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# **Background Paper for the Perth Metropolitan Homeless Response Workshop**

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**Workshop 3 August 2011  
City of Vincent**

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Prepared by



# Background Paper for Perth Metropolitan Homeless Response Workshop

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## **Executive summary**

The Perth Metropolitan Homeless Response Workshop will be held on 3 August 2011 at the City of Vincent. The purpose of the workshop is to encourage collaboration amongst key stakeholders toward delivering appropriate support and accommodation outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and others who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping). This paper provides an overview of the issues and identifies existing services. It also introduces various pathways into homelessness that influence the types of services needed to support and accommodate people experiencing homelessness in order to provide the basis for discussion at the workshop.

## **Purpose of the workshop**

The Perth Metropolitan Homeless Response Workshop is designed to encourage collaboration amongst key stakeholders toward delivering appropriate support and accommodation outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and others who are experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping). Workshop participants will investigate options to address the long term homelessness of people frequenting the parks in the Perth CBD and City of Vincent and homelessness among people who move to the city from remote locations. The workshop will focus on problem solving and look to identify tangible actions to address key areas of concern.

This workshop has been instigated and arranged by the Central Regional Managers Human Services Forum working through the City of Vincent Parks People Working Group which the Forum adopted as a project. Financial support from the Forum members as well as in kind contribution from the City of Vincent has enabled the workshop to take place.

The issue of "Aboriginal rough sleepers" and growth of homelessness in the inner metropolitan area is of serious concern to relevant agencies; particularly with the closures of the Swan Valley Aboriginal Corporation facility at Lockridge, Gnangara Aboriginal Community and the reduced funding and facilities available at Cullacabardee, as well as a diminution of Aboriginal hostel facilities and growth of non-Aboriginal homelessness creating pressure on existing mainstream services.

The Central Regional Managers Human Services Forum (CRMHSF) is one of six interagency collaborative forums in the Metropolitan area and a total of 13 in Western Australia. The purpose of RMHSF throughout the State to achieve effective interagency coordination -- between human service agencies providing health, education, training, housing, child protection and family support, disability services, police and corrective services -- is both a priority and a challenge. A greater collective impact can be achieved through a more collaborative agency practice.

Another role for RMHSF is the coordination and oversight of the implementation of the COAG Indigenous Reform Agenda and State Indigenous policy matters.

Collaborative human service delivery cannot occur effectively without the participation of community sector organisations in planning and problem solving at

the regional level as well as the chief executive and portfolio levels. With this realization the Central RMHSF has embarked upon this workshop.

Shelter WA was contracted to prepare background materials, invite interested stakeholder participants and facilitate the workshop. Following the workshop, Shelter WA will compile a report that will be made available to participants.

Workshop participants will include representatives of relevant government agencies and non-governmental organisations, elected members, and other key stakeholders engaged in addressing homelessness in the City of Perth and the City of Vincent.

## **Purpose of the background paper**

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the issues and identify existing services in order to provide the basis for discussion at the workshop. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the complex issues that Aboriginal people and others face when experiencing homelessness. The paper was prepared by Shelter WA, with input from members of the Parks People Project Working Group sub-committee. Participants are requested to come to the workshop prepared to identify opportunities for greater cooperation and collaboration and focus on plans for future action to deliver appropriate support and accommodation outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and others who experience homelessness in the Perth metropolitan area, particularly those who are unable or unwilling to engage with existing services.

## **Issues and context**

On any given night, over 105,000 Australians are homeless. Roughly 13% of the 2006 total were in WA (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008), which is higher than expected given that WA then comprised only 10% of Australia's population (ABS 2007). This includes people experiencing *primary homelessness*, referring to those who must sleep outdoors, in parks or in make-shift structures, often referred to as rough sleepers. *Secondary homelessness* includes people who move between temporary places, staying with friends, relatives or in crisis accommodation. *Tertiary homelessness* refers to people living in accommodation that is considered below basic community standards.

Homelessness remains a critical problem for Perth and many of WA's regional centres and remote communities. In WA, over 13,300 people are homeless on any given night. Of these, approximately 2,392 sleep rough (AIHW 2009). The table below shows the distribution of homeless people across types of accommodation, comparing WA with the rest of Australia.

## Persons in Different Sectors of the Homeless Population

|  | Australia |     | Western Australia |     |
|--|-----------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|  | N         | %   | N                 | %   |
| <b>Boarding houses</b>   | 21,596    | 20  | 1,652             | 12  |
| <b>Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) accommodation</b>   | 19,849    | 19  | 1,395             | 11  |
| <b>Friends and relatives</b>   | 46,856    | 45  | 7,952             | 59  |
| <b>Improvised dwellings, sleepers out</b>  | 16,375    | 16  | 2,392             | 18  |
|  | 104,375   | 100 | 13,391            | 100 |
| Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006 |           |     |                   |     |

The figures show an increase since 2001, up from 11,697 homeless people in WA in 2001 and 99,900 in Australia. A certain percentage of this may be due to better counting of the homeless population. Nevertheless, homeless service providers report a growing demand for their services and are often unable to keep up with demand.

