



Regional Housing Analysis: Housing in Hedland

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Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of a research project conducted by Shelter WA between January and December 2005. The project combined a series of community consultations, interviews with stakeholders and background statistical research. Shelter WA wishes to thank all of the people who participated in the research.

The report's key finding is that Port Hedland's housing market is severely dysfunctional. It characterises Hedland as a town of 20,000 people that provides adequate housing to only 12,000, with the remainder living in caravans, dongas or overcrowded housing. This lack of appropriate and affordable housing acts as a bottleneck that curtails the town's economic development and is a key cause of many of its social problems.

Firstly, the housing market acts as a factor that exacerbates the severity of Hedland's economic cycle. Decision makers have allowed this situation to persist, on the implicit assumption that any increase in demand for housing will only be temporary, ie. until the next downturn of the economic cycle.

However, long term under-investment in appropriate housing has resulted in a substantial proportion of Hedland's long and short term residents living in inappropriate accommodation. It has resulted in high housing prices, often poor maintenance, lack of diverse accommodation stock, homelessness, overcrowding and at the same time underoccupancy. It acts as a poverty trap for the, mostly Indigenous, people who reside in public housing. It is the root cause of Hedland's difficulties attracting people to work in its service industries.

A solution to Hedland's housing problem is therefore a precondition to both its economic and social development. The severity of Hedland's economic cycle, its lack of services, and the dependence of its Indigenous population on Homeswest for its housing needs all stem from a common source, being a lack of appropriate and affordable housing. Any solution must start with a recognition by all key players that Hedland can no longer afford not to cater for the housing requirements of such a substantial proportion of its residents. The town must provide housing for all of its residents, and stop regarding housing needs generated by economic activity as 'temporary'.

The only way forward is for industry and the three levels of Government – Commonwealth, State and Local – to come together to develop a housing strategy for Hedland. Any strategy must address the consequences of poor planning in the past, which include the creation of segregated populations, conflict between industrial and residential users, poor road access between Port and South Hedland, a shortage of affordable land for development due to restrictions resulting from native title claims, different land tenures, appropriate zoning and proximity to flood plains.

The report makes 31 recommendations that are aimed at resolving particular issues faced by specific groups. However, while there seems to be a growing recognition that Hedland needs to address its housing crisis in a sustainable manner to meet the challenges of the growing economy, the main political challenge for the area is to identify a driver for change. The role of the driver would be to create a united vision for Hedland and then bring together the different community, political and industrial bodies who have invested both time and financial resources in the area.

Recommendations

1. That the State government undertake consultations with Indigenous people regarding establishing an Independent Housing Co-op(s) and investigate the feasibility of the provision of accommodation for Indigenous frail aged people.
2. That the State Government increase its support for carers in Port Hedland.
3. That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development develop an adequate supply of medium term, transitional accommodation.
4. That the Department of Housing and Works expand the My Space program.
5. That the Departments of Housing and Works, Community Development and Treasury jointly establish and fund an early intervention program such as HomeMaker. The way in which this program is delivered should be established through extensive consultation with the local Indigenous population.
6. That the Town of Port Hedland conducts its Town Planning Scheme Review as a matter of urgency. That the Town of Port Hedland as part of its proposed Local Area Planning Strategy and Town Planning Scheme Review consults with the local population with regards to the social impact of housing, how to achieve culturally sustainable housing mix, zoning, incorporating environmentally and culturally appropriate design elements.
7. That the Department of Housing and Works and BHP be included, and play an active role, in the consultations.
8. That the Department of Housing and Works, as part of the New Living Program, conduct consultation with the local Indigenous population as to what design elements meet local Indigenous cultural and environmental requirements.
9. That Homeswest give priority to seniors in implementing its program installing solar hot water systems in all its stock.
10. That the State government investigate the development of a range of affordable housing to cater for the needs of Seniors.
11. That the State government investigate the creation of housing packages to attract doctors and other professionals to Port Hedland
12. That an indoor recreation centre is built to enhance leisure activities in Port Hedland that caters for a wide range of activities, including Seniors.
13. That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development develop short term and medium term accommodation options for children under 15, particularly those under 12 needs to be addressed.
14. That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development investigate establishing a sobering up centre for under 15's should be provided.
15. That the Department of Housing and Works investigate expanding the availability of exit housing options for 15-24 year olds.
16. That the Department of Housing and Works conduct community consultation as to how the aims of the New Living program should be achieved and implemented.
17. That BHP, the Town of Port Hedland and the Pilbara Development Commission be involved in the process.
18. That Department of Housing and Works establish an program educating tenants who have expressed an interest in purchasing their own home regarding the rights and responsibilities associated with home ownership.

- 19.** That the Department of Housing and Works reconsider policies on skip bins, improve debt management policies, and provide Cleaning Kits for people moving into Homeswest housing.
- 20.** That the Department of Housing and Works develop strategies aimed at encouraging staff retention, including improved training and a lower client / worker ratio.
- 21.** That the DHW establish experienced maintenance teams, encourage pride in gardens and re-consider the proposed rate of refurbishment of existing houses in light of demand.
- 22.** That the Department of Housing and Works increase the budget for converting Homeswest homes for accessibility. That any new homes built should be designed using universal access principles.
- 23.** That the Department of Housing and Works implement an incentive and education campaign to reduce underoccupancy in Hedland.
- 24.** That the Department of Housing and Works provide a range of communication options for tenants, including employing Indigenous people who are proficient in local languages.
- 25.** That the Department of Housing and Works investigate the assessment criteria for housing in high cost regional areas such as Port Hedland.
- 26.** That the State Government and Local Council investigate methods of enforcing principals of environmentally sustainability in housing.
- 27.** That the State Government investigate a range of intergovernmental and public private partnerships to facilitate diversifying the local housing market.
- 28.** That BHP, the State government and Town of Port Hedland form a partnership to control the impact of the mining cycle on the community and house prices, establish a diverse housing market, establish company housing for lower level employees, investigate the impact of fly-in/fly out practises and establish a comprehensive employment and training package for Indigenous people.
- 29.** That the Government Employees Housing Authority reduces the proportion of dwellings that it leases from the private sector to below 5% of its stock.
- 30.** That Council be proactive in using Local Laws relating to rubbish removal and maintaining buildings in order to facilitate community health and wellbeing.
- 31.** That the Pilbara Development Commission establish a staff position with responsibility for the nexus between housing and economic development.

1. Introduction

Shelter WA is the peak community body advocating for disadvantaged housing consumers in Western Australia. Shelter WA was established in 1979 and cooperates closely with other State and National bodies working on housing related issues, homelessness and welfare.

Shelter WA works towards the elimination of homelessness and housing related poverty. In particular, Shelter WA aims to ensure that every person has access to housing that is secure and appropriate to their needs, at a price they can afford.

Each year, Shelter WA holds community housing forums in a particular area of Western Australia. The aims of these regional forums are to:

- prepare a regional housing analysis, which identifies and prioritises housing-related issues in the region,
- develop strategies to respond to key issues, and
- establish ongoing links between Shelter WA and local community organisations, State and Commonwealth Government Departments, local government, industry and the community.

Since 1998, Shelter WA has conducted housing forums in Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Busselton, Derby, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Margaret River and Midland. Reports on all of these forums can be downloaded from www.shelterwa.org.au.

During 2003 and 2004, Shelter WA received a number of contacts from individuals and organisations regarding the housing situation in the Pilbara. As Shelter WA had never visited this region before, it was decided to conduct a regional housing analysis in this area. In view of the organisation's limited resources, it decided to focus the analysis on the largest centre in the region, the twin towns of Port and South Hedland.

After some preliminary desk based research in late 2004 and early 2005 Shelter WA's Executive Officer, Karel Eringa, visited Hedland from Monday 21 until Thursday 24 February 2005. During this visit, Karel conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Aboriginal housing and support providers such as Pilbara Meta Maya, the Bloodwood Tree Aboriginal Corporation and the Port Hedland Regional Aboriginal Corporation;
- Local and State government representatives, including the Department of Housing and Works, the Mayor, the Town Planner, and other Town of Port Hedland staff members;
- Community groups including the Youth Involvement Council and the Pilbara Community Legal Service;
- BHP's Housing Office and the Pilbara Development Commission; and
- A number of tenants and individuals with an interest in housing issues.

The initial consultations revealed a strong consensus that the most important issue facing Hedland is a severe shortage of housing stock that is affordable to people earning low to middle incomes. This shortage affects people who earn too much to be eligible for Homeswest housing, but who earn too little to be able to afford to purchase or rent a house in the private market.

Put differently, a lack of rental housing below \$250 per week means that people on low to middle incomes cannot afford to live in Hedland. As a direct result of this, the

town is having difficulties attracting key workers, such as dentists, doctors, opticians, shopkeepers and maintenance contractors, to live in the area.

Following the initial interviews, Shelter WA prepared a discussion paper for a series of more exhaustive consultations in August 2005. In addition to the issues identified above, the discussion paper also contained consultation questions on a range of issues, including:

- Generally low standards of maintenance / upkeep, which appears to be partly due to a shortage of tradespeople and generally high prices making maintenance very expensive,
- Anti social problems in pockets of South Hedland, built using the Radburn design, that have high concentrations of low income tenants,
- Homelessness and overcrowding among Indigenous people,
- A lack of support for disadvantaged tenants, particularly a shortage of funds to support Aboriginal people into housing,
- High turnover of staff in Homeswest, making it difficult for clients to build a relationship with individual officers,
- Lack of diverse housing stock leading to both underoccupancy and overcrowding.

The second round of consultations comprised a series of 11 meetings attended by a total of 54 people from a range of target groups. Detailed outcomes of the August consultations are described in Section 5 of this final report. 31 recommendations grouped in 9 themes are included in the text of this section.

Section 2 contains statistical information relevant to housing in the Hedland area, which serves to provide a broader context for the housing issues, while Section 3 presents a detailed analysis of the issues identified above. Section 4 gives an overview of the findings of some housing studies conducted in the area over the last few years, as well as a summary of the preliminary consultations in February.

The final section of the report contains a conclusion. As has been the case with previous reports, Shelter WA will promote the findings of this Report with relevant stakeholders in Government and industry. The report will also be used to inform Shelter WA's policy processes, in this case particularly on regional and Indigenous issues.

2. Hedland: Background

2.1 Profile

Port Hedland is the main centre of Pilbara region, located some 1,660 kilometres North of Perth on the Western Australian coast. According to Tourism WA,

Port Hedland is renowned for its Indigenous culture and history, long trains, big ships, salt piles and red dust. Often referred to as 'the friendliest town in the Pilbara', the local people make Port Hedland what it is today. Port Hedland has lovely warm weather.¹

The Town of Port Hedland consists of two main centres. Port Hedland ("Port") was the original townsite, and contains the port and the main industrial area. South Hedland ("South") was established in the mid 1960s, when Port ran out of suitable land for building due to a mining boom. Due to the large expanse of tidal flats surrounding the original town, South Hedland ("South") was located some 15 kilometres inland. South now contains the bulk of Hedland's population.

Port Hedland is the major centre for Western Australia's iron ore industry, and is currently Australia's biggest port in terms of annual tonnage.² While iron ore is the mainstay of the regional economy, salt production and other metals are also important. The iron ore industry started in earnest in 1965,

when Goldsworthy Mining Ltd (now BHP Billiton Iron Ore) dredged an approach channel and turning basin for ships of up to 65,000 Dead Weight Tonnes (DWT). At the same time the Leslie Salt Company (now Dampier Salt Ltd) commenced development of a solar salt industry.³

2.2 Population

As at 30 June 2004, the Town of Port Hedland was home to 12,487 people.⁴ Perhaps surprisingly for a mining centre, and contrary to generally held views, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that Hedland's population has been by and large stable over the last 15 years. In the past, the population has fluctuated between a high of 13,116 (in 1996) and a low of 12,599 (in 1991).⁵ It should be noted that ABS data probably understate the amount of fluctuation in population levels for two reasons:

Firstly, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that many short or medium term residents do not indicate Hedland as their usual place of residence on the relevant forms. This issue appears to be of particular relevance for employees who live in makeshift accommodation such as caravan parks and 'dongas' while in Hedland, but who also maintain a house and often a family elsewhere.

