



# Shelter WA Update

## Feb/Mar 2010

### WA Economic Audit Committee (EAC) Report Challenges Status Quo

The EAC, established in October 2008 by the newly elected WA Government, released its final report in December 2009. The report contains 43 recommendations and a far reaching vision of reform to: state agencies; the basis of public sector relationship with non-government; and the flexibility and responsiveness of service delivery to citizens.

The Committee's vision is built around recommendations in five key themes:

1. Delivering on priorities.
2. Designing services to meet citizens' needs.
3. Maximising value through planning, competition and innovation.
4. Realising Western Australia's economic potential.
5. Modernising public sector management (page 18)

The 7 strong EAC Terms of Reference were underpinned by a theme of scrutiny, evaluation and an assumption of bureaucratic wastefulness and expectation of poor performance. The Terms of Reference were:

1. A review of recent government expenditure to determine the effectiveness of budget outlays during the boom years of the Labor Government.
2. A transparent and comprehensive assessment of the financial performance of state departments, authorities and commercial entities, with a focus on identifying potential savings from bureaucratic waste and mismanagement.
3. An examination of the current structure of government agencies to determine whether changes are warranted to better support the efficient and effective delivery of government services.
4. An evaluation of the effectiveness of existing performance metrics and options for greater transparency and accountability through improved public reporting.
5. An examination of public sector management and service delivery issues, including procurement, corporate services and asset management.
6. Options for regulatory reforms to increase efficiency.
7. A review of existing state taxes and recommendations for reform.

The report identifies that the culture of strict adherence to process has been cumbersome and stifling of innovation and creativity, restricted talented leadership and embedded an environment that lacks trust in and support for skilled and capable public servants. It acknowledges fragmentation, duplication and barriers to collaboration and partnership with the community services sector. Most importantly for the community sector it raises the question of individualised funding – tied not to the community service provider, but to the consumer. This shift has already occurred in Disability Services, some aspects of Community Aged Care and in Employment Placement services, and requires that community service agencies be informed and prepared for further consideration and debate and for the major impacts this could entail.

WACOSS is facilitating a Social Policy Seminar exploring the implications of the report on March 10. This event follows on from the Seminar held on 16 October 2009. To secure your booking go to the WACOSS website: [here](#)  
To read the Report 'Putting the Public First Partnering with Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes': click [here](#)

### **Exciting Shelter WA Job Vacancies**

The Shelter WA Management Committee, together with staff, have determined that the former staffing configuration did not effectively meet the needs of the organisation and we have created two new positions to meet the diverse requirements of the agency in the key areas of community engagement/development and low-income housing data analysis and reporting. Shelter WA operates under a strong and competitive Enterprise Agreement, flexible working conditions and a well located central office.

To apply for Shelter WA positions you must read the [Information for Applicants](#)

- respond to the selection criteria contained in each Job Description,
- provide a CV including 2 recent referees and
- a covering letter summarising your skills, experience and interest in the area.

**Applications close 4:00pm 19 Mar 2010.**

View and download the Job Descriptions here: [Community Development and Policy Officer](#), [Research Officer](#).

## National Shelter comes to WA

National Shelter, the Federation of State Shelter organisations will be convening in Western Australia for the first time since 2005 on 30-31 March 2010.

One of the discussion items on the agenda will be a proposal by National Shelter to develop a policy platform around the issues of indigenous housing.

National Shelter launched its latest policy platform, [Housing Australia Affordably](#), in Melbourne on 24th November 2009. The Platform was promoted by Adrian Pisarski (Chair National Shelter and Executive Officer Queensland Shelter) along with Clare Martin (ACOSS), Professor Julian Disney (NSW Social Justice Project and Housing Summit Group) and Tony Nicholson (Brotherhood of St Laurence).

## Mental Health News

### WA Mental Health Commission

A New WA Mental Health Commission is to be established as a separate department from 8 March 2010 to lead reform of the mental health system throughout Western Australia. The agency will be headed by a Commissioner who will be a senior public servant reporting to the Minister for Mental Health. The Commission will work collaboratively with all government agencies, community organisations and mental health professionals in the public and private sectors to transform the way in which mental health services are delivered in this State.

