



# Shelter WA Update

## February 2010

### Welcome to 2010 – Affordable Housing Building News

As we greet the New Year after the summer holiday period and get down to the brisk pace of business as usual, Shelter is enthusiastically anticipating a substantial number of new affordable housing coming on stream. By the end of December 2010 we expect to be celebrating more than 2,000 new homes for low income households in WA, with many going to areas of high need where applicants have had a long time to wait on the public housing rental waiting list – sometimes over 7 years. Significant numbers of new homes are already under construction and well on the way to completion, and many will be managed by community housing organisations - arguably more flexible, responsive and engaged with their tenants.

WA has started from a very low base – only around 4.1% of dwellings are public housing – and there has been no real growth in the range of affordable housing in WA for at least the past 15 years. The increase will not meet the identified demand of around 23,000 currently on the public rental waiting list or return us to a proportion of social housing recommended by National Shelter and other commentators (around 6%) that is in keeping with an effective safety net. WA needs to build about 2,000 new social housing dwellings every year until 2020 to deliver a 6% ratio, and this latest initiative is recognised as a short-term one off Commonwealth stimulus that will dry up by the end of 2012. Encouragingly our Minister for Housing, the Hon. Troy Buswell recognised the shortfall and has committed to an additional 20,000 dwellings by 2020. Shelter WA will be monitoring performance against this target.

To see where new housing development is happening click the Tenders WA website [here](#) and To see those Repairs and Maintenance and New Construction projects funded through Round 1 of the Federal Government Social Housing Stimulus Initiative click [here](#) – we are waiting to hear the outcome of Round 2 soon

In other news the **WA Department of Housing, has been reviewing many of its policies and procedures**, internal operation and administration. The Department has undergone a protracted period of restructure that commenced in 2007, with the annexure of 'Works' from the Department of Housing and Works. The re-structure gained momentum in 2008 - coupled with the new Federal Government driving the CoAG Reform Agenda and consolidating State and Federal funding Agreements a change of State government and the imposition of the efficiency dividend saw much activity but little measurable outcome from an external point of view. And it didn't end there. The Department undertook an audit of its properties – identifying those for demolition, asbestos remediation, renovation and refurbishment.

Of particular interest to Shelter WA in the past couple of months have been;  
The Social Housing Taskforce Report – see Shelter WA's response [here](#)  
The Housing Appeals Mechanism – see Shelter WA's response [here](#)  
The Disruptive Behaviour Management Strategy – see Shelter WA's response [here](#); and  
The commencement of a Joint Waiting List for eligible households to simultaneously apply for public rental and community housing – improving their chances of a faster allocation

### Free Shelter WA Membership for Low Income Housing Consumers

At Shelter WA's Annual General Meeting in October 2009, members supported the Management Committee to make changes to the Shelter WA Constitution. These changes allow for low-income housing consumers to become full members of Shelter WA for no cost.

Shelter is keen to engage people so we can hear the issues first-hand and be better informed of the challenges, barriers and obstacles facing low-income housing consumers. An increase in consumer members will allow us to improve our representation and advocacy and strengthen the work we do on committees with government, public and private decision makers. Shelter WA needs to know what the pressure points are and where are the key problems that need to be addressed and to do that we need to hear from YOU! A new membership brochure and mail out is planned soon

Fee free members will have access to updates and newsletters, papers and reports and will be entitled to nominate for the Management Committee – To join contact Corinne at the office on 9325 6660

## Disruptive Behaviour Management Strategy – Have your say!

The Department of Housing has released its Disruptive Behaviour Management Strategy, which aims to reflect “...a revised approach to public housing tenancy management in response to community concerns regarding ongoing disruptive behaviour by a small proportion of public housing tenants.”

The aim is to address the causes of tenancy dysfunction with an approach which provides supports, early intervention and stronger sanctions. Commitment from other stakeholders is sought to a “...regime of interagency accountability, which will define the responsibilities for disruptive behaviour across government and bind agencies to working towards common objectives” and to guide the implementation of the measures.

The strategy has been endorsed by Cabinet and its interim measures will be enacted immediately. These include the use of section 64 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* to evict tenants without first having to satisfy a Court that the termination of the Tenancy Agreement is warranted. This effectively removes any protection a tenant may have and does not provide for circumstances that arise which are outside of the tenant’s control. Government service providers have a responsibility to the individual, as well as to the community, to uphold the principal of natural justice and to house those in the community who are disadvantaged, including the few who are difficult and disruptive. Eviction eludes the problem but does not solve it.

The Department is seeking comments from all stakeholders and interested parties and acknowledges that there is “...significant scope for refinement, revision and expansion of these initiatives.”

Click [here](#) to view the discussion paper. Submissions, comments or ideas should be forwarded by COB **12 Feb 2010**.