Secondly, the Census is always conducted at the same time of the year (June), eliminating any possibility of capturing seasonal population fluctuations.

Be that as it may, Figure 1 below shows that the age profile of Hedland's population differs markedly from that of the rest of Western Australia. The figure indicates that:

¹ Tourism Western Australia, *Port Hedland*, www.westernaustralia.com/en/Destinations/Australias%20North%20West/The%20Pilbara/A2Local.htm?contentType=4&contentID=1801&desttype=4&, accessed 29 March 2005.

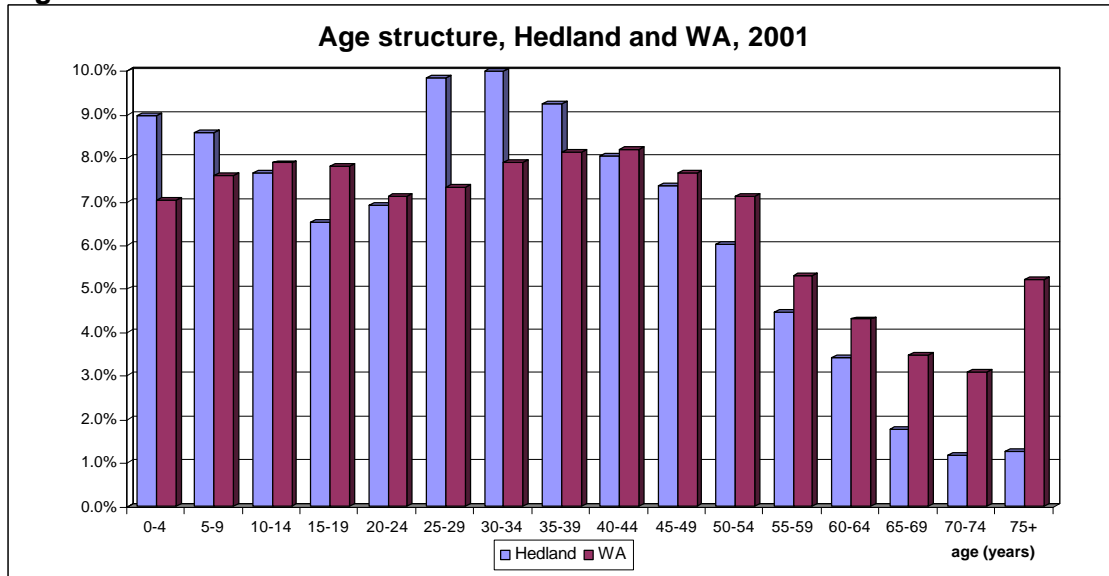
² Port Hedland Port Authority, *2004 Annual Report*, undated, p.3

³ Port Hedland Port Authority, *2004 Annual Report*, undated, p.1

⁴ Space Time Research, *Population Estimates by Age and Sex, Western Australia, 2004, At 30 June, for Estimated Resident Population (psns), Port Hedland (T)*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Time Series Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, ABS Cat. No. 2003.0, 2003. The estimate of 12,487 people in 2004 is from a different source and is not directly comparable to the ABS estimates.

- Hedland's population contains a relatively large proportion of children under 15 years of age (25.1%, compared to the WA average of 21.4%),
- At 13.4% Hedland has relatively fewer young people aged 15-25 year old than WA as a whole (14.9%),
- There is a relatively large proportion of people aged 25-44, with 37.1% in this age bracket compared to the WA average of 31.6%,
- Hedland has relatively few people aged between 45 and 64; these people comprise 21.0% of the population compared to the WA average of 23.2%, and
- Only 4.1% of Hedland residents are aged 65 years and over (WA: 11.2%).

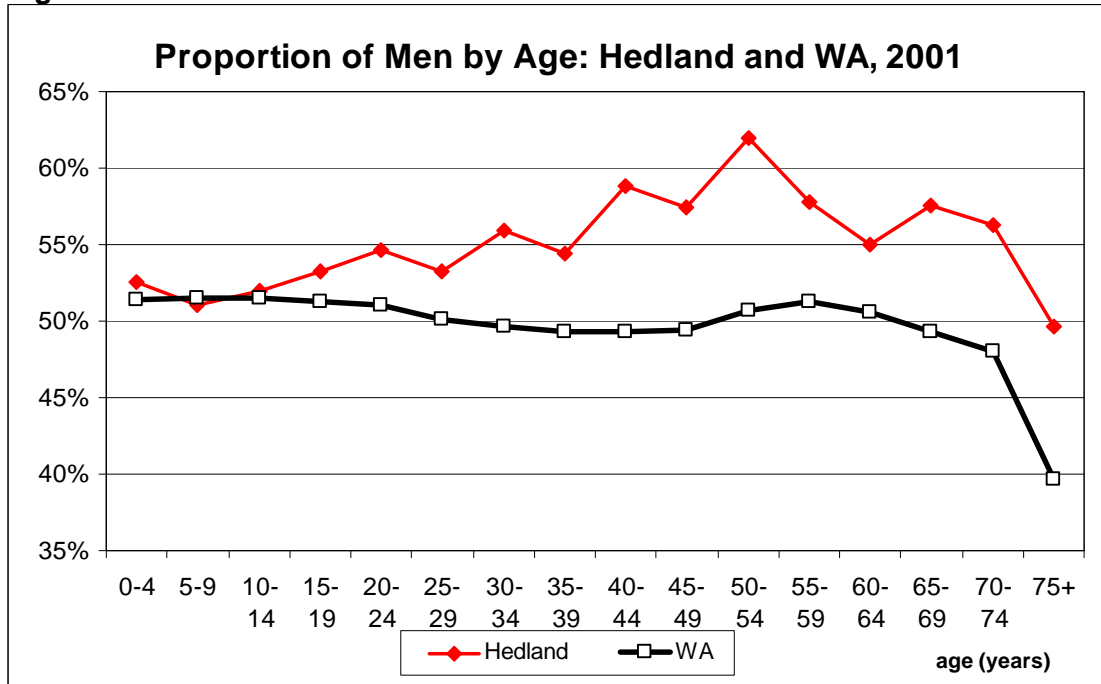
Figure 1

Source data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Cat. No. 2005.0, Table X01, and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5), Cat. No. 2005.0, Table X01

Overall, this means that Hedland's population is relatively young, with a median age of 31 years compared to the WA median of 34. In addition, 2001 Census data shows that most (54.9%) of Hedland's residents are men – in WA as a whole women outnumber men by a small margin. Figure 2 below shows that the proportion of men is particularly high for the 40-59 age bracket, where men form 59.0% of Hedland's population.

This age and gender profile is consistent with there being a relatively large number of families with young children in Hedland, whose parents are in town to take advantage of employment opportunities in mining and related industries. As parents and children grow older, they tend to move out of Hedland in order to pursue education and employment opportunities elsewhere. Men aged between 40 and 60 who move to Hedland to take up employment opportunities are much less likely to bring their families. Few people remain in town after they retire.

Figure 2



Source data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Cat. No. 2005.0, Table X01, and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5), Cat. No. 2005.0, Table X01

2.3 Household Structure

Table 1 below shows that Hedland's family and household structure is very similar to that of Western Australia as a whole. For instance, the table highlights that 83.8% of Hedland's households consist of families with children, compared to 84.6% for WA. 16.2% of Hedland's households are non-family structures, including group households, multi-family households and single persons. This is very similar to the WA average of 15.4%. In addition, the proportion of couples with children has declined in Hedland as it has across Western Australia since 1991, while the proportions of lone persons, couples without children and single parent households have increased.

Nevertheless, Table 1 also highlights a number of differences between Hedland and the rest of the state. Firstly, within the family households, the proportion of couples with children is significantly higher than that for WA as a whole (56.3% compared to 52.3%). Secondly, the proportion of couples without children is substantially lower, accounting for 16.1% of households in Hedland compared to 20.1% in WA.

Thirdly, the proportion of singles with and without children is below the WA average. This group comprises 19.8% of Hedland's households, but 21.4% of WA's households. Finally, the proportion of multi-family households in Hedland is 3.3% - nearly double the WA average of 1.7%.

Table 1

Household Type and Family Type: Hedland and Western Australia, 1991-2001									
	1991 Census			1996 Census			2001 Census		
	Hedland	WA		Hedland	WA		Hedland	WA	
Couple with children	6,854	64.3%	59.6%	5,724	58.7%	55.0%	5,647	56.3%	52.3%
Couple without children	1,445	13.6%	17.2%	1,460	15.0%	19.0%	1,611	16.1%	20.1%
Single Parent Family	897	8.4%	9.3%	841	8.6%	9.9%	1,065	10.6%	11.2%
Other Family	50	0.5%	1.0%	79	0.8%	1.1%	83	0.8%	1.1%
Total Family	9,246	86.7%	87.0%	8,104	83.1%	85.0%	8,406	83.8%	84.6%
Lone person household	712	6.7%	7.7%	898	9.2%	9.4%	922	9.2%	10.2%
Multi-family household	323	3.0%	1.3%	322	3.3%	1.8%	335	3.3%	1.7%
Group household	383	3.6%	4.0%	429	4.4%	3.8%	370	3.7%	3.4%
Total Non-Family	1,418	13.3%	13.0%	1,649	16.9%	15.0%	1,627	16.2%	15.4%
Total	10,664	100.0%	100.0%	9,753	100.0%	100.0%	10,033	100.0%	100.0%

Source data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Time Series Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Cat. No. 2003.0, Table T17, and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Cat. No. 2003.0, Table T17

By and large, the data presented in Table 1 confirm the patterns identified in section 2.2. The exception to this is the relatively large proportion of multi-family households, which corresponds with the relatively high incidence of overcrowding reported below, and appears to result from multiple, mostly Indigenous, families and individuals sharing accommodation.

2.4 Employment and Income

Five characteristics of Hedland employment and income patterns are worth noting. Firstly, mining and related industries underpin the Hedland economy and employ a large section of the population.