In contrast to the popular belief that the homeless population is predominantly middle-aged and older single men, the contemporary profile of the homeless population is one in which the majority are aged under 35 and a large number are children. In 2006, 62% of homeless people in WA were aged 34 or younger with a significant number (32%) aged 12 to 18 years. Nine per cent were children under 12 years who were with either one or both parents (DCP 2009). Of the homeless adults on Census night, 82% of people had substance abuse issues and had been homeless for 12 months or longer; 50% of those who had no substance abuse issues had also been homeless for the same length of time – a year (Johnson and Chamberlain 2007). This illustrates that although substance abuse is co-occurring in a large proportion of people who are also homeless, it is not a primary determinant, and people without drug and alcohol problems are equally at risk of becoming homeless for long periods.

People who sought homelessness services in 2008-2009 gave a variety of reasons for seeking crisis accommodation including domestic violence (29%), financial difficulties (11%), family breakdown (8%), emergency/previous accommodation ended (7%), and needing time out from family or other situations (6.3%). Other reasons given were substance abuse, health issues, overcrowding and sexual abuse (AIHW 2010).

The 2006 census data identified a total of 235 people living in an improvised home, tent or in other “rough” accommodation in the City of Perth local government area. Of these, 111 were in the Perth CBD and 124 were outside the inner city area.

Indigenous people experience homelessness at a higher rate than non-Indigenous people (1.9% of the Indigenous population are homeless compared to 0.5% of the non-Indigenous population). In 2006, 1,496 Indigenous people in WA experienced

homelessness. The majority of these were secondary homeless, which includes residing in crisis accommodation and staying with friends or relatives (AIHW 2010).

According to a report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2008, p.45), “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be homeless than other Australians as they generally do not have the same access to affordable and secure housing. The Indigenous population is more mobile than the remainder of the population. Indigenous people often need to leave their home to access services or to observe cultural obligations.” All of these factors, combined with the absence of temporary accommodation, can contribute to homelessness.

The same report continues that in 2005-2006, “Indigenous clients were less likely to cite accommodation difficulties as a reason for seeking assistance than non-Indigenous clients (in 10% and 17% of support periods, respectively), where accommodation difficulties include being evicted or asked to leave, or the ending of previous accommodation or emergency accommodation. However, Indigenous clients were twice as likely to cite overcrowding as a reason for seeking assistance, in 4% of support periods compared with 2% for non-Indigenous clients” (2008, p.50).

## **Pathways into homelessness**

Johnson et al (2008) identify several pathways into homelessness including mental health, domestic violence, housing crisis, substance abuse and youth. These pathways often overlap. Nevertheless, understanding peoples’ pathways into homelessness is useful in understanding the context which has contributed to them becoming homeless and the appropriate supports and accommodation needed to assist them.

People experiencing homelessness often conceptualise the causes of homelessness differently from the practitioners aiming to assist them. For example, in their report on Indigenous homelessness Birdsall-Jones et al (2010, p.7) found that “the way homelessness is understood by homeless Indigenous people often differs from that of Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners. Practitioners place the greatest emphasis on the ways in which life circumstances in general interact with structural features of the wider society. Their concern is the degree to which the structural features of government and departmental policy, agency practice, the Australian economy and the available facilities either hinder or help Indigenous people to exit the homeless state.” The report continued:

In contrast, the primary concern of Indigenous homeless people is the way in which their own specific life circumstances impel them into the homeless state and thereby place them in the path of key institutions in the wider society and how these institutions: (1) raise conflicts between themselves and their own social world; and (2) prevent them from exiting the homeless state. For Indigenous homeless people life circumstances which impel Indigenous people into homelessness often flow from a lack of access to (suitable) housing, substance misuse and violence.

The ways that homelessness is understood and conceptualised will influence the programs and services to assist people, and ultimately whether those programs are successful or not. Memmott (2004, p.1) suggests that “mainstream concepts of homelessness do not serve Indigenous people well.” His research found that, “for many Indigenous homeless people, finding accommodation is not necessarily their most crucial support need. Indigenous homelessness can be redefined as losing one’s sense of control over, or legitimacy in, the place where one lives.” Memmott’s research identified three broad categories of Indigenous homelessness: public place dwellers; those at risk of homelessness; and spiritually homeless people. These are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of Indigenous Homelessness Categories and Best Practice Responses

| Category/Sub-Category                                  | Characteristics   | Best Practice Response Category  |
|--|---|--|
| I. Public Place Dwellers                               | Living in a mix of public or semi-public places (as well as some private places, which are entered illegally at night to gain overnight shelter), eg parks, churches, verandas, car parks, car sales yards (under cars), beaches, drains, riverbanks, vacant lots and dilapidated buildings.  |  |
| I.1 PPD <i>Voluntary, short-term intermittent</i>      | Often staying in conventional accommodation (eg a relative's house), may have their own residence in a rural or remote settlement. When socialising in public urban places, they may or may not decide to camp out overnight, usually with others, despite the availability of accommodation. | Legislative and police approaches.<br>Patrols and outreach services.<br>Diversionary strategies.<br>Addressing anti-social behaviour.<br>Alcohol strategies.<br>Emergency or crisis accommodation. |
| I.2 PPD <i>Voluntary, medium-term</i>                  | Reside continually in public places (including overnight); acknowledge they have another place of residence in a home community but uncertain if and when they will return.   | Service centres and gathering places.<br>Physical design of public places.<br>Public education strategies.<br>Training outreach workers.   |
| I.3 PPD <i>Voluntary, long-term (chronic homeless)</i> | Reside continually in public places (including overnight); unclear whether it is possible for them to readily reconcile with their home community/family due to a range of emotional barriers; they have come to regard a beat of public places as their 'home'.                              |  |