The priority for the Commission is to improve the way in which individualised care is provided and coordinated for people with mental health problems. However, over the next few years, the Commission will oversee a move towards new procurement arrangements for mental health services in the state. This is consistent with the national health reform agenda, as well as the State Government's reform direction for greater choice by consumers, particularly through greater access to community-based services delivered by the not-for-profit sector.

The key changes are:

- Create a separate department titled the Mental Health Commission
- Appoint a Commissioner to head the department
- Move all staff and resources associated with the Department of Health (DOH) Mental Health Division (MHD) to the Commission from 8 March 2010
- Transfer other resources for mental health policy, planning and purchasing of services to the Commission from 1 July 2010
- Appoint an advisory council to the Commissioner comprising government, non-government and community representatives
- Establish a peak non-government organisation to represent the interests of consumers

The functions of the Commission will include:

1. the development and provision of mental health policy and advice to the Government
2. leading implementation of the Mental Health Strategic Plan
3. responsibility for articulating key outcomes and determining the range of mental health services required for defined areas and populations across the state
4. responsibility for, specifying activity levels, standards of care and determining resourcing required
5. identification of appropriate service providers, benchmarks and the establishment of associated contracting arrangements with both government and non government sectors
6. provision of grants, transfers and service contract arrangements
7. ongoing performance monitoring and evaluation of key mental health programs in Western Australia
8. ensuring effective accountability and governance systems are in place
9. promoting social inclusion, public awareness and understanding of matters relating to the wellbeing of people with mental illness to address stigma and discrimination

A more detailed consultation and communication strategy will be developed over the coming weeks. further information is available at the [Mental Health website](#) or by email [mentalhealthreception.royalst@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:mentalhealthreception.royalst@health.wa.gov.au).

### Scoping the Establishment of a National Mental Health Consumer Peak Body

Craze Lateral Solutions has been exploring the potential for the establishment of a national mental health consumer peak body. A summary of the Draft Final Report of the National Scoping Project is now available. You can also follow the journey of the consultation project and their regular newsletters. Comments may be submitted by Friday 13 March. To read the draft report click [Here](#)

## [Older Women Experience Domestic Violence and Are At Risk of Homelessness Too](#)

The WA Womens Council for Domestic and Family Violence is holding a Training Forum to support older women who have experienced domestic and family violence and mistreatment. The forum will be held in the Conference Room, City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi St, West Perth, Friday, March 26, from 9.30am – 12 noon. Phone 9420 7264. Forum [Flyer](#)

## [Effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery Conference - April](#)

Criterion Conferences informed by research undertaken with the Australian Government's Closing the Gap focus is holding a Conference in Alice Springs '[Beyond Consultation to Shared Responsibility](#)' 20-21<sup>st</sup> April 2010. The aim of the conference is to illustrate more equitable and efficient methods for delivering services to indigenous communities assisting in the quest to *Close the Gap*. For more information call **1300 316 882**. For other relevant conferences see the criterion calendar [here](#)

## [Australasian Housing Institute Seminar](#)

### [Homelessness, priority and allocations- an overseas perspective - 28th April, Perth](#)

Lynden Esdaile, Executive Chairperson, NSW Housing Appeals Committee has completed a 6 week Churchill Fellowship study tour to England, Scotland, Ireland and Canada to study social housing issues. Lynden has many interesting observations from her tour and will lead discussion on issues such as homelessness strategies, housing policy trends, allocation systems and choice based letting. She will stimulate discussion on what Australian policy makers and practitioners can learn from international experience.

This seminar will interest housing managers, policy officers, community housing providers, client service staff, Aboriginal housing staff, SAAP sector providers and Commonwealth officers. The seminar will be held Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 9.30am – 11.30am, The Duxton Hotel, 1 St Georges Terrace, Perth. Visit [www.housinginstitute.org](http://www.housinginstitute.org) for more information.