Secondly, many people work long hours: 32.7% of all employees in Hedland work 49 or more hours per week, compared to the WA average of 20.3%.⁶ The longest hours were worked in the Construction sector, where 53.0% of employees worked 49 or more hours, followed by Manufacturing (48.2%), Wholesale Trade (46.7%), Transport and Storage (40.1%) and Mining (39.4%).⁷

Thirdly, the consultations conducted as part of this project strongly suggested that a relatively high proportion of people working in Hedland do so on a temporary basis, typically two years. Both temporary workers and long working hours are known to have a negative impact on family and community life.⁸

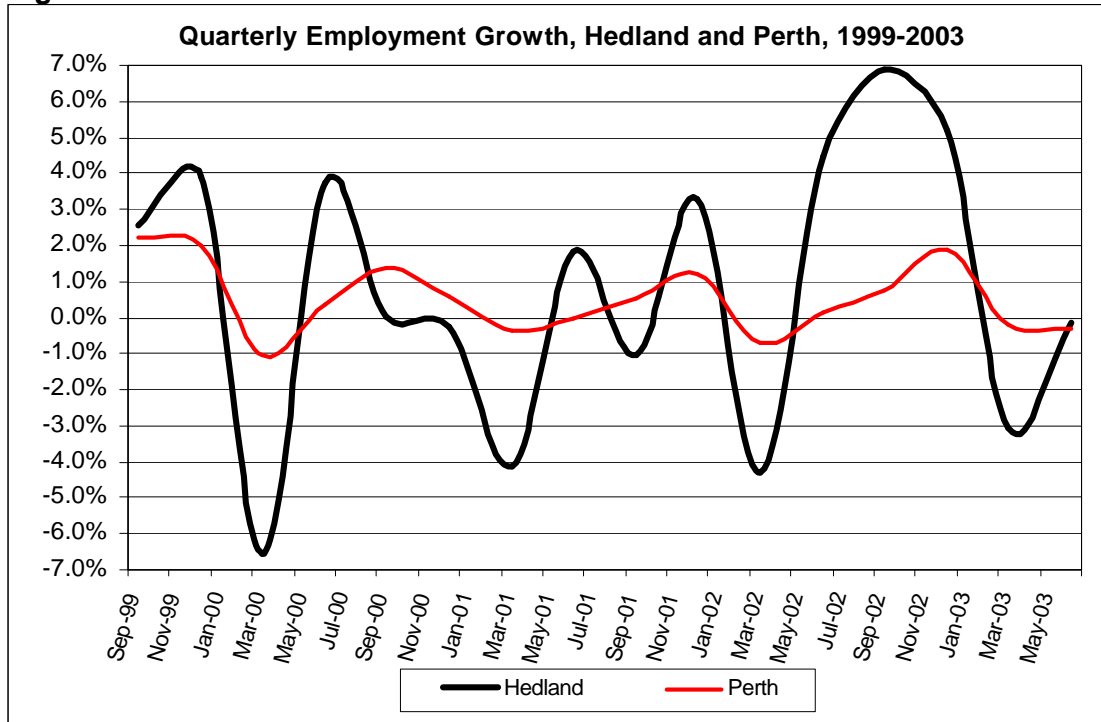
Fourthly, the 'boom bust' cycle associated with the mining industry has an impact on Hedland's general economy and labour market. For instance, Figure 3 compares quarterly employment growth in the Town of Port Hedland with Perth over the period between 1999 and 2003. This figure indicates that Hedland is subject to some very pronounced seasonal economic fluctuations. While longer term data on employment are not readily available, Figure 10 in Section 3.8 indicates a major boom in construction industry activity in the late 1990s.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Cat. No. 2003.0, Table X22B and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X22B

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X22B

⁸ For instance, see Anne M. Sibbel, *The Psychosocial Well-being of Children from Fly-in/Fly-out Mining Families*, Edith Cowan University, October 2001.

Figure 3



Source data: Department of Local Government and Regional Development, *Regional Trends and Indicators Town of Port Hedland, June 2003* and Department of Local Government and Regional Development, *Regional Trends and Indicators Perth Metropolitan Area, June 2003*

Finally, there are substantial differences between the employment and income characteristics of men and women in Hedland. Half of all employed men work in mining, construction and manufacturing. Mining is the biggest employer, accounting for over a quarter (26.0%) of employed males, followed by the construction (13.6%) and manufacturing (10.3%) sectors.⁹ Men tend to be employed as Tradespersons and Related Workers (26.6%), (Associate) Professionals (24.8%), or Intermediate Production and Transport Workers (21.5%).¹⁰

Most women, on the other hand, are employed in services, including retail (16.9%), health and community services (16.5%), education (13.3%), and property / business services (10.0%). Mining, construction and manufacturing employ 11.6% of women.¹¹ 45.1% of women are employed as Clerical, Sales and Service Workers, and an additional 33.4% as (Associate) Professionals.¹²

Table 2 shows that at the time of the 2001 Census, the unemployment rate for men (4.1%) was higher than that for women (2.2%). However, participation rates were substantially lower amongst women, with 77.5% of males aged 15 and over in the labour force, compared to 63.2% of females. There are also significant differences between the sexes in terms of hours worked, with 44.2% of men working 49 hours or more each week, compared to 14.6% of women.¹³

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X20A

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X25

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X20B

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X25

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X22A

Table 2

Unemployment and Workforce Participation, Port Hedland and WA, 2001						
	Unemployment Rate			Participation Rate		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Port Hedland	4.1%	2.2%	3.5%	77.5%	63.2%	71.3%
Western Australia	8.3%	6.5%	7.5%	66.9%	53.1%	59.9%

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Tables X23A and B and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Tables X23A and B

The differences between the sexes in terms of the type of employment and hours worked also result in a large discrepancy in terms of income. At the time of the 2001 Census, the median weekly income for employed women in Hedland was \$533.95, with 12.6% earning in more than \$1,000 per week.¹⁴ This is significantly better than the averages for WA, which were \$463.98 and 7.6% respectively.

However, for employed men the median income in Hedland was \$1095.66 - more than double the median weekly income for women and 83% more than the WA median of \$599.93 per week. 55.2% of employed men in Hedland earned in excess of \$1,000 per week, more than twice the WA average of 27.0%.¹⁵

2.5 Indigenous People

According to Census data, 1,829 people in the Town of Port Hedland identified as Indigenous in 2001. Indigenous people comprise 16.1% of Hedland's population, or nearly five times the WA average of 3.3%.¹⁶ Contrary to the general population profile of the City, Indigenous women (52.6%) outnumbered men (47.4%).¹⁷

Figure 4 shows that Indigenous people tend to be significantly younger than non-Indigenous people, with median ages of 22 and 32 years for the two groups. Over half of Indigenous people in Hedland were aged under 25, with 37.3% under 15 years of age. The proportion of Indigenous people was substantially below that of non-Indigenous people for all cohorts up to 20-24 years, while the reverse was true for all age cohorts from 25-29 onwards.

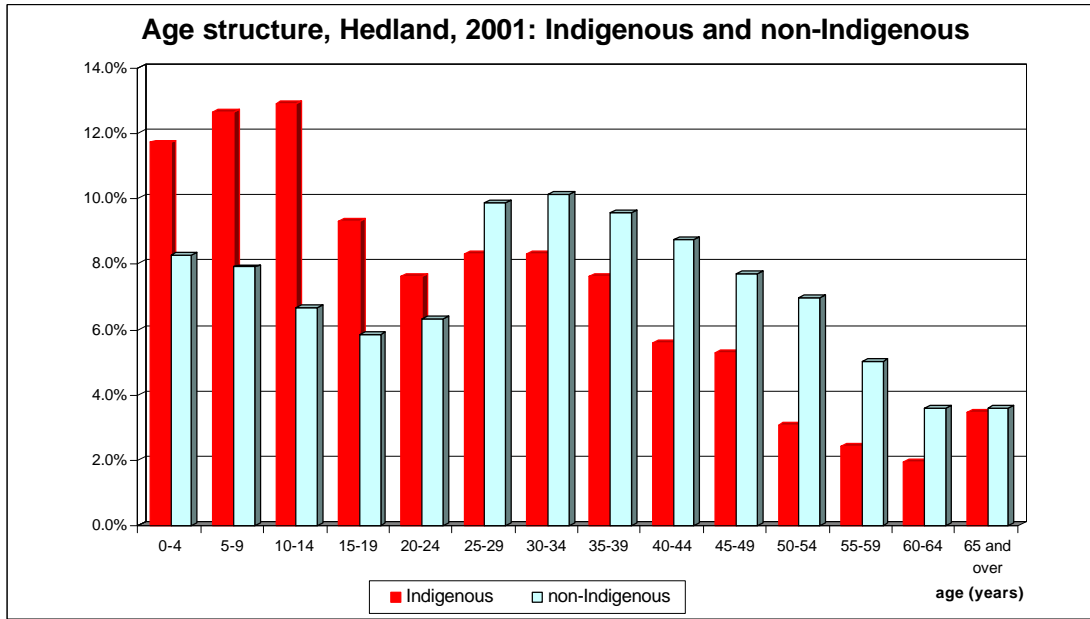
¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X23B and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X23B

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X23A and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X23A. The median individual income for all employed persons in Hedland was \$818.30 per week, with 38.5% earning more than \$1,000 per week: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X23C.

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I01, and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I01. The figures for Port Hedland exclude 1,359 people or 10.7% of the population who did not state whether they were Indigenous or not.

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I01

Figure 4



Source data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001), Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I03

Census data contains considerable evidence that Indigenous people in Hedland face severe and multiple disadvantage. For instance, the median *individual* income of Indigenous people over the age of 15 in 2001 was \$164.46 per week, less than a third of the median individual income for all Hedland residents over 15 (\$576.51).¹⁸ At the same time, the median income for Indigenous *households* in Hedland was \$689.29, less than half the median income for Hedland’s non-Indigenous households of \$1421.85.¹⁹

This large difference is due to several factors. Firstly, Indigenous people tend to live in larger households: on average, Indigenous households contain 3.4 people, compared to 2.7 people for non-Indigenous households.

Secondly, there are differences in unemployment rates: in 2001, unemployment stood at 22.2% for Indigenous people and 3.7% for non-Indigenous people. Another factor is that the labour force participation for Indigenous people was very low (52.1% compared to a participation rate of 78.8% for non-Indigenous people).²⁰

Finally, part of the discrepancy in incomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is due to the fact that Indigenous people are less likely to hold higher paying jobs. For instance, Table 3 shows that 55.0% of non-Indigenous people were employed in the four highest paying professions, compared to 39.4% of Indigenous people. Employed Indigenous people were less than half as likely to be working as managers and administrators than non-Indigenous people, but nearly twice as likely to be working as intermediate clerical, sales and service workers.

Table 3: Profession by Indigenous Status, Town of Port Hedland, 2001

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (SLA 540057280)*, Catalogue No. 2001.0, 2002, Table B13B and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I08. Excluding overseas visitors and ‘not stated’.

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I22. Excluding overseas visitors and ‘not stated’.

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I13.

Occupation	Median Wage	% Indigenous Employed People	% non-Indigenous Employed People
Managers and Administrators	\$1,278.30	2.9%	6.3%
Intermediate Production and Transport Workers	\$1,152.03	14.9%	14.5%
Tradespersons and Related Workers	\$1,025.81	10.3%	18.8%
Professionals	\$953.55	11.2%	15.3%
Associate Professionals	\$940.96	13.2%	14.0%
Advanced Clerical and Service Workers	\$573.68	2.0%	2.3%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	\$522.50	21.8%	11.5%
Labourers and Related Workers	\$498.59	16.9%	9.0%
Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	\$371.54	6.8%	8.2%

Data Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I18 and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X28

It is also worth noting that Indigenous people were more likely than non-Indigenous people to work in the relatively low waged service sector. For instance, 15.7% of employed Indigenous people worked in the Health and Community Services, compared to 3.9% of non-Indigenous people. An additional 23.2% of employed Indigenous people worked in Government and Education, compared to 10.5% of non-Indigenous people. Conversely, Mining accounted for 10.3% of Indigenous people compared to 18.8% of non-Indigenous people and no Indigenous people were employed in Finance and Insurance.

With regard to education, 20.4% of Indigenous people over 15 did not go to school or finished below Year 9, compared to 5.9% of their non-Indigenous counterparts. 12.9% of Indigenous people over the age of 15 stated their highest level of schooling to be Year 12 or equivalent, compared to 37.6% of non-Indigenous people.²¹ Only 17 Indigenous people in Hedland (1.8%) held a tertiary degree, compared to 852 non-Indigenous people (12.6%). At Census time, there were no Indigenous people in Hedland with a graduate diploma or post graduate degree.²²

Finally, the Town of Port Hedland's *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan* identifies short to medium term housing options for 'fringe dwellers': Indigenous people coming into Port Hedland from the communities as a major issue:

While there is an Aboriginal Hostel in South Hedland, this has capacity for only a relatively small number of people and is not the preferred living environment for many Aboriginal people from desert communities who prefer to camp in a bush setting. Unrestricted camping and casual living on the vacant lands within the town area are not acceptable behaviour and all parties accept that there are community health and safety implications if these practises are allowed to continue. The Ngarda-Ngarli-Yarndu Regional Council of ATSIC and the Town of Port Hedland will work together to identify and implement strategies that will lead to either the provision of a safe and managed facility or the eradication of this practise.²³

2.6 Young People

The Hedland Youth Involvement Council / Youth Crisis Accommodation (YIC) commissioned a *Youth Housing Needs Research Project* in 2003. This project raised

²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I05.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I14. 13 out of the 17 Indigenous people with tertiary qualifications were women.

