



Shelter WA Update

July 2009

National Shelter re-Funded!

After 11 long years without resources for a National Affordable Housing Consumer Peak, the Minister for Housing, the Hon Tanya Plibersek on July 2 2009 announced that National Shelter would receive \$200,000 in funding over the next two years. This is less than what was requested but will give some capacity for National Shelter to increase its activities. Speaking at the NSW Shelter Conference, Ms Plibersek described the funding as a continuance of the government's reform agenda for homelessness and social housing services, stating "It's important that people who are homeless, private tenants and residents of social housing will continue to have their voices heard through the advocacy provided by National Shelter and other peak bodies. This funding will allow National Shelter to bring together their state organisations and other members such as State and Territory Tenants Unions to be part of the implementation of the Government's reform agenda."

Shelter WA welcomes this funding as a measure of the Government's commitment to hearing from consumers, State Shelters and Tenants Unions across the country, and looks forward to progressing the concerns of low income tenants at the national level.

National Community Housing Standards Review

A strong theme in current national policy around affordable housing is to strengthen and grow Community Housing to be able to respond to increased numbers of low income and otherwise disadvantaged consumers. Tenants in Community Housing already have the opportunity to participate in the management processes of their housing provider. The National Community Housing Standards, first published in 1998, deliver a regulatory framework for the community housing sector. They were developed as part of a project to form a common set of national standards, assessment mechanisms and structure for community housing. The standards received positive support and widespread usage and were first reviewed in 2002.

In December 2008, a further review of these standards was commissioned to ensure that they reflected recent growth and consequently, the need for a greater degree of management control in the sector. Key areas for consideration were financial planning, asset management and business planning.

The third edition of the standards is now in the consultation draft stage and the Community Housing Coalition of WA (CHCWA) held a sector consultation on 21 July 2009 to consider the draft. For further information see the website: www.communityhousing.com.au

House Standing Committee seeks input to Homelessness Legislation

New Legislation is proposed to replace the Supported Accommodation Assistance (SAAP) Act 1994. Homelessness Australia along with other advocacy agencies are keen to preserve the strength of the human rights framework that has been a feature of SAAP and are advocating for the creation of a Homelessness Act as well as supporting the expanded scope of the national response outlined in The Road Home. Submission to the inquiry currently progressing under the House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth are open until 14th August. Homelessness Australia has produced a discussion paper which can be accessed here: http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/UserFiles/File/HRA_homeless.doc and the terms of reference for the Standing Committee here: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fchy/homelessness/index.htm>

State Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan 2010 to 20 – Have your say!

Adequate community mental health services are an important aspect of sustaining vulnerable tenancies and Shelter WA calls for a significant increase in both mental health supported accommodation services and community supports. Pricewaterhouse Coopers has been commissioned by the Department of Health's Mental Health Division to undertake a review of mental health services and assist with the development of a policy framework to guide mental health reforms in WA. The WA Minister for Mental Health, Dr Graham Jacobs, outlined his vision for a whole of government approach and 'joined-up' services, at the launch on 10 June 2009. The direction of reforms will focus on wellness, early intervention and recovery rather than from the existing response model based on illness and acute intervention.

To this end Pricewaterhouse Coopers Pty Ltd are inviting individuals and organisations to provide input by completing an online submission before **24 July 2009** at www.pwc.com/au/mentalhealthsurvey

A number of consumer and carer workshops will also be held. To register your interest in the workshops email your name and contact details to mentalhealthsurvey@au.pwc.com

Victorian Legislation for Domestic Violence Protects Victims Tenancies

Shelter welcomes the news that Victoria has introduced the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 and will be looking towards similar legislation in WA. The Act protects people living in rented properties and enables victims of domestic violence to remain in their own home if they choose, reducing the risk of the consequent homelessness, poverty and social dislocation.



Shelter WA Welcomes New Staff

Our new Research Manager, Susan Sharples has commenced and is settling in to her new role. Susan comes to us from the Department of Commerce where she was working on consumer publications in the finance industry. She has a wealth of experience in the area of small business management and has worked on community sector projects and in special education. Christina Kadmos has been engaged as Project Officer to scope consumer participation in the affordable housing sector and is making great headway. The project will run until September 2009 - the results are eagerly awaited by Shelter and other WA Peak bodies. See Christina's report below.*

Shelter WA will again be hosting a social work student from Curtin University, Katie Arpino, from July through to November 2009. She will be working on producing an updated Information Sheet – explaining the new terminology and acronyms that are now emerging with new funding agreements, amongst other things.



From left to right, team members Corinne Mercer, Susan Sharples, Bronwyn Kitching and consultant Christina Kadmos.

Report from Christina - The Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group Scoping Project*

The Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group Scoping Project is in its fourth week and is planned to run for three months. This phase of the project has involved researching models of consumer participation generally and in relation to housing in particular. Chris has been doing lots of reading and lots of visits to agencies! By 31 July, a discussion / consultation paper will be completed and go out to members of the WA Peaks Forum. August will be about consulting with the Peaks and doing some consumer consultation and September will see the final report. The project finishes at the end of September. Shelter WA was delighted that Christina applied to undertake this project as she is well versed and highly regarded in the sector, and her knowledge and diverse experience over many years will add depth and rigour to this project.

National Squalor Conference 'Pathway through the Maze'

Catholic Community Services will host a National Squalor Conference in Sydney on **5 – 6 November 2009**. The conference will explore the experiences of severe domestic squalor with a view to formulating sustainable long term interventions. The themes of social isolation, social structures, sustainable housing, the ethical and legislative environment, systemic and clinical issues along with an overview of current literature, evidence based research and models of best practice, will be the focus. Speakers will include Professor John Snowdon, together with speakers drawn from backgrounds in medical ethics, animal welfare and emergency services, as well as federal, state and local government.

The request for abstracts is open until 31 August 2009. If you are interested in submitting an abstract, further information or to register for the conference, email info@nationalsqualorconference.com.au

Volunteers needed!

Homeless Persons Week August 3 - 8

Homeless Persons Week commences **3 August 2009**. The Community Housing Coalition together with Shelter WA and other key service providers will be conducting activities and events, including a Lunchtime Street Survey in Forrest Chase on Wednesday **August 5 2009**, between 11am and 2pm. The short survey will provide a snapshot of the public's experience of homelessness, their perception of the problem and thoughts on potential solutions. If you would like to help Shelter WA collect information about homelessness please contact Susan Sharples at Shelter WA, email research@shelterwa.org.au

Reminders!

Domestic Violence Forum

The West Metropolitan Family Protection Unit of the WA Police Service is holding a Domestic Violence Forum on **12th August 2009**. Email Constable Kylie.VELIOS@police.wa.gov.au if you are interested in attending.

Australian Residential Tenancies Conference

The 9th Australasian Residential Tenancies Conference (ARTC) is to be held on the Gold Coast at the Sheraton Mirage Resort on Wednesday **9 September to Friday 11 September 2009**. To register see the website: <http://www.restenconf.com/>