## [National Quality Framework for Homeless Services](#)

The development of accreditation and service standards for homeless services, was a measure flagged under the White Paper, and now Federal and State/Territory Housing Ministers have announced a series of national consultations as a first step towards developing a "national quality framework" (NQF). The NQF is intended to apply to existing specialist homelessness services (what was previously SAAP), as well as to 'mainstream' services. More information is set out in the discussion paper. Homelessness Australia will consult with members over the coming weeks to develop a detailed response to the development of the NQF. There is no formal registration process to attend these.

WA	Wednesday 24 February 2010 1:00-2:00pm	Westlink – presentation Dumas House, Ground Floor 2 Havelock Street, West Perth
WA	Wednesday 24 February 2010 3:00-5:00pm	The Cambridge Room, City West Receptions 45 Plaistowe Mews West Perth
WA	Thursday 25 February 2010 10:00-12:00pm	The Lighthouse Restaurant, Lighthouse Beach Resort 4 Carey Street, Bunbury

## [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) Review of the Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#)

The ABS is undertaking a review of its Consumer Price Index (CPI). The ABS is seeking feedback from users of the CPI to inform the review and provide an opportunity for user involvement in the evolution of the CPI.

This review is focused around the following topics:

- Principal purpose of the CPI;
- Compilation frequency of the CPI;
- Evaluation of the deposit and loan facilities index;
- Maintaining the relevance of the CPI;
- Commodity classification;
- Analytical series; and
- Other issues.

### **Consultation**

Organisations and individuals are invited to comment on any aspect of the CPI review by providing a written submission before 12 March, or by participating in a public forum. The Perth forum will be held Thursday, 4 March, ABS, Level 8, Exchange Plaza, Sherwood Court, Perth, from 10am – 11.30am. If you wish to attend, please register with the review team by email at [cpi.review@abs.gov.au](mailto:cpi.review@abs.gov.au) or contact Michael Abbondante on 02 6252 7124. Further information regarding the review process can be found in: [Information Paper: Issues to be considered during the 16th series Australian Consumer Price Index review](#) and is available online at the ABS website: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au).

## [National Standards for Out of Home Care Consultation – FaHCSIA Examines Foster Care](#)

The Australian Government, through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, together with state and territory governments and non-government organisations, is committed to ensuring that children living in Out of Home Care receive the same opportunities to develop and become healthy children like those children not living in Out of Home Care.

The development of the National Standards is a key part of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 30 April 2009.

A Consultation Paper is available to seek views on:

- the drivers for optimal health and well-being outcomes for children and young people
- where and how the Out of Home Care system can impact on outcomes for children and young people in Out of Home Care and how to influence these drivers
- what possible standards should be included in the National Standards for Out of Home Care and how they should be measured and reported.

Written submissions of views and concerns regarding the development of the National Standards will be accepted until **Friday 26 March, 2010**. For more information go to: [www.nationalstandardsforoutofhomecare.com](http://www.nationalstandardsforoutofhomecare.com)

## [Department of Housing WA News](#)

### [Consolidation of the Shared Equity and Home Loans Schemes](#)

The State Government will boost funding for its low-cost home loans as part of a major overhaul of the system under its Housing 2020 reform agenda, doubling the number of loans available to all shared equity customers in 2009-10.

The extra funding spearheads changes to the Government's shared equity schemes as part of the public housing reform agenda.

Under the new system, four existing schemes would be consolidated and renamed the ***Step Up Home Ownership Scheme***, which would be run by the State Government's home lending arm, Keystart.

The move would harmonise eligibility and lending criteria for loans to people with disabilities, sole parents, public housing tenants and Aboriginal borrowers. As part of the changes, a dedicated network of indigenous regional brokers would also be established to assist Aboriginal borrowers. The Department of Housing will use its regional office network to identify tenants who may benefit from the scheme.

### [New Homes for the Aged in Mandurah](#)

More than \$19million in Government funds will be invested to create 96 new homes for the aged in Mandurah in a joint project between the Department of Housing and The Bethanie Group.