²³ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.13.

a number of issues with regard to housing for young people, and identified “the need for a continuum of accommodation services within the town”,²⁴ including:

- long term affordable housing options for young people in general,
- transitional housing with support to enable the leap from crisis accommodation to long term housing,
- hostel or boarding house style accommodation for high school students,
- medium and crisis accommodation.

2.7 Other Issues

A number of issues in Hedland can be viewed either as a cause or as a consequence of inadequate housing. Possibly the most hotly debated issue in Hedland is that of crime. The latest edition of the University of Western Australia Crime Research Centre’s annual report on *Crime and Justice Statistics for Western Australia* notes that “about three quarters of all reported crime was located in the Perth metropolitan area. However, for different types of crime, the distribution varied from region to region. Violent offence rates were highest in the Kimberley, Pilbara, South Eastern and Central regions – no doubt related to the high levels of Indigenous victimisation.”²⁵

The Town of Port Hedland’s *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan* delves into this issue in some detail, and finds that crime statistics at the regional and even the local government level may mask some crime hot spots. In particular, the Plan identifies South Hedland as a crime hot spot, with crime statistics that are “generally consistent with the figures for Broome, Derby and Kalgoorlie for burglaries (ranking behind Meekatharra) and are clearly second only to Meekatharra for assaults. There is therefore no doubt that South Hedland crime statistics, particularly those relating to offences against persons, are among the worst in the State”.²⁶

The Plan links the high rate of violent crime to alcohol abuse, stating that the “amount of alcohol consumed per head in the Town of Port Hedland is twice the Australian average. Statistics also indicate that the Pilbara has the youngest uptake of substance use. There are correlating violence statistics; of the 26 reported family violence events reported for the month March 2002 in Port Hedland, 77% were recorded as drug (including alcohol) related with a further 13% recorded as being possibly drug related”.²⁷

Like the UWA Crime Research Centre, the *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan* makes a connection between Indigenous people and crime. The Plan claims that the main perpetrators of violent crime “are male persons of Aboriginal descent aged between 20 and 35 years who reside in Port or South Hedland”.²⁸ It views this as the result of “the despair and anger that many [Indigenous people] face in their daily lives from historical factors, a high rate of unemployment (over 40% if CDEP is excluded), a lack of formal education, inadequate housing, low self worth, social exclusion, entrenched violence, a lack of social alternatives, a focus on fabricated or

²⁴ Northern Edge Consultants, *Youth Crisis Accommodation: Youth Housing Needs Research Project – Final Report*, July 2003

²⁵ J A Fernandez, A M Ferrante, N S N Loh, M G Maller and G M Valuri, *Crime and Justice Statistics for Western Australia: 2003*, University of Western Australia Crime Research Centre, December 2004, p.vi.

²⁶ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.3.

²⁷ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.3

²⁸ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.4.

real past injustices, an inability to recognise the future consequences of their actions and a lack of life goals”.²⁹

The Plan concludes that “law and order issues must be addressed if South Hedland is to regain its sense of community and well-being... It must also be clearly acknowledged that the strategies include some that are intended to address the underlying causes of the crime and anti-social behaviour issues, most notably the social exclusion of many Aboriginal people in the Pilbara. Without this, the problems being experienced will continue to recur and worsen. This has clearly been the pattern to date and it must be changed.”³⁰

For the purposes of this discussion paper, it should be noted that social exclusion and Indigenous victimisation can only be addressed in a holistic manner. Such a solution would require industry, government and Aboriginal people to work together on all aspects of the problem, including housing, employment, poverty and health.³¹

²⁹ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.4.

³⁰ Town of Port Hedland, *Safer Community & Crime Prevention Plan*, August 2003, p.18.

³¹ Memmott, P. Long, S. Chambers, C, Spring, F. 2003, *Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practical Responses to their Needs*, Australian Housing and Research Institute, Queensland .

3. Hedland Housing Stock and Needs: Statistical Evidence

3.1 Housing Construction

According to Census data, Port Hedland was home to 13,099 people in 2001, including 79 overseas visitors. 11,983 of Hedland residents lived in 4,359 private dwellings,³² with the remaining 1,116 people residing in non-private dwellings such as hotels and motels (351), hostels and refuges (72), nursing homes (26), hospitals (31) and prisons (462).³³

At Census time, 741 private dwellings (14.5% of total stock) were unoccupied.³⁴ This proportion is significantly greater than the WA average of 10.0%.³⁵ This discrepancy is most likely due to the 2001 Census taking place close to the bottom of Hedland's economic cycle.

More detailed analysis of occupied private dwellings reveals that Hedland's housing stock is somewhat different from the Western Australian average. In particular, Figure 5 indicates that compared to the WA average, Hedland housing stock had the following features:

- As in Western Australia generally, separate houses are the dominant structure. However, this dwelling type accounts for a significantly lower proportion of stock than the WA average (65.0% compared to 80.1%).
- The categories of semi-detached houses / townhouses and flats / units / apartments are correspondingly larger, accounting for a total of 28.2% of stock compared to the WA average of 18.2%.
- The category of other dwellings is nearly five times greater than the WA average (5.7% compared to 1.2%). This indicates that a relatively large proportion of people who are living in marginal dwellings or who are homeless; section 3.5 contains a discussion on homelessness and overcrowding in the Town of Port Hedland.

The community consultations identified that the first two differences arise due to the relatively large presence of company owned housing in Hedland. These dwellings account for a sizeable proportion of the town's housing stock, and contain a large number of semi-detached houses, as well as apartments. Some of these dwellings have since been sold to the private sector.

With regard to the high proportion of marginal dwellings, the consultations identified that this is most likely related to the fact that many temporary company employees reside in caravan parks or 'dongas'. This also explains the odd fact that the 2001 Census did not include any Indigenous people living in caravan park accommodation.

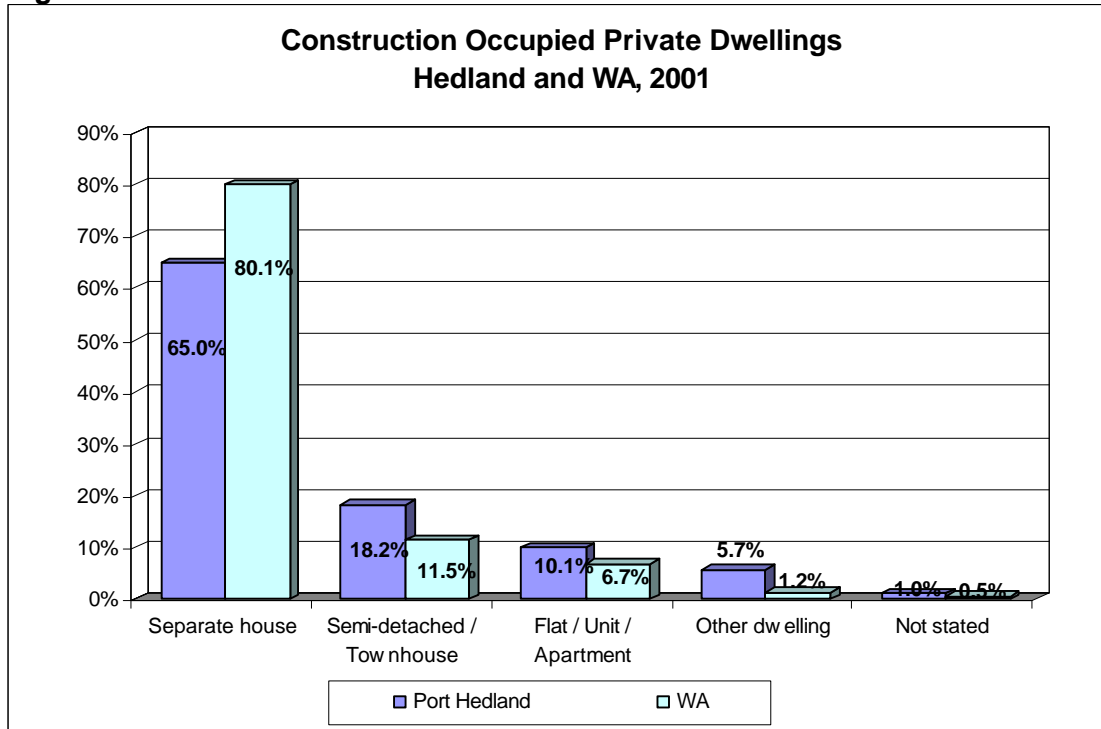
³² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (SLA 540057280)*, Catalogue No. 2001.0, 2002, Table B01

³³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X45

³⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (SLA 540057280)*, Catalogue No. 2001.0, 2002, Table B18

³⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2001.0, 2002, Table B18

Figure 5

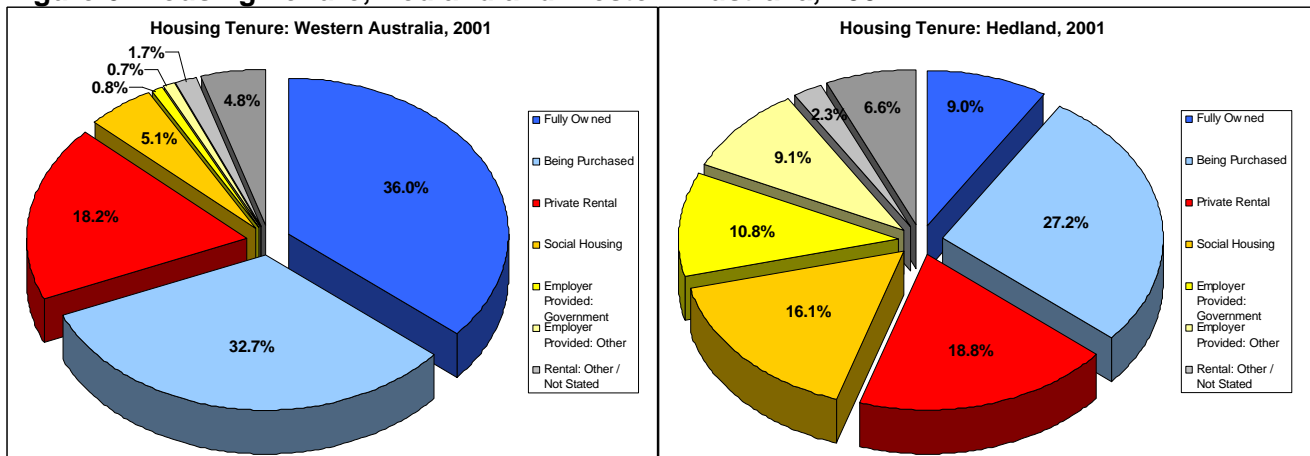


Data Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X49 and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5), Catalogue No. 2005.0, 2002, Table X49

3.2 Housing Tenure

Figure 6 shows that there are some significant differences between housing tenure in Hedland and Western Australia. Firstly, the proportion of owner occupiers is far lower, accounting for 36.2% of households in Hedland compared to the WA average of 69.2%. Within this category, the proportion of fully owned dwellings in Hedland is particularly low at less than a quarter of the WA average (9.0% compared to 36.3% of households).