(continued next page)

| Category/Sub-Category                               | Characteristics  | Best Practice Response Category  |
|---|--|--|
| 1.4 PPD <i>Reluctant and by necessity</i>           | Residing continually in public places, and who<br>(a) wish to return home but need to remain in urban area due to a service need or to support a hospitalised relative or similar; or<br>(b) wish to return home but no funds for and/or capacity to organise travel.  |  |
| 2.0 At risk of homelessness                         | At risk of losing one's house or of losing the amenity of one's house.   |  |
| 2.1 At risk <i>Insecurely housed people</i>         | Residing in adequate housing but under threat of loss of such; lack of security of occupancy; possibly due to circumstances of poverty.  | Emergency or crisis accommodation.<br>Medium-term transitional housing.  |
| 2.2 <i>People in sub-standard housing</i>           | People whose housing is of a sub-standard architectural quality, possibly unsafe or unhealthy housing.   | Long-term housing.   |
| 2.3 At risk – <i>experiencing crowded housing</i>   | People whose housing is crowded, resulting in considerable stress to occupants.  |  |
| 2.4 At risk – <i>dysfunctionally mobile persons</i> | In a state of continual or intermittent residential mobility, including temporary residence (eg crisis accommodation), that is a result of personal and/or social problems (eg violence, alcohol and substance abuse, lack of safety or security in a social sense, personality or 'identity crisis', lack of emotional support and security). |  |
| 3. <i>Spiritually homeless people</i>               | A state arising from either:<br>(a) separation from traditional land;<br>(b) separation from family and kinship networks; or<br>(c) a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused.  | Philosophies of client interaction.<br>Alcohol strategies.<br>Regional strategies.<br>Emergency or crisis accommodation.<br>Public education strategies.<br>Phone-in information services. |

Among the Indigenous homeless present in parks in the Perth CBD and City of Vincent, people have experienced a number of pathways into homelessness similar to the ones described above and some unique to the local context. These include:

- moving to Perth for medical assistance or to care for family requiring medical assistance
- substance abuse
- mental health
- domestic violence
- displacement from dry communities up North
- housing crisis including eviction from public or private accommodation
- displacement from Swan Valley and Lockridge following closure of Aboriginal community settlements and camps

Some of the different forms of homelessness are described by Birdsall-Jones et al (2010, p.49-50):

Another situation of spiritual homelessness exists in Perth. This arose as part of the result of the closure of a designated Indigenous community in the metropolitan region in June 2003 (Nola 13 June 2003). The community was located in the city's eastern suburbs. It was closed in extremely controversial circumstances following court action against a small group of men, one of whom was finally gaoled for his offences in 2008 (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2008; 2009). The closely related residents of the community were relocated in public housing throughout the metropolitan area...Within the year following the closure of the community, a small proportion of its former membership withdrew from their public housing homes and formed a homeless group in the Perth city centre...They spend their days moving around the city centre and sheltering in secluded places around the city by night. They may camp in a laneway or behind a skip. For meals, they go to a soup truck in Wellington Square in the early morning. Occasionally, the younger ones aged up to 25 can go to the YMCA's Jewell House in Goderich St. and there are other night shelters which will take in homeless people. On pension days they sometimes put their money together and buy the makings of a barbeque. Then, weather permitting, they may take the ferry over to the South Perth foreshore and cook their meat on the public barbeques. There's also the area called the Bull's Paddock in the city where they sometimes go for their barbeque, which they get to by using Perth's free inner city bus service.

However, this is a dangerous lifestyle and people have been knifed for their blankets, or mobbed in running battles. These are sometimes brought on by other homeless groups, but may also be perpetrated by groups of young people of whom the Eastern Suburbs Aboriginal Community group knows nothing. Other dangers come from substance abuse, principally sniffing; solvents, spray paint, glue; and drinking methylated spirits with lemonade. These are cheap forms of substance

abuse and ordinarily, they are all these people can afford, although when they can, they will drink beer.

Now and then, some of the group will go to one of their relations' homes and stay for a few days, to do their laundry, shower, rest and then they leave again. So far, the only way any of them have been made to leave the street permanently is an illness so serious that it is completely debilitating, such as a series of strokes. Then, they are placed in a nursing home and because they are now disabled, they do not leave. Others have died on the street...the relations of these homeless people worry about them very deeply. Their explanations of why some Eastern Suburbs Aboriginal Community residents have taken to the street are various. In a very few cases, the person is acknowledged to have been suffering from emotional problems before the community was closed, and having taken to the street following that, their condition worsened. In the case of the rest of this homeless group, the only explanation they have is that when the Community closed, it 'broke them', they 'have no drive, nothing to live for', and they 'yearn to get back to where they were' (interview, Perth, June 2008).