Under the proposal, the Department of Housing will fund 96 units in Maclaggan Turn. The site adjoins an existing aged care facility managed by Bethanie, which is a registered growth provider with the department. Registered growth providers comply with strict operating and management guidelines. The design of the new complex comprises of two two-storey buildings each containing 48 units and separated by community open space.

Housing Minister Troy Buswell said the project was a good example of the State Government working in co-operation with the private sector to build much-needed housing for the elderly in an area of growing need.

### [Disruptive Behaviour Management](#)

The Department of Housing's Disruptive Behaviour Management Strategy reflects 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 Department will be implementing a multi-faceted approach which seeks to deliver greater responsiveness to community disruption through the provision of appropriate supports to address the causes of tenancy dysfunction, balanced with early intervention and stronger sanctions to hold seriously disruptive tenants to account for their behaviour.

After considering a range of options to address these issues and conducting research into the effectiveness of approaches taken in other states and countries, the Department considers improvements in both of these areas to be critical to the success of the strategy. Also critical will be commitment from other stakeholders to a regime of interagency accountability, which will define the responsibilities for disruptive behaviour across government and bind agencies to working towards common objectives.

The Department has sought comments from all stakeholders to guide the implementation of the measures outlined in this paper. While the Strategy framework has been endorsed by Cabinet and the Department is currently making operational changes to achieve its underlying principles, there is significant scope for refinement, revision and expansion of these initiatives.

Achieving successful outcomes for both public housing tenants and the broader community through the Strategy will be highly dependent on cooperation between stakeholders and, in particular, support from the community sector. Some proposals in particular cannot be delivered by government alone, for example, the establishment and operation of an independent mediation service.

Submissions of comment and review of the discussion paper closed 29 January, 2010.

### **Ineligible Tenants Investigation**

More than 30 public housing tenants have been evicted in the past five months after being caught exceeding income limits for taxpayer funded accommodation.

Department officials have so far interviewed 76 tenants and issued 31 notices of eviction to tenants whose income or assets exceeded the allowable limits for public housing eligibility.

Housing Minister Troy Buswell said many more homes would be available for people on the waiting list if this 40 per cent strike rate was repeated across the remaining 743 cases of potentially ineligible tenants.

Housing Minister Troy Buswell said if people in public housing can afford to buy an investment property, or their income is now substantially higher when they moved into public housing, these people will be asked to move out into private rentals or their own investment property.

Case studies from the audit team include several examples of tenants whose weekly earnings exceeded set income limits by several hundred dollars. The homes of evicted ineligible tenants have been allocated to various tenants, including families on the public housing waiting list for more than a year.

Mr Buswell said public housing was a safety net for people who would otherwise have nowhere else to go.

Investigations last year identified up to 1350 tenants who were potentially ineligible for housing assistance.

Further investigation cleared 607 people, including tenants whose households were subject to higher income limits either because they were located in the North-West of the state or their household included a person with a disability.

Tenants were also excluded from the initial group after the apportioning of Family Tax Benefits A & B, and child maintenance in accordance with the Department's rent setting policies and in cases where household details had subsequently changed.

### **Get a Diploma of Social Housing by Studying Online**

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations offers online courses designed for practitioners in the community housing industry as part of a Diploma of Social Housing. Visit [www.communityhousing.org.au](http://www.communityhousing.org.au) for further information or go to the [elearning](#) page.

### **Community Housing Limited Looking to Grow WA Support Provider Partnerships**

With its recent approval as the fifth affordable housing growth provider for Western Australia, Community Housing Limited (CHL) is moving quickly to establish itself in the state, with the announcement of Shane Hamilton as West Australian State Manager and the establishment of CHL's headquarters in Leederville.

As CHL continues to build its business in Western Australia, the organisation is seeking to develop new partnerships with support providers in a range of areas. This is consistent with its community engagement model of only developing projects in a given area once it has established working relationships with a local affordable housing interest group, local service organisations, and local social service agencies.

CHL sources funding, locates land, designs and constructs housing, and then manages the housing and its tenants for the long term. In order to deliver successful affordable and sustainable housing outcomes, CHL depends on a range of service providers to assist in anything from construction and landscaping, to social support agencies and interest groups for tenants.