Figure 6: Housing Tenure, Hedland and Western Australia, 2001



Data sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Catalogue No. 2005.0, Tables X44 and X46B and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Western Australia (State 5), Catalogue No. 2005.0, 2002, Tables X44 and X46B

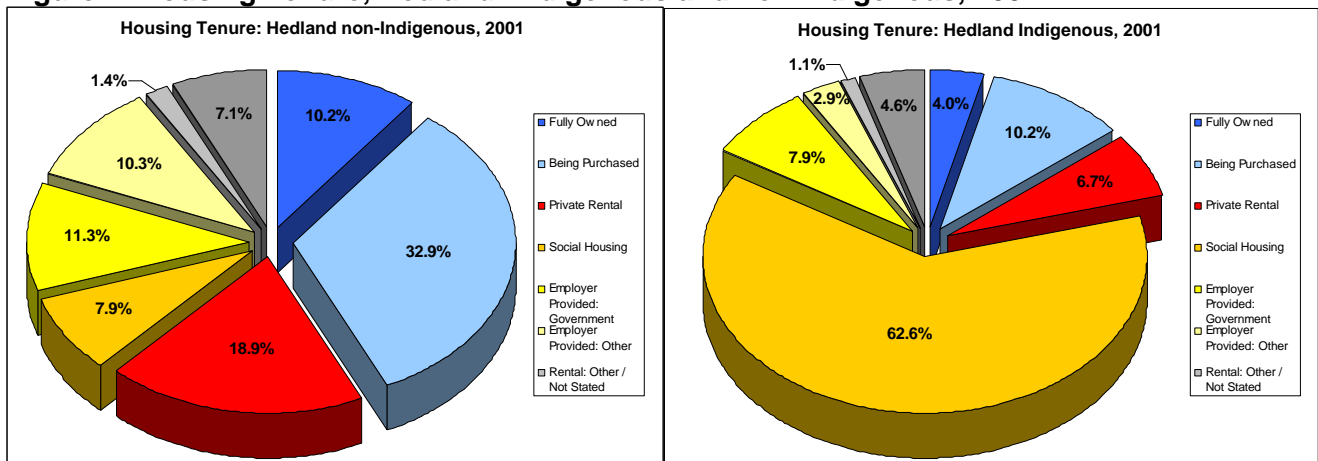
By contrast, the proportion of employer provided housing in Hedland is more than ten times the WA average (19.9% compared to 1.5% of households). As in Western Australia generally, just over half of this category is Government provided,³⁶ with the remainder provided by private sector employers. However, the community consultations found that the proportion of employee provided housing is in all likelihood higher than suggested by these figures, as companies also headlease a proportion of dwellings enumerated as private rental, which fluctuates with Hedland’s economic fortunes.

Thirdly, Hedland’s social housing sector is proportionally more than three times the WA average (16.1% compared to 5.1% of households). This category comprises mostly of public housing (Homeswest), with a small component of community housing (provided by not for profit community organisations).

The above breakdown masks substantial differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Figure 7 compares the housing tenure of Hedland’s Indigenous population with that of its non-Indigenous people. This figure highlights some severe housing disadvantage among Hedland’s Indigenous people. Most significantly, less than a third (31.7%) of Indigenous people in Hedland are housed in the private sector (home ownership, private rental and employer provided housing), compared to 83.6% of non-Indigenous people. Specifically:

- the rate of home ownership among Indigenous people in Hedland is less than a third that of non-Indigenous people (14.2% compared to 43.1%),
- the proportion of Indigenous people in Hedland reside in the private rental sector (6.7%) is significantly lower than that of non-Indigenous people (18.9%), and
- 10.8% of Indigenous people in Hedland live in employer provided housing compared to 21.6% of non-Indigenous people; it should be noted that within this category, Indigenous people are 30% less likely to reside in Government provided employee housing, but 72% less likely to reside in housing provided by other employers.

Figure 7: Housing Tenure, Hedland: Indigenous and non-Indigenous, 2001



Data sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001), Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Tables I23 and I27A.

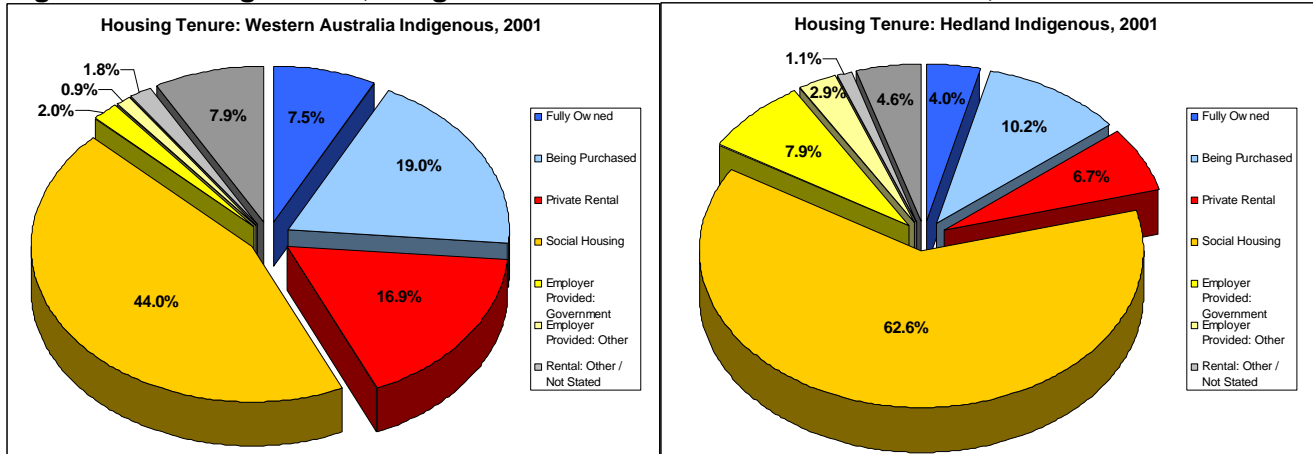
As a consequence of their inability to access housing in the private sector, Indigenous people in Hedland are highly dependent on social housing for their

³⁶ This is mostly provided under the Government Employees Housing Assistance scheme, or GEHA.

accommodation. Nearly two thirds (62.6%) of Indigenous people in Hedland reside in this sector, nearly eight times the proportion of non-Indigenous people (7.9%).

As might be expected from Figure 6, to some extent the Indigenous disadvantage is a result of the relatively poor position with regard to housing in Hedland generally. This is confirmed in Figure 8, which indicates that Hedland's Indigenous people are significantly worse off in terms of their housing situation than Indigenous people in Western Australia generally.

Figure 8: Housing Tenure, Indigenous: Hedland and Western Australia, 2001



Data sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Tables I23 and I27A and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Western Australia (State 5)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Tables I23 and I27A.

Figure 8 indicates that compared to Indigenous people in Western Australia as a whole, Indigenous people in Hedland are:

- less likely to own their own home, reflected by a home ownership rate of 14.2% in Hedland compared to 26.5% in WA,
- less likely to reside in the private rental sector (6.7% compared to 16.9%), and
- more likely to be a social housing tenant (62.6% compared to 44.0%)

The figure also indicates that more Indigenous people live in employer provided accommodation in Hedland than in WA generally. However, Figures 5 and 6 suggest that this is solely due to the fact that this category is relatively large in Hedland and does not reflect any greater ability on the part of Indigenous people to access this type of housing in Hedland.

Overall, Hedland has less home ownership, more employer provided housing, about the same level of private rental and more social housing than Western Australia generally. There are some major differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Hedland, with the former group having severe problems accessing accommodation in the private sector. As a result, Indigenous people in Hedland are heavily dependent on social housing.

3.3 House Prices and Rents Over Time

Little data on house prices and rents in Hedland exists, and what is available is not systematically kept and appears to be unreliable. There are four readily available sources of information, all of which have some major drawbacks.

First, the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia publishes the median house price for regional centres, and occasionally this has included Port Hedland. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the REIWA data refers to Port or South Hedland, or both. A second problem with this data source is that the use of median prices may not be particularly accurate in a relatively small town such as Hedland. The third issue is that REIWA data refers to settlements rather than contracts, and therefore lags the market by some three to six months. However, the major problem is that REIWA data is not available for rents and is only available for sales from 2001, with data for 2002 and 2005 not available.

Secondly, the Department of Land Information Valuation Services (formerly the Valuer General's Office) have tracked the rental value, market value and land value for a typical dwelling in Port Hedland since June 1988. The advantage of this data source is that it does not suffer from the issues associated with averages, as it tracks the rental and sales price of a single property.³⁷ The main problem with this data source is that the DLIVS tracks a 1960 asbestos three bedroom, one bathroom detached house on a quarter acre block, which may have been typical 15 years ago but now no longer meets community standards. A lesser issue is that it is unclear whether the DLIVS 'typical' dwellings are situated in Port or South Hedland, or perhaps represent an average of the two.

Thirdly, the Town of Port Hedland's Housing Officer, Zabia Chmeliewski, tracked advertised rentals in the North West Telegraph for both Port and South Hedland every month between November 2003 and January 2005. The main problems with this data source is the limited time period and the fact that it does not cover rentals not advertised in this particular publication.

Finally, Hedland First National Real Estate has published an overview of residential median prices in both Port and South Hedland between 1993 and 2004 on its Internet site. This data source suffers from the same problems as the REIWA data, with the exception of missing data. However, an additional problem is that there is a degree of ambiguity about the data. Hedland First National states on its website that this data was "compiled by Hedland First National from Valuer Generals and RP data suppliers". However, with respect to Valuer General data it does not state whether the data refers to actual sales or valuations and does not give any indication of what "RP data suppliers" are. Nevertheless, this is the best data source for house prices in Hedland as it covers a relatively extended period and is unbroken.

Figure 9 presents all of these data sources in one graph,³⁸ revealing the following broad patterns:

- Between 1988 and 1996, house prices in both Port and South Hedland appear to have increased steadily, from \$25,000 to \$160,000 for a three bedroom asbestos house on a large block.
- Rents appear to have increased at roughly the same rate, from \$200 to \$365 per week for the same dwelling type. However, the increases in rents appear not to have been regular, but rather to have occurred in two major jumps in 1991/92 and 1996.
- All data sources suggest that house prices and rents peaked around 1997, with significant falls occurring during 1998. It is of interest to note that a

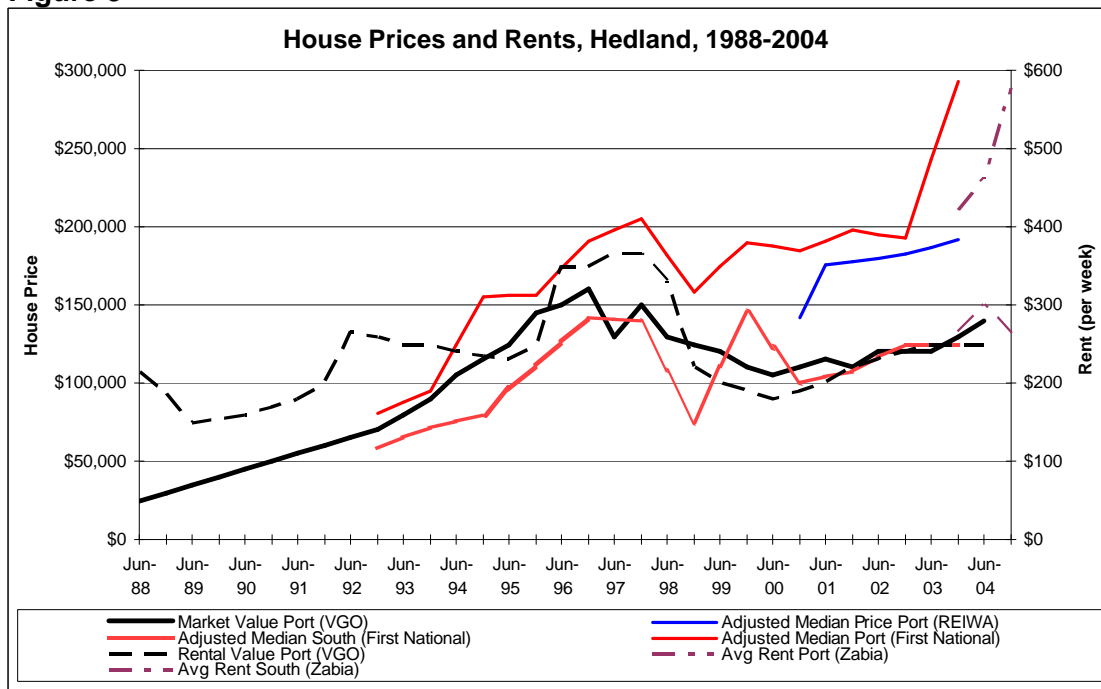
³⁷ In actual fact, DLIVS track a number of similar properties and average the results.