There are clearly mental health issues involved in these cases of spiritual homelessness...With regard to the former members of the Eastern Suburbs Aboriginal Community, their circumstances may arise from traumatic stress syndrome. They have been through a long and difficult experience which began in 2001 with the accusations against the community's senior men, a state commission of enquiry (Gordon, Hallahan and Henry 2002), the closure of the community and eviction of the residents in 2003, the conviction of one of the senior men in 2008, and the process of appealing against the closure of the community which is ongoing (interview Perth, June 2008). In addition, there may have been pre-existing issues within the community which constituted a threat to mental health for some community members.

## Pathways out of homelessness

The various pathways into homelessness influence the types of services needed to support and accommodate people experiencing homelessness. Although housing is essential, it is often not enough to prevent further homelessness, especially for people affected by mental illnesses, substance abuse or violence. Nevertheless, securing affordable, appropriate housing is an essential component in preventing further homelessness.

Crisis accommodation includes night shelters and/or sobering up shelters. One example from Bega Garnbirringu Health Service in Kalgoorlie includes a rough sleeper assertive outreach program and a sobering up shelter. The shelter provides a safe and secure place for those affected by drugs and/or alcohol to sober up away from police incarceration. Clients who are repeat clients receive assistance with their alcohol and other drug issues through a referral service.

Some jurisdictions have used a return to country policy. Phillips et al (2011, p.19) reviewed return to country approaches throughout Australia and found that:

return to country initiatives can most appropriately meet the needs of some Indigenous people residing in public places. In some instances, however, this strategy can be inappropriate for both the individuals and the home communities. Memmott et al. (2003) document how 'return to country' approaches have often been implemented against the overt wishes of the Aboriginal people involved.

In addition to seeing Indigenous homelessness in displacement terms, outreach responses to Indigenous people have been directed to managing concerns about public intoxication and/or anti-social behaviour. Outreach responses informed by this perception focus on moving people away from public places where they are not wanted by the broader public. These types of 'move on' outreach responses have two related elements. On the one hand, outreach responses to Indigenous people living in public places are of a 'law-and-order' nature. In this case, police and council rangers, often instigated by public complaints, draw upon legislation to forcibly remove people from public places (Memmott et al. 2003). This type of outreach response further exacerbates the problems which people residing in public places have with accessing vital health and welfare services (Australian Government 2006).

On the other hand, there are a range of approaches that, although moving Indigenous people from public places, do not use overt coercion or rely upon legislation. Some of these approaches were developed in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. These types of responses can be broadly considered as diversionary, and include engagement and the provision of short and medium term accommodation.

## **Existing services, funding and policy framework**

### **Local governments**

The City of Vincent plays an active role in coordinating and hosting the Parks People Project Working Group. This group, which was first run by the Department for Child Protection, continues to be the overarching group to monitor homelessness and related anti-social issues within the City of Vincent. Since the Parks People Project Working Group's inception, due to increased coordination between attending agencies there have been improved responses to people presenting in parks and public spaces with problematic issues. The coordinated responses have evidenced a decrease of people presenting in parks and also in the number of complaints from adjacent residents and businesses. However, due to the constant changing and transient face of homelessness, it is an area that continually needs to be refined and honed to ensure longer term gains and effective agency preparedness.

The City of Perth seeks to complement the other tiers of government through civic leadership, advocacy, coordination and facilitating partnerships that address homelessness in the Perth inner city area. The City of Perth is not a direct service provider but works collaboratively with government and non government agencies to minimise the impact of homelessness on community. For example the City of Perth supports voluntary organisations through its donation program and community development program and the annual one-day event Homeless Connect Perth. The City of Perth promotes that people experiencing homelessness of all ages, social and cultural backgrounds and abilities are treated with equity and dignity and encouraged onto the pathway out of homelessness.

## State and Federal funding for homelessness services

In WA, the major source of funding for specialist homelessness services is through the joint Commonwealth/State National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Funding for NAHA and NPAH is administered in WA by the Department for Child Protection.

NAHA provides ongoing funding for approximately 120 specialist homelessness services, including crisis and transitional accommodation services for adults, families, young people and women and children experiencing domestic violence, as well as day centres, meals and outreach services.

In April 2009, the Rudd government released the white paper, *The Road Home*, which set a target to halve street homelessness by 2020 and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it. In order to meet that target, homelessness funding increased by 55%. This represented an additional \$800 million over four years.

The NPAH commits towards the following intermediate targets by 2013:

- A decrease of 7% in the number of people who are homeless
- A decrease of a third in the number of Aboriginal people who are homeless
- A decrease of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough (DCP 2010)

Funding through the NPAH will provide for a range of programs including:

- Services for rough sleepers
- New housing support workers for private and public tenancies
- Housing support workers for people leaving supported accommodation and institutional care
- New and expanded supports for women and children who experienced domestic violence
- A Foyer development to provide supported, yet independent, accommodation for young people, linked to education and/or skills training

At the end of June 2010 contracts were signed and the equivalent of 100 new positions were created across the state.