Any interested social support, social service, or assisted living agencies are encouraged to contact CHL's State Manager, Shane Hamilton at 0429 115 296 or [shane.hamilton@chl.org.au](mailto:shane.hamilton@chl.org.au).

### **Case Management Software Solutions for Social Service Organisations**

Athena Software is a company dedicated to supporting human and social service organisations through Penelope, a software system that is essentially a client management tool. It is designed specifically for behavioural health, mental health, social services and community services. For more information email: [info@athenasoftware.net](mailto:info@athenasoftware.net)

### **After Hours 24/7 Telephone Support Services – Well Done International**

Well Done International is a telephone contact provider (aka call centre) operating in Australia (currently in the East) offering tailored after hours telephone support services to the community housing providers sector. They are in the process of providing after hours' escalation telephone support for several community housing corporations (Homes North, Yarra Community Housing and Southern Cross, amongst others). See [www.welldoneinternational.com](http://www.welldoneinternational.com) for information.

## **WA Peaks Forum & WACOSS Opportunities for Community Agencies to get Low Cost Human Resources for [Jobs2Communities](#) and [Climate Change Readiness Projects](#)**

New help is now available to the community service sector in Perth.

On behalf of the WA Peaks Forum, the WA Council of Social Service has an agreement with the Commonwealth Government through the Jobs Fund to enhance the capacity of the West Australian community services sector, while responding to emerging and current needs of the labour market, and to help not-for-profit organisations be prepared for higher energy and utility costs, improving environmental sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

The Project [Jobseekers2Communities](#) will provide job seekers with a gateway into a career in the community services sector, and provide the community services sector with a work-ready workforce.

[Jobseekers2Communities](#) will establish 3 pools of retrenched workers from the business and corporate sectors with skills in information technology, quality assurance, administration, grant/tender writing and marketing. These people will be assigned to work in organisations who have applied for a project worker to undertake organisational development tasks.

To date [Jobseekers2Communities](#) workers have assisted NGO agencies to review and update their Policies and Procedures Manuals, develop detailed contact and member databases, develop systems to collect and report inquiries, requests and referrals, review and record library and document resource holdings and refresh their websites.

The Climate Change Readiness Project allows for NFP organisations to have an energy and water audit of their building premises undertaken with a report identifying what can be done to save on energy and water costs.

Applications for both projects are now open. Organisations who wish to take advantage of the opportunity to have an energy audit or [Jobseeker 2Communities](#) worker need to make an application. All details can be found at [www.wacoss.org.au](http://www.wacoss.org.au)

## **Shelter WA seeks Nominations to the Management Committee**

Shelter WA has a Management Committee that provides corporate governance, strategic and policy direction. We are currently seeking nominations from interested people to join the committee and become part of a team dedicated to the governance of Shelter WA. The committee meets at 4.30pm on the third Tuesday of every month at the Shelter WA office at Claisebrook Lotteries House in East Perth. Please contact the Executive Officer, Bronwyn Kitching, on 9325 6660 or alternatively by email at [bronwyn@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:bronwyn@shelterwa.org.au), for further information.

### **Upcoming Conferences and Workshops**

**Supporting Older Women who've experienced Domestic and Family Violence March 26 [here](#)**

**Homelessness Priority and Allocations – an International Perspective 28 April [here](#)**

**Effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery Conference 20 – 21 April [here](#)**

**WACOSS Social Policy Seminar – Economic Audit Committee 10 March [here](#)**

**Racism Revisited – Anti-racism Leadership and Practice 19- 20 March Murdoch Uni [here](#)**

**National Homelessness Conference 1 - 3 September 2010 [here](#)**

**Improving Social Determinants of Indigenous Health Brisbane 30-31 March [here](#)**

**WACOSS Conference 12 – 14 May [here](#)**

**Learning Centre Link Conference 29 April – 1 May [here](#)**

**National Community Legal Centres Conference 25-27 October Victoria [here](#)**

**National Self Help and Support Group Awareness Day 8 September**