³⁸ For purposes of comparability, the data from REIWA and Hedland First National has been brought forward in time by six months in order to adjust for lagging.

meeting held by the Town of Port Hedland in May 1999 made mention of a housing crisis in Hedland in the recent past.³⁹

- In the period since 1998, discrepancies occur between the various data sources. DLIVS data shows both rent and market value recovering at a very slow rate. ToPH and First National data confirms this development for South Hedland. However, for Port Hedland, ToPH and First National data suggest a much faster increase in house prices and rents, particularly since 2002. REIWA data sits between the high growth in Port and slow growth in South Hedland, suggesting that this is indeed an amalgamate measure comprising both centres.

Figure 9



Data sources: Department of Land Information Valuation Services, ValueWatch Port Hedland, June 2004, Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, Market Update, various editions, Hedland First National Real Estate, Residential Median Prices, http://www.first.au.com/?page=median_prices, accessed 18 May 2005, Town of Port Hedland Housing Officer, personal communication, 23 February 2005.

The above discussion suggests the following conclusions with regard to house prices in Hedland:

1. Assuming DLIVS data reflects market conditions reasonably accurately in the earlier period, house prices in Hedland increased by around 22% per year between 1988 and 1997, from around \$25,000 to around \$150,000 in South and around \$200,000 in Port Hedland.
2. A minor crash occurred in 1997/98, resulting in a downward adjustment of house prices by 10-20% in both centres.
3. By early 2003, house prices in both centres had recovered to their 1997 levels.
4. Since 2003, house price growth has accelerated, particularly in Port and to a lesser extent also in South Hedland. In Port, house prices were well in excess of \$300,000 by early 2004. According to a recent article in the West Australian newspaper, house prices have increased rapidly since then:

³⁹ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Website 1999, *Bushtalks in South Hedland, WA*, Available Online [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/rural_australians/bushtalks/south_hedland.htm]

“housing and land shortages in Port Hedland contributed to a massive 77.9 per cent growth in the three months to March [2005]”.⁴⁰

While less information is available for rental prices, the available data suggests that rents increased from around \$200 per week in 1988 to around \$350 in 1997. By around 2000, rents had fallen to their 1988 level. Since then rents appear to have started increasing again, particularly in Port Hedland where the average rent advertised in the North West Telegraph was well on its way to \$600 per week by late 2004. In South Hedland, the average advertised rent was just under \$300 per week.

3.4 Housing Stress

Section 3.3 demonstrates that house prices and rents in Hedland are currently very high by any standard. However, the section has not looked into the issue of affordability, which provides the link between housing prices and rents on the one hand, and people’s ability to pay these prices on the other.

Affordable housing can be defined as housing that is appropriate to people’s needs and located close to jobs, education and services is important for the social and economic development of an area.⁴¹ People who are spending too much money on rent or repaying their mortgage have less money to spend on other goods and services. One widely used measure of housing affordability is housing stress, which refers to households in the bottom 40% of incomes paying in excess of 30% of their income on rent or mortgage servicing.⁴²

At the time of the 2001 Census, 40% of households in Hedland had incomes below \$1,138.83.⁴³ Of these:

- 566 households were not in housing stress as they fully owned the house they lived in (151), were public housing tenants (389) or were occupying their accommodation rent free (26).⁴⁴
- 177 households were purchasing their house, of which details on both household income and mortgage payments were known for 158 households. 106 of these households (67.1%) can be calculated to be in housing stress.⁴⁵
- 518 households were renting their premises (excluding public housing), of which details on both household income and rent were known for 465 households. 270 of these households (58.1%) can be calculated to be in housing stress.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ The West Australian, *Perth Property Prices on the Way Up Again*, 17 May 2005

⁴¹ National Housing Strategy, *The Affordability of Australian Housing*, Issues paper No. 2, Commonwealth of Australia, 1991.

⁴² National Housing Strategy, *The Affordability of Australian Housing*, Issues paper No. 2, Commonwealth of Australia, 1991, p.7. The paper goes on to say that in “the view of the Strategy, 30 per cent represents the upper limit of acceptable housing expenditure in Australia for [households in the lowest 40 per cent of the income distribution range]. For people on low incomes who spend a considerable period of time in private rental, 30 per cent could be too high and 25 per cent may be a more reasonable measure of housing stress in recognition of the fact that long-term renters do not share the benefits of home owners over their lifetimes of decreasing outlays on housing in relation to income.”

⁴³ This section refers to *household* rather than *individual* incomes; the figures in this section are therefore not comparable with those discussed in section 2.4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X46B. Excluding 149 households for which no income was stated as well as 386 households for which only partial income was stated.

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X46B

⁴⁵ This assumes that both mortgage payments and incomes are distributed evenly within the stated ranges: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X41

⁴⁶ This assumes that both rents and incomes are distributed evenly within the stated ranges: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X40

It should be noted that these figures are skewed by the very high household incomes in Hedland. If WA-wide income figures are used, the proportion of both renters and purchasers in housing stress increases markedly. Nevertheless, the above figures show a remarkably high level of housing stress, particularly in view of the fact that the Census was taken at a time when Hedland was near the bottom of its economic cycle. The high rate of housing stress amongst home purchasers partially explains the low home ownership rates in the Town.

Finally, it should be noted that the rate of housing stress among renters is probably understated, as it includes renters living in employer-provided housing. Rents in this sector are relatively low, and the sector is relatively large in Hedland. As a result, housing stress in the non-employer provided portion of the private rental market is likely to be substantially higher than indicated above.

3.5 Homelessness

The State Homelessness Taskforce in its 2002 report, *Addressing Homelessness in Western Australia*, defined homelessness as *one extreme of a spectrum of disadvantage in terms of access to safe, affordable and secure housing. Homelessness has an implication of lack of options or choice. A person is homeless if he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing. Inadequate housing is defined as follows:*

- *damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or*
- *threatens the person's safety; or*
- *fails to provide access to adequate personal amenities and the economic and social support that a home normally affords.*⁴⁷

In line with the definition used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Taskforce report went on to define three distinct levels of homelessness:

1. Primary homelessness refers to people sleeping rough, ie. living on the streets, in parks, squatting in derelict buildings or using cars or railway carriages and makeshift dwellings.
2. Secondary homelessness refers to people who move frequently from one form of transitional shelter to another and includes people using emergency accommodation such as hostels for the homeless or night shelters women's refuges, and people residing temporarily with other families, acquaintances and friends because they have no accommodation of their own.
3. Tertiary homelessness includes people who do not have security of tenure as provided by a lease, or who are living in accommodation which is unsafe or harmful to their health, such as some boarding houses, caravan parks, rooming houses or special accommodation houses.⁴⁸

While the Taskforce "found no reliable measure of homelessness",⁴⁹ a useful starting point is the 'other dwellings' category of the 2001 Census. As discussed in Section 3.1, in Hedland 5.7% of households were enumerated in this category, nearly five times the WA average. Further analysis indicates that of the 211 households enumerated in 'other dwellings', 35 were living in dwellings attached to shops or offices and 12 in improvised homes or tents, or were sleeping rough. The

⁴⁷ State Homelessness Taskforce, *Addressing Homelessness in Western Australia*, 31 January 2002, p.1

⁴⁸ State Homelessness Taskforce, *Addressing Homelessness in Western Australia*, 31 January 2002, p.

⁴⁹ State Homelessness Taskforce, *Addressing Homelessness in Western Australia*, 31 January 2002, p.1

overwhelming majority (164) in this category resided in 'caravans, cabins or houseboats'.⁵⁰

Three issues flow from these data. Firstly, a large proportion of people residing in 'caravans, cabins and houseboats' generally indicates a major issue with inadequate and insecure accommodation. This was confirmed by the community consultations, which identified that Hedland's caravan parks are effectively used as an overflow option for housing temporary workers. In other words, Hedland does not offer appropriate accommodation to all of its residents, most notably temporary workers and particularly during economic boom times.

Secondly, it is tempting to conclude from the low number of rough sleepers that Hedland has no, or only a relatively small number of people in the primary homeless category – those literally without a roof over their head. However, this would be erroneous. In fact, the most likely cause of the number of households in this subcategory being small is that the Australian Bureau of Statistics did not employ any special collectors to count homeless people in Hedland for the 2001 Census.⁵¹ While the community consultations unambiguously indicated that primary homelessness is a significant issue in Hedland, Shelter WA is not aware of any attempts to quantify the problem.

Thirdly, the above data do not give any indication of the extent of secondary homelessness, ie. people in unstable accommodation. However, there is an indirect source that gives some indication of the extent of the problem, a 2004 report called *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*. This report identifies 275 homeless people in the DeGrey statistical subdivision (SSD), of which Hedland is the principal centre. It puts the homelessness rate at 156 homeless people per 10,000 population – nearly four times the rate of homelessness in Perth (42 per 10,000).⁵²

173 or 63% of homeless people in the DeGrey SSD were enumerated as staying with friends or relatives, with 47 (17%) in SAAP or boarding house accommodation and 55 (20%) in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.⁵³ As Hedland accounts for nearly two thirds (65.9%) of the population of the DeGrey SSD,⁵⁴ these data suggest that secondary homelessness may be a significant issue in Hedland.

One final issue worth noting is that not one of the households enumerated in the 'other dwellings' contains Indigenous people.⁵⁵ This is highly at odds with the general trend in Western Australia that the extent of homelessness among Indigenous people is far greater than that among non-Indigenous people.⁵⁶ As discussed above, this discrepancy arises partly because, unlike in many other centres, caravan parks cater for temporary workers rather than for itinerants such as Indigenous people.

Indigenous people in Hedland have available two alternatives to caravan park accommodation. The first alternative is to camp in an unofficial site, usually on the

⁵⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280)*, Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X47

⁵¹ Counting of homeless people in Western Australia for the 2001 Census was limited to the Perth metropolitan area, where there were 29 special collectors, who counted homeless people between 10 am and 3 pm on Census day: Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the Homeless*, Australian Census Analytic Program, Australian Bureau of Statistics, ABS Catalogue No. 2050.0, 2003.

⁵² Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, Swinburne University and RMIT University, 2004, p.50.

⁵³ Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, Swinburne University and RMIT University, 2004, p.50.

⁵⁴ 13,099 out of 19,885: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (SLA 540057280)*, Catalogue No. 2001.0, 2002, Table B01 and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Basic Community Profile DeGrey (SSD 54005)*, Catalogue No. 2901.0, 2002, Table B01

⁵⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Indigenous Profile Port Hedland (IARE 25001)*, Catalogue No. 2002.0, 2002, Table I24. However, there is an inconsistency with Table I23 in the same publication, which identifies 3 Indigenous households that are

⁵⁶ For instance, see Paul Pendergast, *No Place Like Home: Homelessness in Western Australia*, Shelter WA, December 2004

edge of town. This option tends to be used particularly when people are visiting Hedland for a relatively short period of time, eg. to attend hospital. In response to social and health issues raised by these unofficial camps, a number of Government and community agencies are currently developing a Town Camp strategy – see Section 3.6.