In May 2011, the State Government announced \$5.4 million for an acute homelessness night shelter in Perth. The shelter is a response to an identified need to provide additional overnight accommodation for homeless people sleeping rough in the Perth Central Business District. Funds are provided to build and operate a 10 bed shelter which will be operated by St Vincent de Paul.

## Street to Home Program

The Street to Home Program, funded and administered by the Department for Child Protection, includes assertive outreach workers, a mobile clinical outreach team and housing support workers. The Street to Home Program includes three assertive outreach teams:

- 1) Uniting Care West Tranby
- 2) Ruah Community Services
- 3) St. Patrick's Community Support Centre Fremantle

People over 18 years of age can use the Street to Home Program who meet the following criteria:

- Are primary homeless (rough sleepers) without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, in parks, laneways and so on.)
- Qualifies for a Centrelink benefit
- In Perth or Fremantle inner city areas (Fremantle area covered by St Patricks)

Street to Home Assertive Outreach Workers have the capability to undertake street based shifts to connect with the client group at different times during the days dependent on the needs of the client group, this may involve early morning- day-evening shifts depending on each agency. The Street to Home Program is not a crisis response service. Outreach Workers serve many functions. For example, the Ruah Outreach Workers develop relationships to gain engagement, tailor flexible support plans, connect to existing day centre services, collaborate with mainstream and other agencies, partner with mental health clinical outreach team, link to supported housing providers, and provide transitional support until transfer of case management with supported housing providers.

The Street to Home Program also includes the Mobile Clinical Outreach Team staffed by Department of Health. The Mobile Clinic Outreach Team is a new dual-diagnosis combined drug and alcohol and psychiatric service.

Housing Support Workers are available at:

- 1) Saint Bartholomew's House
- 2) 55 Central
- 3) The Salvation Army
- 4) Foundation Housing
- 5) St. Patrick's Community Support Centre (Sister's Place)

## Homeless day centres

Tranby Day Centre provides day support to homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless. Tranby was established to provide a range of services to assist people transition from homelessness to a more secure existence. Tranby is an open service and caters for people who are aged 20 and over. Clients do not require a referral to access the services offered by Tranby. Individuals requiring support are encouraged to drop in to the centre and speak to the support workers on site. Breakfast is provided every morning free of charge, this includes tea and coffee. Light refreshments are also available in the form of sandwiches which are available daily for a small fee. Operating Hours: Monday to Thursday 6.30am – 11.00am, Sunday 7.30am – 11.00am

The Ruah Centre is a multi-use day centre located in the inner city, that provides drop-in facilities, showers, specialised support services, training and small group programs. The Ruah Centre is a service for all disadvantaged men and women who are: over the age of 20 years, low income, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, have mental health issues, have problematic alcohol or substance use issues, are socially isolated, or have any other needs or issues. The Centre also offers a case work service to clients with ongoing issues; who need support and are unable to access such support elsewhere. Casework clients can be seen during drop-in times, but are often followed up with appointments or outreach in the afternoons. The range of services offered by the Ruah Centre is supplemented by a regular schedule of visiting services including Centrelink, mental health nurse, Street Law, Western Australian Substance Users Association, Department of Housing and the Mobile GP.

In June 2011, the Salvation Army closed its homeless day centre at Genesis. There are plans for a day centre to be included in Murlali Lodge when it is complete in a few years.

## Crisis and transitional housing and support services

Salvation Army, Tanderra House in Mount Lawley caters for lone men in crisis. Tanderra provides crisis, short and transitional accommodation. All clients are individually case managed with the view to gaining independence.

Salvation Army, Lentara Men's Hostel, is being redeveloped. The new facility, Murlali Lodge, will be open in a few years. It will accommodate 104 men and will include a day centre. Access to accommodation at Murlali Lodge will be administered from Tanderra House in Mt. Lawley.

St Bartholomew's House provides community based support, accommodation and assistance to homeless individuals, and establishes collaborative partnerships with individuals and other organisations to eliminate or reduce homelessness. St. Bartholomew's House Homeless & Transitional Support Service (Appleton Hostel) offers secure accommodation and support services for single men aged 18 years and above experiencing homelessness. The House has three units: Claisebrook Unit that includes crisis and short term, shared and single rooms; Lawson Unit with single

rooms for transition to independent living; and Peter Hodge Hostel with single rooms for transition to independent living. St. Bart's new building project commenced construction in Lime Street East Perth in January 2011. St. Bart's is building a unique and complex integrated accommodation project that will fit into the East Perth precinct, be as 'green' as possible and will deliver 148 high quality units for people who are experiencing homelessness.

Aboriginal Hostels provides accommodation services such as Derbarl Bidjar, Allawah Grove, and country hostels in Derby, Broome, Kalgoorlie and Kununurra. Derbal Bidjar Hostel in Maylands provides temporary accommodation for people accessing medical services. Costs are covered for eligible people from regional areas attending metropolitan health services for necessary medical care or treatment if they are approved for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS). Aboriginal Hostels also administers funding for community hostels for travellers, students and drug and alcohol users. Cost varies according to circumstances and income.

