessness NSW
- 8/3/2012** QWN – Cawarra Women's Refuge
- 23/2/2012** Meeting – Meeting with Minister Goward
- 22/2/2012** QoN – Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness
- 21/2/2012** QWN – Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness
- 15/2/2012** QWN – Common Ground Project
- 17/1/2012** Meeting – Meeting with Robert McLelland (Federal Homelessness Minister)
- 24/11/2011** QoN – Public Housing expenditure
- 18/11/2011** Meeting – North Coast Homelessness Meeting with service providers
- 17/11/2011** Meeting – ARPRA conference – (staff attended Annual conf)
- 9/11/2011** QWN – Emergency Temporary Accommodation
- 8/11/2011** Meeting – Anglicare Forum in Parliament
- 28/10/2011** Budget Estimates Hearing: FACS (including Housing)
- 24/10/2011** Meeting – National phone hook up with Greens spokespeople on Housing
- 9/9/2011** Meeting – Meeting with Homelessness NSW
- 6/9/2011** Speech on Residential Parks Amendment Bill
- 6/9/2011** QWN – Homeless young people and leaving care plans
- 5/8/2011** QWN – Measuring homelessness
- 5/8/2011** Adjournment speech marking Homelessness Week
- 4/8/2011** Summary offences Amendment (intoxicated and disorderly conduct) Bill
- 2/8/2011** QWN – National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

FORMAL MOTION: Homelessness in NSW (Thursday May 10th 2012)

Ms Barham to move –

1. That while taking into account the inherent difficulties in accurately measuring the rates of homelessness, this House notes that:

- (a) according to the 2006 National Census, at least 27,374 people were considered homeless in NSW.
- (b) according to a 2009 report from the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (AIHW) called "*Counting the Homeless*", this figure can be broken down into the following categories:
 - i. At least 3,715 people were sleeping rough in improvised dwellings (*Primary homelessness*): (13%)
 - ii. At least 16,033 people were staying with friends or relatives, or in short term accommodation provided through formal assistance (*Secondary homelessness*): (59%)
 - iii. At least 7,626 people were sleeping in facilities providing longer term accommodation such as Boarding Houses (*Tertiary homelessness*): (28%)
- (c) according to the same AIHW report, there is a significant incidence of homelessness among children and young people in NSW, with 10,587 of those counted aged under 24 (39%)
- (d) according to the same AIHW report, the number of older homeless people is growing with 30% of the homeless in New South Wales aged 45 or older, up from 25 per cent in 2001
- (e) it is widely estimated that over 7% of the entire homeless population of NSW are Aboriginal, which is well above the 2.2% of the total NSW Aboriginal population.
- (f) That documented rates of the prevalence of mental health issues in homeless people vary markedly but that an extensive research paper published in 1998 called "Down and Out in Sydney" (Hodder, Teeson & Burich) found that 75% of participants in the study had at least one mental illness compared to 20% in the general population

2. That this House further notes

- (a) The May 2007 report from the NSW Auditor General entitled "*Responding to Homelessness*"
- (b) The report from the NSW Legislative Council Social Issues Committee's 2009 inquiry into Homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation;
- (c) The Government's response in 2010 to the report of the Legislative Council Social Issues Committee's inquiry into Homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation;
- (d) The revised National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness signed on April 13th 2012.

3. That this House strongly supports:

- (a) The continuation of the Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness
- (b) The implementation of the revised Homeless Persons Protocol as soon as possible

4. That this House calls for:

- (a) the Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness to be retained and to meet on a regular basis;
- (b) all Councils to have a nominated staff member tasked with the responsibility of ensuring their Council adheres to the Homeless Persons Protocol;
- (c) all Councils to be required to report on local initiatives for addressing homelessness in their Local Government Area in their Annual Report;
- (d) a review of the ten Regional Homeless Action Plans that were developed in July 2010 with a progress report;
- (e) the balance of funds from the NSW allocation under the 2009-10 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness be identified for a funding program to support local government to meet the needs of homeless people.

Extract - QUESTIONS in Parliament

Minister Greg Pearce represents Minister Goward in the Legislative Council

QWN = Question Without Notice (asked in the Chamber)

QoN = Question on Notice (submitted in writing)

10/5/2012: **QWN: Homeless Person's Protocol**: My QWN is to the Minister for Finance and Services representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Can the Minister please advise the house on the progress of updating the Homeless Person's Protocol; specifically, can the Minister advise who has been consulted on the revised Protocol so far and when the final version will be available to the public.

Government Answer: Pending (due by 4/6/12)

3/5/2012: **QWN: Report Card for NSW Homelessness Action Plan**: My QWN is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister advise the House when the public will be provided with a report card for the New South Wales Homelessness Action Plan covering the period 2010-11? **Answer: The Hon. Greg Pearce:** I thank the member for her question, which I will take on notice. I will also be interested to see that report.