The second alternative to using caravan park accommodation is to stay with relatives. Indigenous people tend to use this strategy when staying in town for longer periods of time or permanently.⁵⁷ Another time when this option is often used is when a family's existing accommodation is no longer available, eg. due to eviction or a death. One consequence of this strategy is a high rate of overcrowding among Indigenous people, which is discussed in Section 3.7.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a fundamental measurement problem relating to Indigenous homelessness. This occurs because some Indigenous people appear to fill out the Census form differently than intended, because they perceive homelessness differently from non-Indigenous people. For instance, an AHURI Report on this subject notes that the *most visible Indigenous 'homeless' people are small groups who live in public places, socialising, sheltering, drinking, arguing and fighting in public. This occurs despite the existence a range of Indigenous housing options and the advent of formal Town Camps in many regional centres throughout the late 20th century (especially post 1970). Although these people are often categorised as 'homeless', a number see themselves as being both 'placed' and 'homed', and prefer instead to refer to themselves with such labels as 'parkies', 'goomies', 'long grassers', 'ditchies' or 'river campers'*.⁵⁸

3.6 Town Camp

In February 2004, the Pilbara regional managers of 21 Government Departments signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which they agreed to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in the region. In particular, this Pilbara Government Managers Indigenous Forum (PGMIF) agreed to develop a comprehensive strategy addressing the needs of itinerant people.

The principal outcome of this is a 'Community Visitors Strategy', which comprises a managed camping area. This facility aims to provide affordable and appropriate accommodation for visitors from remote Indigenous communities, with services including support, outreach and health closely integrated with the accommodation. The facility would also have easy access to the Bunara May Hostel and a bus service. Finally, regular patrols by police and town rangers would ensure security to users of the facility, including particularly women and children.

The community consultations found that this proposal was controversial. Some participants strongly supported the camping facility, so long as it included adequate support services and strong management. The main concern expressed by this group was that the camp might degenerate if funding for support was insecure or if the camp was not appropriately managed.

However, a number of participants, including notably the Pilbara Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation group, felt strongly that a camp was not appropriate. This group strongly preferred hostel style accommodation as a safer alternative, particularly for women and children. While they agreed with the proposed location of

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, Swinburne University and RMIT University, 2004, p.55,

⁵⁸ Paul Memmott, Stephen Long, Catherine Chambers and Frederick Spring, *Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practice Responses to Their Needs*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, November 2003

the facility next door to the Bunara Maya hostel, they felt that there had been insufficient meaningful consultation on the proposal and that their concerns had not been heard. The group stated a strong opinion that the camp proposal should be developed in conjunction with the Indigenous population.

3.7 Overcrowding and Underoccupancy

The community consultations revealed two housing issues that on the face of it appear mutually exclusive. On the one hand, a number of consultees identified a lack of accommodation for singles as a problem, with many single persons and couples without children 'underoccupying' three and four bedroom houses. On the other hand, Indigenous people in particular noted high levels of 'overcrowding' due to the small average size of dwellings.

Overcrowding and underoccupation occur when the size of a dwelling is not suited to its occupant. A dwelling is considered underoccupied if its bedroom requirement is less than the number of bedrooms available. In estimating the number of bedrooms required account is usually taken of the number of residents, their ages, sex and family relationships.⁵⁹

Overcrowding, on the other hand, is a hidden form of secondary or tertiary homelessness. It results from having insufficient rooms to adequately house the number of people residing in the dwelling. A household is considered overcrowded if its bedroom requirement exceeds the number of bedrooms available, again taking into account the number of residents, their ages and family relationships. Overcrowding has been demonstrated to have a severely detrimental impact on health, causes increased damage to housing, disrupts sleep patterns and contributes to tension and domestic violence.⁶⁰

It should be noted that in some cases people may prefer to live close to their relatives. However, as the Kimberley Region Aboriginal Health Plan notes: "While it is true many people like to live reasonably close to their extended family, very few people live by choice with eight or ten people in a two bedroom house. The reality is that most people have little option and have never had the option."⁶¹

Table 4: Housing Stock by Number of Residents and Number of Bedrooms, Town of Port Hedland, 2001

Number of bedrooms	Number of persons usually resident(a)						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more	
None (includes bedsitters)	22	9	7	3	0	0	41
One bedroom	176	87	17	6	0	3	289
Two bedrooms	216	163	68	30	12	6	495
Three bedrooms	307	631	400	425	147	71	1,981
Four bedrooms	55	139	119	171	188	81	753
Five or more bedrooms	9	14	3	12	11	13	62
Not stated	49	26	14	8	7	7	111
Total Households	834	1,069	628	655	365	181	3,732
	22.3%	28.6%	16.8%	17.6%	9.8%	4.8%	100.0%

Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X49. Occupied private dwellings containing family, group and lone person households(a)

⁵⁹ While there is no universally accepted measure for overcrowding, this report refers to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which is also used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The CNOS is detailed in Appendix 1 to this paper.

⁶⁰ See Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *The Impact of Overcrowding on Health & Education: A Review of Evidence and Literature*, London, May 2004 for an overview of the evidence of the impact of overcrowding on health and education.

⁶¹ Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council, *Kimberley Regional Aboriginal Health Plan*, 1999, p.16.

The paradox of concurrent high rates of both overcrowding and underoccupancy in Hedland is resolved by viewing both as outcomes of a 'one size fits all' housing market. This is particularly perspective given the corroboration of the anecdotal evidence by the ABS household profile described in section 2.3.

Table 4 gives an overview of Hedland's housing stock split up by the number of bedrooms and the number of people usually resident in the dwelling. While the exact extent of overcrowding and underoccupancy depends on the age, sex and relationships between the various occupants, the shaded area indicates dwellings that could be appropriate for their occupants. Dwellings above the shaded area are overcrowded, while those below the shaded area are underoccupied.

The table indicates that while more than half (50.9%) of Hedland's households contain either one or two people, less than a quarter (22.1%) have two or fewer bedrooms. Similarly, while 14.6% of households have five or more people, only 1.7% of dwellings have five or more bedrooms. More than half (53.1%) of dwellings in Hedland have three bedrooms, and an additional 20.2% have four bedrooms.

Table 4 also indicates that both underoccupancy and overcrowding are concentrated in three bedroom dwellings, which category accounts for 54.8% of overcrowded residences as well as 68.5% of underoccupied stock. In addition, the table indicates that:

- 46.3% of bedsitters and 39.1% of one bedroom dwellings are overcrowded
- 41.6% of five bedroom and 61.3% of six bedroom dwellings are underoccupied

It should be noted that these figures most likely understate the size of the problem. For instance, there are 101 households with 6 or more people living in four and five bedroom dwellings or who have not stated the size of their dwelling. It is likely that a proportion of this group also lived in overcrowded conditions. In addition, it has been well documented that many Indigenous people underreport the size of their household on Census forms.

Table 5: Overcrowding by ATSI Regions in Western Australia

ATSI Region	Indigenous			non-Indigenous			All Households		
	Overcrowded	All	%	Overcrowded	All	%	Overcrowded	All	%
Perth	591	5,628	10.5%	9,237	485,987	1.9%	9,828	491,615	2.0%
Narrogin	258	1,905	13.5%	2,364	82,019	2.9%	2,622	83,924	3.1%
Kalgoorlie	154	811	19.0%	558	14,302	3.9%	712	15,113	4.7%
Geraldton	259	1,407	18.4%	665	16,996	3.9%	924	18,403	5.0%
South Hedland	231	1,144	20.2%	394	8,356	4.7%	625	9,500	6.6%
Warburton	228	454	50.2%	30	1,271	2.4%	258	1,725	15.0%
Broome	272	881	30.9%	297	2,561	11.6%	569	3,442	16.5%
Derby	346	879	39.4%	61	770	7.9%	407	1,649	24.7%
Kununurra	381	801	47.6%	164	1,315	12.5%	545	2,116	25.8%
Total WA	2,720	13,910	19.6%	13,770	613,577	2.2%	16,490	627,487	2.6%

Data Source: ABS Census 2001:125 and Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, Proxy Occupancy Standard
Only includes households where both bedroom numbers and number of occupants were known.

Finally, it was suggested above that overcrowding is concentrated among Indigenous people. This is confirmed in Table 5, which shows the extent of overcrowding in the South Hedland ATSI Region. The table indicates that the rate of overcrowding among Hedland's Indigenous households was 20.2%, roughly in line with the State average.

At 4.7%, the rate of overcrowding among non-Indigenous people was around one quarter that of Indigenous people, but more than twice the State average of 2.2% and the highest rate outside the Kimberley. In other words, while overcrowding remains

overwhelmingly a problem affecting Indigenous people, the problem is spread more evenly among the population than in some other regions.

Due to the long useful life of real estate, it is not possible to redress the mismatch between housing stock and its residential profile in the short term. Instead, the mismatch has to be reduced gradually, by constructing greater proportions of both smaller (one and two bedroom) and larger (five and more bedroom) dwellings. Over time this will reduce the predominance of three and four bedroom dwellings in Hedland and create more choice in the real estate market.

Table 6: Housing Stock and Projected Requirements, Town of Port Hedland, 2001 and 2016

	2001	2016	
		Required Stock	To be constructed
None (inc bedsits)	42	481	141
One bedroom	298		
Two bedrooms	510	1,925	1,415
Three bedrooms	2,042	1,211	-831
Four bedrooms	776	1,300	524
Five / more bedroom	64	130	66
Total	3,732	5,047	1,315

Data Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Expanded Community Profile Port Hedland (T) (LGA 57280), Catalogue No. 2005.0, Table X49 and Western Australian Planning Commission, Western Australia Tomorrow – Population Projections for the Statistical Divisions, Planning Regions and Local Government Areas of Western Australia, Population Report No.4, October 2000, p.119. 2001 figures adjusted for 'not stated' category.

Table 6 gives an indication of the likely need for different types of accommodation in Hedland. The table is based on data contained in *Western Australia Tomorrow*,⁶² which projects Hedland's population to grow to 15,797 by 2016. It shows a need for a net addition of 1,315_ in Hedland over the next 11 years to accommodate 2,702 additional residents, as well as eliminating overcrowding and underoccupancy among the existing population.

The table confirms that Hedland's housing need will continue to be concentrated among smaller dwellings, in particular two bedroom stock. Assuming no changes in household structure, the population projections indicate a need for an additional 1,415_ two bedroom dwellings – just short of a four-fold increase – as well as an additional 141 one bedroom dwellings. The table also confirms a need for 590 additional four and 5+ bedroom dwellings, with required increases of around 67% and 100% respectively. Finally, the table indicates that Hedland will continue to have a surplus of three bedroom dwellings well into the future.

However, it should be stressed that the figures above include some very large households residing in four bedroom dwellings, and do not take into account private renters and home purchasers living in housing stress. Depending in particular on the composition of the 6 and more person households, these figures are therefore likely to underestimate the real need for larger dwellings. Finally, the Census data reflect one particular point in time, while there is some evidence that homelessness and overcrowding in Hedland are subject to significant seasonal fluctuations.