Anawim Aboriginal Women's Service provides a range of case management and support services for sole Indigenous women, unaccompanied by children, who are escaping family or social violence, homelessness or other crisis. Anawim consists of an emergency housing intake service to provide crisis housing and assessments; and to develop support plans which link women to other specialist and mainstream services. The Anawim Community Centre offers a duty intake service, life skills activities and an opportunity for support for Aboriginal women as they work towards accessing sustainable housing and an improved quality of life.

Ebenezer Home (Northern Suburbs) provides Aboriginal staffed accommodation and support for homeless young people, which includes crisis accommodation for females 15-24 yrs and supported transitional accommodation for males and females aged 16-25 yrs.

Noongar Mia Mia provides and manages housing for Indigenous people within the Perth metropolitan area. It is an Indigenous owned and controlled company that exclusively operates as a property manager of rental accommodation in the Perth Metropolitan area for Indigenous people.

## Referral services

The Homeless Advisory Service provides information to primary and secondary homeless people which will assist them to seek their own accommodation. Every effort is made by the Homeless Advisory Service to assist homeless people to link with crisis accommodation services. The Advisory Service also takes calls from people who have shelter but do not have their own tenancy or lodgings. In these cases the Homeless Advisory Service encourages clients to obtain bond assistance and to seek private rental accommodation. Clients are given information about public and community rental housing through the Department of Housing and how they can apply for priority assistance.

Crisis Care is a telephone information and counselling service for people in crisis needing urgent help. It operates 24 hours, 7 days a week. Crisis Care can arrange

help including temporary accommodation, protection for children, financial aid, counselling and support services.

## Health services

The Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) provides subsidies towards the cost of travel and accommodation for permanent country residents to travel to access the nearest eligible medical specialist service.

The Office of Aboriginal Health works in partnership with Aboriginal communities and health service providers to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receive culturally appropriate health care that meets their needs. Programs include Building Solid Families, Men's Health, Primary Care, Youth Health and Youth Suicide.

The objectives of the Aboriginal Health Council of WA include: (a) The amelioration of poverty within the Aboriginal community; (b) The advancement of Aboriginal religion; (c) The development and maintenance of educational institutions to provide constructive educational health courses and programmes for members of the Aboriginal community and to undertake medical research to redress ill-health within the Aboriginal community; and (d) To deliver holistic and culturally appropriate health and health related services to the Aboriginal community.

Derbarl Yerrigan provides general medical, physiotherapy, ear and eye services, dental, maternal and child health program, welfare, patient transport and health promotion.

Elizabeth Hansen Autumn Centre provides residential care facility 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The centre provides culturally secure services for people requiring renal dialysis and short term medical procedures.

The Street Doctor is an accredited General Practice service that has been successfully operating since 2001 and is run by Perth Primary Care Network. Street Doctor is a mobile, easily accessible, confidential, non-judgemental and non-discriminatory bulk billing primary health care service. This service employs a multidisciplinary team of General Practitioners, Registered Nurses and Outreach Workers. The aim of the Street Doctor is to improve health outcomes and reduce hospitalisation for disadvantaged people of all ages. Street Doctor attends several different sites around Central Perth and the Eastern Suburbs. The service attends sites that will provide homeless and disadvantaged populations with access to primary health care because access to conventional general practice may not be a possibility for a number of reasons.

## Food

Salvation Army serves 60-70 people each morning in Supreme Court Gardens and Wellington Square.

Through Red Cross volunteers provide a mobile, hot and nutritious evening meal to homeless and otherwise disadvantaged people from specially equipped vans.

### **Alcohol and drug services**

The Salvation Army's Bridge House in Highgate provides overnight assistance for alcohol and other drug affected persons. The Bridge House offers a holistic approach to addiction recovery and includes a detoxification unit, drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Services bases itself and its services within a working model that meets high standards for "cultural security" and offers treatments, education programs, Yarning (counselling) and a range of natural healing therapies that have always been at the heart of Aboriginal life.

### **Advocacy and legal services**

Daydawn Advocacy Centre provides support, advocacy and negotiation on behalf of Aboriginal people in relation to a variety of housing issues, including homelessness, housing applications, housing disputes, public housing appeals, inspections, waiting lists, and evictions.

Aboriginal Legal Service provides assistance with criminal law, civil law, human rights, family law, and duty lawyers in attendance at all Local Courts and the Children's Court, including a Women's Support Officer (prison visits on legal matters).

Shelter WA is an independent community based peak body committed to the principle of accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing for low income and otherwise disadvantaged people including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Shelter WA's role is to give an informed voice on housing policy based on sound research, close collaboration and consultation with housing consumers and community based organisations working on housing and related issues. Shelter WA does not provide or manage accommodation or perform direct client services, other than linking to support by referral to service delivery organisations and the provision of information.