1/5/2012: **QoN: Allocation for NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-10**: Ms Barham to the Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women— Can the Minister confirm if all funds allocated to the implementation of the New South Wales Homelessness Action Plan in 2009/10 were expended? If not, (a) what is the balance? (b) is it State or Federal funding? (c) are there plans for its expenditure? **Answer:** Pending (due by 5/6/12)

22/2/2012: **QoN: Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness**: Ms Barham to the Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women— (1) Has the new terms of reference for the Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness been finalised? (2) When is the next meeting of the Council scheduled to take place? (3) How often will the Council be meeting this year? **Answer: 27/3/2012:** The NSW Government is committed to working with key community leaders and stakeholder groups to guide and inform the development of effective policy and programs. The Premier's Council on Homelessness has met in the life of this government and we have confirmed our commitment to addressing homelessness in the State Plan 2021. (*Follow up question asking for exact meeting dates was lodged on 10.5.12*)

21/2/2012: **QWN: Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness**: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister advise the House on the current status of the Premier's Advisory Council on Homelessness? Have the new terms of reference for the council been finalised? When is the next scheduled meeting of the council? How often will the council meet this year? **Answer:** As the Hon. Jan Barham knows, that part of the housing function rests with Minister Goward. I suggest that she look at the website.

05/08/2011: **QWN: Measuring homelessness**: My QWN is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. In light of the fact that the State Government has committed to a 7 per cent reduction in the overall level of homelessness in New South Wales by the year 2013, will the Minister update the House on what processes are in place to collect relevant data and measure the level of homeless? What is the current estimated homeless figure in New South Wales? **Answer (extract):** The question allows me to outline for the House—this will take some time—the Government's real commitment to social housing. That commitment is reflected in the fact that we have not one but two housing Ministers.... (*The Minister continued along these lines with interjections from the Opposition. The requested information was not provided*)

02/08/2011: **QWN : National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness**: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Recognising that this is the National Week of Homelessness, will the Minister provide the House with an update on the New South Wales Government's delivery of the four core outputs that were committed to under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness—in particular, point three, which relates to tenancy support for private and public tenants, and point four, which relates to assistance for people who are leaving child protection, jail and health facilities, to access and maintain stable, affordable housing. **Answer: The Minister provided a history of Labor Housing Ministers. Jan indicated she was happy to wait for an answer from Minister Goward but Minister Pearce did not take it on notice.**

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH: Homelessness Week (August 5th 2011)

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [3.53 p.m.]: National Homelessness Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness across the community of issues surrounding homelessness and to provide activities and services for those working in the homelessness sector and those affected by homelessness. We are all aware of the public and tragic face of homelessness. We all pass the huddled figures in our streets every day—almost literally on our doorstep of Parliament House—curled up in sleeping bags in Martin Place or huddled on the steps of the State Library. They are just some of the estimated 3,559 people of New South Wales who sleep rough each night. National Homelessness Week is a chance for us to think about the less visible aspects of homelessness: the 10,950 people in our State who are forced to rely on family and friends for a bed each night, the 5,201 using crisis accommodation and refuges, and the 7,665 living in boarding houses on a medium-term to long-term basis

They are the harsh figures of homelessness in our State—in total at the last census in 2006, nearly 28,000 people in New South Wales were classified as homeless. But even that figure is probably an underestimate as one of the consistent challenges facing those working in the homelessness sector is the lack of reliable data. Accurate and credible figures are integral to understanding homelessness not only so we can measure the extent of the problem but also so we can also evaluate the effectiveness of services. I note this week that the Minister for Family and Community Services launched the Platform 70 Program in Woolloomooloo. I commend the Government for supporting that program which aims to provide housing and support services to 70 chronically homeless people in this area of Sydney. This concept of combining accommodation with essential support services is exactly what non-government organisations such as Mission Australia have been calling for.

On Monday Mission Australia detailed that its frontline staff spent more time helping people with mental health issues than helping people with homelessness issues. This has prompted calls for the model for shelters to be modified to incorporate the provision of essential services. This move towards shelters providing easy access to services is not new to me. I will give an example from my home Byron Bay area. In Byron Bay a house is used as a drop-in centre for homeless people. It is a joint venture of the Byron Bay Community Centre, the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul and Byron Shire Council. The cottage provides a shelter, the safe storage of personal belongings and access to a variety of services. It is a case of the service providers coming to those in need rather than the expectation that those people make their way to the disbursed services in the area. This example could be replicated across the State, and I would welcome the opportunity to speak with other members about how it can be implemented while we await the long-term program of trying to provide housing for all people in New South Wales.

This move towards a coordinated and person-centred approach to homelessness is completely consistent with priority 6 of the New South Wales Homelessness Action Plan to streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services. This State Action Plan, named "A Way Home", was released by the State Government in 2009 and lays out some ambitious targets, namely, a reduction of 7 per cent in the overall level of homelessness in New South Wales by 2013, a reduction of 25 per cent in the number of people sleeping rough in New South Wales by 2013 and a reduction of one-third in the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless in New South Wales by 2013. These targets are commendable and the strategies outlined to meet them centre around three key approaches: preventing people from being at risk, responding quickly and effectively to homelessness when it occurs, and ensuring people who have been homeless do not become homeless again.

There are many reasons why people find themselves in a position of homelessness—domestic violence, family violence, financial hardship, mental illness or sometimes an unfortunate run of hard luck. For those who find themselves in such a position it is more than just having no bed or food for the night; it is a lack of security and privacy, and a profound sense of isolation and disengagement. In conclusion, I wish to mark this National Week of Homelessness by thanking the hundreds of workers across our State—both paid and volunteers—who do their best every day to assist the homeless. Their patience, compassion and dedication are to be commended.

The Fletcher Street cottage in Byron Bay offers a range of services to homeless people. It operates as a partnership model involving the Salvation Army, Byron Bay Community and Cultural Centre, St Vincent de Paul and Byron Shire Council.

A short video about Fletcher St Cottage can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXvO7qluz0g>