## Along the Road Home - the White Paper on Homelessness first year review

It is one year since the release of the White Paper on Homelessness “The Road Home” and the Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek MP, has released [Along the Road Home](#), a report setting out the achievements of the first year of this important initiative. Key strategies which are being implemented include: early intervention and prevention services; improving, expanding and connecting services; and, preventing the reoccurrence of homelessness by moving people through the crisis system to stable housing.

December 2009 saw the completion of 87 homes under the “A Place to Call Home” initiative, the completion of 275 new homes and commencement of a further 3787 homes under the “Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan” and the commencement of construction activity on 300 new houses and refurbishment of 1000 existing houses (to be completed by June 2010) under the “National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing”.

These achievements will go a long way towards reducing the number of people entering homelessness as any improvement in homelessness services would be ineffectual if not underpinned by safe, secure and affordable housing.

## National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

A joint State and Commonwealth commitment of \$496 million will deliver 295 new houses and 1025 refurbishments in remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia over the next five years. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a 10 year strategy to improve the standard of housing in remote Australia. It aims to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage by improving housing conditions, reducing overcrowding and homelessness, improving tenancy management support and providing economic development opportunities through the provision of housing-related jobs. Click [here](#) for further information on the NPARIH.

## More Australians receiving rent assistance

New figures released by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs confirm that many families are struggling under increasing rental pressure. The number of Australians receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance has risen by almost 15 per cent over the last five years. The Government’s plan to provide an additional 50,000 properties over four years, to be rented to low and moderate income earners, alongside the construction of an additional 19,200 social housing dwellings across Australia, is long overdue.

## Government Construction Program fully committed

Almost 550 Expressions of Interest have been received for Stage 2 of the State and Commonwealth Economic Stimulus Packages with the potential to deliver 9,000 new dwellings in Western Australia. Practical completion of construction is required by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and homes are expected to be 6-star energy rated with adaptable and universally accessible design. All funds available have now been committed and negotiations are taking place to deliver on projects. Construction has commenced on the 313 dwellings which formed part of Stage 1 of the Commonwealth Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan with six completed.

## Green Loans Program

The Australian Government is offering an interest free Green Loan to eligible homeowners to install solar, water saving, and energy efficient products. The Green Loans Program could help up to 360,000 Australian households save on energy and water bills whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The program provides detailed home sustainability assessments and access to a Green Loan of up to \$10,000, interest free for a maximum of four years, to make the changes recommended in the assessment.

For more information click on [Green Loan](#) or phone the hotline on 1800 895 076.

## Energy efficiency in office buildings

As part of the Government's national strategy on energy efficiency the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has initiated a national scheme to improve the energy efficiency of commercial office buildings.

Building owners (including the Australian Government) will be required to provide energy efficiency information when they sell or lease office space covering more than 2,000 square metres, commencing the second half of 2010. They will need to disclose a valid Building Energy Efficiency Certificate, which will include a National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) Energy base building star rating. Potential buyers or tenants will then have the option of choosing greener offices which are more comfortable to work in and claim to boost productivity and reduce sick leave, as well as, supporting green building industry jobs and delivering savings of 20-40 percent on energy bills. For more information, click [energy efficient buildings](#).

## TheMHS Summer Forum

The Mental Health Services Conference will be holding a Summer Forum from **18 - 19 February 2010** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, **Sydney**. The forum's theme is The RIGHT to CARE that Works which explores the idea that everyone, including those people with a mental illness, has a right to timely, effective, best-practice mental health care.

Speakers will include: Cheryl Kernot, Associate Professor and Director of Teaching and Learning at the Centre for Social Impact, University of New South Wales; Steven P. Segal, Mack Distinguished Professor, School of Social Welfare, University of California; and, Henry Brodaty, Professor of Ageing and Mental Health and Director of the Australian government funded Dementia Collaborative Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

Topics presented cover: balancing human rights, mental health and social inclusion; coercive treatment and mental health, equity of access across gender, age and rural and remote areas, clinical and human rights issues in prisons; and homelessness and the right to housing and employment.

Click here for more details about [SPEAKERS](#) and here for more details about the [PROGRAM](#)

## TheMHS 2010 Conference

The Mental Health Services Conference will be holding their **20th Annual TheMHS Conference** on **14 - 17 September 2010** and are calling for abstracts to be submitted online prior to **March 11 2010**. Anyone interested or involved in mental health services is invited to submit an abstract for consideration for the 2010 program. Submit your abstract [here](#)

## DSC Event Calender

The **Disability Services Commission** is inviting organisations to submit details of events relevant to the disability sector for inclusion in their [2010 Calender of Events](#). Contact [dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au) or [media@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:media@dsc.wa.gov.au) with the event title, contact details, the date and location, for your event to be considered.

## Shelter WA Executive Officer Australia Day Celebration with the Premier and PM

Bronwyn was invited to the recent celebration held in the Perth Town Hall for Australia Day. The company, entertainment, food and beverage were all excellent and the speeches well received. No kerfuffle!