Street Law Centre WA is a not-for-profit incorporated association. Its objects are the relief of poverty, suffering, distress or misfortune of people in Western Australia who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Street law will provide advice, assistance and casework services in the following areas: housing, debts, bankruptcy, criminal law (minor matters only), discrimination, guardianship and administration applications, police complaints, criminal injuries compensation, fines, violence restraining orders, and family law – access to children (limited assistance). Street Law's services are provided through legal clinics that take place at Ruah and Tranby. Street Law also has an advice line.

## Department of Indigenous Affairs

The Department of Indigenous Affairs collaborates and engages with Aboriginal people and stakeholders to enhance life opportunities for Aboriginal people. The Department is not primarily a funding nor program delivery agency. The Department seeks to strengthen Government engagement with Aboriginal people; development and implement policy that addresses economic participation, remote community and land tenure reform priority areas; implement key strategic initiatives to maximise social and economic benefits; and lead and implement Council of Australian Government (COAG) reforms.

## Centrelink

Centrelink convenes the Homelessness Reference Group. Centrelink's service response to homelessness was through the creation of Centrelink Community Engagement Officers (CCEOs). They provide assertive outreach into the community to work with the homeless and those at risk customers in their own environment. CCEOs ensure customers are in receipt of all their entitled Centrelink payments and work closely with agencies, community groups and welfare organisations in assisting homeless clients with referrals to accommodation and provide input into strategies to reduce homelessness.

## Nyoongar Patrol

The Nyoongar Patrol Outreach Service is a community based service that deals with social and welfare issues in the Perth Central Business District and surrounding regions, Fremantle, Midland, Northbridge and Vincent. The mission of Nyoongar Patrol is to continually provide 'street level' early social and welfare interventions to Aboriginal people who are at risk of: self harm, family and inter-family violence, entering the criminal justice system, homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health episodes. The purposes of the Nyoongar Patrol is to provide early street level interventions to local and remote Indigenous people frequenting public spaces in nominated locations. The target groups are people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system due to various social and welfare issues.

## Police

As part of the responsibility to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of all people in Western Australia by contributing to making our State a safe and secure place, WA Police contribute to a variety of interagency partnerships with regards to homeless people. While a focus will always remain law and order as well as maintenance of the peace, WA Police continually seek innovative ways of diverting people from the criminal justice system.

These well established partnerships enable Police to respond quickly to problems as they arise and to use networks of other Government and secondary service providers to assist. The WA Police are committed to working with Aboriginal people

to build strong and trusted partnerships that address local needs and the Aboriginal Corporate Development Unit coordinates information, programs and advice on Aboriginal issues impacting on WA Police. Its role includes:

- Facilitating communication between police and Indigenous communities.
- Encouraging Indigenous people to seek employment with the WA Police.
- Identifying and responding to the needs of Indigenous people.
- Contributing to developing police knowledge, practices and services of the WA Police to ensure Indigenous people are not disadvantaged in accessing police services or discriminated in any way.

## **Corrective services and crime prevention**

The Department of Corrective Services supports offenders in the community in obtaining accommodation by way of working with local community agencies and service providers. The department also assists prisoners in obtaining and maintaining transitional accommodation after a period of imprisonment, through its Transitional Accommodation Support Service.

Outcare provides a range of services to ex-offenders including accommodation provision, referral, and advocacy. Outcare has a range of single and shared crisis accommodation across the Perth metropolitan area which is available to ex-offenders and their families who are participating in the re-entry program, and to other justice related clients who are experiencing difficulties with accommodation and homelessness.

## **Relevant research**

Flatau et al (2008) analysed the cost-effectiveness of homeless programs. Their paper discusses how “homelessness programs may improve the health, wellbeing, financial security, labour market and accommodation outcomes of clients. This, in turn, may result in decreased utilisation of homelessness services in the future, reduced utilisation of hospital, justice and other services, reduced child residential care costs, lower social housing and private rental management costs from the avoidance of evictions, lower income support payments and higher revenue from increased income tax payments.”

Mark Liddiard at Curtin University is working on a small piece of research for St Vincent de Paul Society examining service provision for homeless men with complex needs. There are four main areas that this study is seeking to investigate, drawing upon both Australian and International examples:

- What are examples of best practice in addressing the problem of homeless men with complex needs?
- What are the various support models that are in use with proven success?
- What are strategies for the management of behaviours in this area, again with proven success?

- What are suitable building designs to cater for homeless men with complex needs?

## Concerns

In preparation for the workshop, the Parks People Project Working Group sub-committee has identified several areas of concern. Participants are asked to bring their own ideas to discuss at the workshop.

