

Opinion.

7 August 2020

In this together

If nothing else, West Australians know how to look after their own.

We've proved that we can come together and make personal sacrifices for the benefit of all. And we protect our safety with vigour - just look at the local outcry at Clive Palmer's High Court challenge to tear down our hard border.

As we progress through the pandemic, and we move from the previous health crisis, we're rightly focused on getting industry back on its feet and fast-tracking WA jobs. And we're prioritising growth while keeping our community safe.

So now, in Homelessness Week 2020, where do the people with no place to call home fit in to this recovery?

It's a major challenge, but it's one our Premier and this Government are more than capable of tackling.

There's a clear strategy to end homelessness in WA that was launched last year. The plan - All Paths Lead to a Home - has a vision that "everyone has a safe place to call home and is supported to achieve stable and independent lives".

A vision is one thing, but the priorities and the actions are the key to making this a reality.

This week, we're likely to have seen images and heard stories of people sleeping rough in and around our city. This is the reality of around 900 people each and every night in Perth alone. Which is why the Government's plan includes a commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2025.

So what would it take to achieve this? And does this align with the \$5.5 billion WA Recovery Plan? Absolutely it does.

We know that housing is the key to ending homelessness.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute released a peer-reviewed report in November 2018 on social housing as infrastructure. The report outlines an investment pathway for building the extra 86,500 social housing dwellings that West Australians need over the next two decades.

That's more than 2,500 additional social housing dwellings each year for the next 20 years. And that's just in WA.

The nationwide figure is almost 730,000 new homes over that time.

We can do this.

Our own Department of Communities is one of the largest residential property developers in the State. Their projects are often done in partnership with private developers and using State-owned land. It's a great model, and includes around 7 to 11 per cent of all the homes built being made available for affordable or social housing.

So what if we expand this approach to boost our economy and fast-track thousands of jobs in our construction industry? It's the kind of big-thinking that we need right now. A legacy for the ages.

In rolling out the \$5.5 billion WA Recovery Plan, our Premier recognises that we need to keep supporting people who have been most affected by the coronavirus, and protect our most vulnerable.

Achieving an end to rough sleeping by 2025 is going to take a steady supply of housing.

We're a State of innovation and entrepreneurship and now's our time to shine.

We're in this together, so let's ensure this includes the most vulnerable people in the community.

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This opinion piece was first published in The West Australian on 7 August 2020.

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