- lack of strategy to engage people who don't want to engage
- need for inclusive communities
- safety for people living on the streets
- public safety
- lack of culturally appropriate service delivery – a number of key agencies apparently not acknowledging culture of homelessness, or acknowledging the nature of reasons behind why people present and keep presenting in parks and public spaces
- A large degree of barring more 'at risk' clients and limitations of 'assertive' outreach services not able to adequately respond to the most at risk client groups as they are 'too hard' to engage.
- Lack of culturally appropriate service delivery in terms of the diversity of represented people who are presenting in parks. Aboriginal people and mixed groups and not tailoring services offered beyond 'whitefella' approaches.
- greater coordination needed between agencies - many silos existing catering for specific client profiles not flexible when person does not fit criteria for service, lack of communication and duplications
- Dept of Housing disruptive behaviour policy resulting in increasing homelessness among Aboriginal families
- plethora of feel good short term approaches which are not assisting or considering longer term issues and ramification- i.e. food handouts, mattress handouts, swags etc that make it more appealing for people to 'opt out'.
- no protocol developed or recognition of overlapping department and agency responsibilities and issues and hotspots
- lack of tangible actions to dealing with this overall complex issue and sites of concern
- lack of acknowledgment that homelessness and associated problematic issues in parks and public spaces is an area that fall outside of many agencies key responsibilities and mandate. It is however an area which all agencies can assist in and look to ways of ensuring supportive and inclusive policy environments and ensuring that their actions are not counterproductive to each other
- Need to work more collaboratively on an ongoing basis and long term.

## Moving forward

Here are some of the initial suggestions that emerged out of the Parks People Project Working Group. Workshop participants are asked to consider what resources and ideas they can offer to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and others experiencing homelessness in the Perth CBD and the City of Vincent.

- Improved coordination and communication among stakeholders.
- Determine what resources each agency can offer to collectively address homelessness for people with complex needs.
- Determine the role of local governments in addressing homelessness
- What are the procedures and practices needed?
- Changes in operational models? Legislative framework?
- Additional services?
- Funding needed?
- Training needed?
- Night shelter
- Indigenous assertive outreach teams – culturally appropriate, intensive, extensive long term follow up to build trust
- How to reduce harms and apprehensions by police due to homelessness
- How to reduce community concern about homelessness, particularly in public spaces.
- Develop draft protocols such as those in Adelaide to address “hotspots”
- Investigate alternative models of intensive case management outreach services
- Investigate the feasibility or appropriateness of establishing alternative culturally appropriate facilities
- Increased access to culturally appropriate drug and alcohol treatment services.
- Extend the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme
- Create safe, public space for Aboriginal people in Perth
- Re-open Lockridge or establish safe space for Aboriginal people displaced from the camp
- Services that are needed include culturally appropriate assertive outreach with intensive case management support and the opportunity to live in a shelter be it a refuge or home.

## Best practice response strategies

Memmott et al (2003, p.5) describe response strategies as they relate to different groups of people experiencing homelessness. Please note that the ticks show the appropriate type of response strategy for different types of homelessness; ticks do not indicate that a particular strategy is in place or that the need is being met.

Table 2: Analysis of the Response Strategies in relation to the different categories of Indigenous Homeless and Public Place Dwelling People

| Response Strategies   | Homeless and Public Place Dwelling Categories |   |                                       |                                     |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|   | 1.0 Public Place Dwellers                     |   |                                       |                                     | 2.0 At Risk Categories |                        |                    |                          | 3.0                      |
|   | 1.1 Public place dwellers – short term        | 1.2 Public place dwellers – medium term | 1.3 Public place dwellers – long term | 1.4 Reluctant public place dwellers | 2.1 Insecurely housed  | 2.2 Substandard housed | 2.3 Crowded housed | 2.4 Dysfunctional Mobile | 3.0 Spiritually homeless |
| 1. Legislative and Police Approaches<br>(Only in conjunction with other strategies)   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
| 2. Patrols & Outreach Services<br>(Night Patrols, Aboriginal Wardens)   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        | ✓                  | ✓                        |                          |
| 3. Diversionary Strategies<br>(Detox Centres, Sobering Up Shelters)   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    | ✓                        |                          |
| 4. Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
| 5. Philosophies of Client Interaction<br>(Community Development Approach, Healing Framework)  | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 6. Alcohol Strategies   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 7. Regional Strategies  | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 8. Accommodation Options  |   |   |                                       |                                     |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
| 8.1 Emergency or crisis accommodation (1-3 nights)<br>(Women's refuges, safe houses, sobering up shelters or hostels plus management support)                               | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 8.2 Medium-term transitional housing (1-6 months)<br>(hostels, boarding houses, large extended family housing, hospital hostel, managed town camp, plus management support) |   |   |                                       |                                     | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  |                          |                          |
| 8.3 Long-term housing with management support<br>(houses, extended family houses, managed and serviced camps, flats and units, special housing for aged, men and women)     |   |   |                                       |                                     | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  |                          |                          |
| 9. Service Centres & Gathering Places<br>(Food Provision, Day Centre, Dedicated Space)  | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
| 10. The Physical Design of Public Spaces<br>(Storage Shelves, Park Shelter, etc)  | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    |                          |                          |
| 11. Public Education Strategies   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    |                          | ✓                        |
| 12. Phone in Information Services   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 13. Skills & Training for Outreach Workers<br>(Effective Use of Field Staff, Staff Training and Development, Information Sharing and Exchange)                              | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   |                        |                        |                    | ✓                        |                          |
| 14. Partnerships  | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |
| 15. Holistic Approaches   | ✓   | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓                                   | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                  | ✓                        | ✓                        |

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