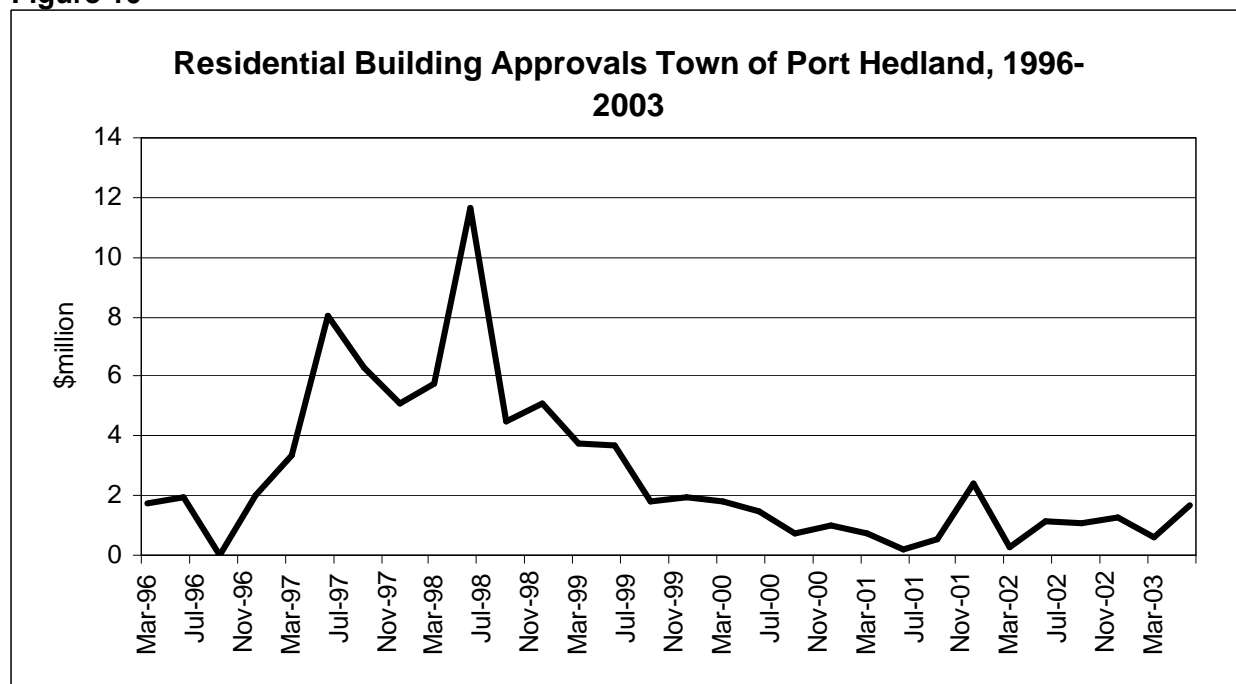
3.8 Housing Construction

Figure 10 shows some large fluctuations in housing construction in the Town of Port Hedland over the last decade. The main feature of the graph is a peak in building activity in the late 1990s, which corresponds with the evidence regarding a housing

⁶² WA Planning Commission, *Western Australia Tomorrow – Population Projections for the Statistical Divisions, Planning Regions and Local Government Areas of Western Australia*, Population Report No.4, October 2000.

affordability crisis reported in previous sections. In addition, the graph confirms that there has been very little building activity since around 2000.

Figure 10



Data Source: Department of Local Government and Regional Development, Regional Trends & Indicators Town of Port Hedland, June 2003

4. Hedland Housing Stock and Needs: Qualitative Section

4.1 Introduction

This section starts with an overview of issues identified during the preliminary consultations held by Shelter WA in Hedland in February 2005. These consultations involved 16 people from a range of private, public and community organisations related to housing in Hedland. They included representatives from various State Government Departments, the local State Member of Parliament, and several community organisations; a full list is included in Appendix 2.

The various people consulted had widely different perspectives on housing issues in Hedland. This section does not attempt to reconcile such opposing views, but instead gives an overview of the issues that were perceived to be significant by different organisations. The views expressed in this section are therefore not necessarily those of Shelter WA.

4.2 Issues Identified at the Preliminary Consultations in February 2005

The issues below were identified during preliminary discussions held by Shelter WA's Executive Officer, Karel Eringa, with a range of key stakeholders in Port and South Hedland. The issues have been grouped thematically. All of the issues are relevant for discussion at the Forum.

General

The overwhelming impression from the February consultations was that Hedland has a severely dysfunctional and bipolar housing market. Housing is available at the top end of the market in Port Hedland, for exorbitant prices (\$750 per week and more). At the bottom end of the market, rentals are available in South Hedland with a starting rate in excess of \$200 per week.

The only affordable housing options are the Department of Housing and Works at the bottom end of the market. For middle income earners the only affordable option is employer sponsored housing. However, this is only available to Government employees through the Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA) and employees of large companies such as BHP and Hamersley Iron. Hedland's housing market fails to provide suitable housing for people on middle incomes, say between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per year, whose employer does not provide them with subsidised housing.

One result of this lack of affordable housing for people on middle incomes is that Hedland has a severe problem attracting key workers such as dentists, shopkeepers, opticians, etc. The resulting lack of services reinforces Hedland's image as a temporary residence for workers in the mining and construction industry who are there to make a quick dollar rather than a long term commitment to the town.

High Rents and Low Rates of Home Ownership

The shortage of housing stock for people on middle incomes has resulted in upward pressure on rents. Rental prices are particularly high during periods of economic upswing, when demand increases and competition for the available properties drives rents to extremely high levels. For instance, during the time of the consultations, no properties were available for rent under \$250 per week.

In addition to high rents, several interviewees also identified high living costs as an issue. For instance, airconditioning is a basic necessity in Hedland in summer, but can cost \$400 per month to run. The situation is not helped by the relatively high water and shire rates applicable in the Town of Port Hedland.

High rents combined with high living expenses severely restrict the ability of many long term residents to save up a deposit for a house. In this way, the low supply of affordable rental housing is one of the causes of low rates of home ownership. This appears to produce a vicious cycle where people are effectively locked into the rental market and they can't make the leap into home ownership.

In South Hedland, the high cost of living has not been offset by high land values. Large areas of vacant land in the middle of South Hedland have kept land prices from rising with population. As long as substantial areas of land in South Hedland remain vacant, land prices are unlikely to rise, making housing investment in this part of Hedland unattractive. In turn, the lack of such investment is one of the factors that keep rents relatively high.

Overcrowding

Another phenomenon that is partly explained by the lack of affordable housing in Hedland is a high level of overcrowding. Interviewees identified overcrowding as mainly affecting Indigenous people who stayed with extended family members because they had nowhere else to stay. While some of the overcrowding appears to be temporary – a result of people visiting family or staying in town to access services such as the hospital – much of it appears to be permanent.

Several interviewees identified a link between overcrowding, people coming in from outlying Aboriginal communities, and high crime rates in Hedland.

Homeswest

As stated above, Homeswest accommodation is the only source of affordable housing for people on low incomes. Homeswest is also an important housing provider for Indigenous people - roughly 80% of Homeswest tenants in Hedland are Aboriginal. While many interviewees were at pains to point out the helpful attitude of Homeswest staff, the consultations revealed a number of policy and practice issues regarding the Department:

- Homeswest income limits (around \$30K) are far too low for the area and need to be reviewed to include people on lower wages.
- High concentrations of Homeswest properties in pockets of South Hedland are the main factor underlying maintenance and anti social problems
- The tenant advocate at the Pilbara Community Legal Centre said that most of her clients were Aboriginal Homeswest tenants, mostly large families.
- Most pressing issues were debt resulting from ex tenant liability.
- While Homeswest were implementing the Debt Discount Scheme policy, they required all remaining debt to be repaid before an applicant could be allocated priority housing.
- Need for a HomeMaker type program in Hedland. Pilbara Meta Maya funding was only for the communities.
- New Living program about to commence in South Hedland will reduce the number of Homeswest properties by 50%. Will exacerbate overcrowding and maintenance issues.

- High throughflow of Homeswest staff as an issue as it makes it impossible to build relationships with Aboriginal people.
- In some cases, accommodation managers are not competent.
- Homeswest needed more accommodation managers, and that accommodation managers should take more responsibility.
- People lose their Homeswest house when they find a job, as they exceed their income limits. However, they lose out financially because they can't get any reasonably priced private rental. There is a big shortage of middle priced rental, nothing decent available under \$300 per week.
- Some participants wanted changes to the Centrelink Direct Debit scheme. Homeswest should be able to make it compulsory for Aboriginal people, particularly those with prior debts. Tenants should not be able to pull out of the scheme unilaterally when they go to a funeral or something.

Historical Town Planning Problems: Impact of Radburn Design of South Hedland

South Hedland is an example of the Radburn planning design that was implemented on a large scale in Redfern in Sydney in the 1960s. The design features winding roads designed to impede car traffic, and houses backing on to the street and fronting on to laneways. While originally conceived as a design that would maximise community involvement, the Radburn design is now associated with high crime rates because it offers many unlit getaway opportunities for burglars and other criminals. South Hedland appears to be no exception in this regard.

In the case of South Hedland, the situation is further aggravated by two factors. Firstly, South was set up on a relatively grand scale as a rose leaf with five petals. These petals were filled in from the outside, leaving large vacant areas in the centre of the petals. The result of this has been that land values have remained low, making investment in home ownership unattractive.

Secondly, initial development in South Hedland was clustered according to proposed usage. In other words, different pockets were allocated to various mining companies, Homeswest, other State Government Departments and local government. The result is still visible today in the high concentration of mining company housing and Homeswest housing in certain areas.

Land Shortage

Several people identified a shortage of land that can be built on as an issue. In view of the large vacant areas in the centre of South Hedland, this comment seems at first glance paradoxical. However, further investigation reveals that while there is no shortage of land in Hedland that would potentially be suitable for building dwellings, there is a shortage of land that has been serviced and is 'ready to go'.

The main cause of this appears to be that when land values are low, ie. during economic downturns, major holders of unserviced land such as the Department of Housing and Works find servicing their land uneconomical. When land values rise, ie. during periods of high economic activity, servicing land does become economical.

However, due to the lead time associated with developing land, new blocks ready for development are likely to come on to the market only when the economic upswing is well underway. In this sense, the requirement for the Department of Housing and Works to cover its costs on developing land leads to a situation where land is developed during economic upswings. This effectively prevents social housing from

playing one of its traditional roles, which is to mitigate the economic cycle through a countercyclical development policy.

Role of Industry

As noted above, mining companies including BHP and others own substantial parts of Hedland's existing housing stock. In addition, these companies continue to be major property developers. The consultations revealed three issues resulting from this.

Firstly, mining companies have a high requirement for trades people. The high demand tends to increase the prices of the services these people offer. Partly as a result of this, the cost of constructing and maintaining housing in Hedland is relatively high.

Secondly, during economic downturns, mining companies often lease excess stock on the private market. During economic upturns, mining companies not only subsume this stock but also compete with both the Department of Housing and Works, private homebuyers and renters for the limited available stock in the private market. The result is relatively large price fluctuations in both rents and house prices.

Thirdly, a significant proportion of mining company houses, particularly in South Hedland, are on 'superlots', with multiple dwellings situated on one large lot. This arrangement effectively makes it impossible for third parties to purchase individual properties.

As a consequence, the original clustering of dwellings in South Hedland according to ownership type continues to the present day. In addition, the February consultations revealed anecdotal evidence that while most people agree that clustering of public housing can lead to social problems, some parties would prefer to leave employer provided housing separate. For instance, GEHA is reluctant to enter into joint developments with Homeswest, while BHP expressed a degree of reluctance to house its workforce in close proximity to public housing tenants.

In a relatively small town like Hedland, the result of this is that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Department of Housing and Works to reduce the degree of clustering of public housing tenants.

Maintenance and Physical Standards

Several interviewees commented on the poor physical standards and a backlog of maintenance in both public housing and private rental. They argued that this was due to a number of factors, including:

- Many dwellings are old
- Humid weather causes airconditioning and other appliances to rust
- Dust
- There is a severe shortage of tradies, as all are currently very lucratively employed in the mining industry
- A very tight private rental market means that landlords are able to rent even run down dilapidated 2 bedroom units out at \$250 per week, ie. No incentive to do the maintenance
- High prices of materials
- Limited maintenance budget does not take into account high regional prices, so Homeswest "cut corners"

- Some contractors are dishonest or don't do a good job. Homeswest don't check if they have done the job properly, often resulting in tenant liability later on. Need an independent agency to check the work.

One interviewee said that standards were particularly poor for Homeswest dwellings occupied by Aboriginal people. 'Sometimes you get the feeling that they just don't care because it's only Aboriginal people'. On the other hand, another consultee expressed surprise at the fact that maintenance problems in Homeswest housing were being addressed very promptly.

Shortage of Appropriately Sized Dwellings

There is a shortage of larger (4+) bedroom housing. Most stock in Hedland is small, typically they are ageing three bedroom dwellings. The shortage of large housing stock is particularly problematic for extended Aboriginal families. In addition,

Transience

Many Hedland residents stay for only a relatively short time. There are two main groups. The first group is workers associated with the mining industry, for whom a typical length of stay would be around two years. One factor here is the shortage of larger accommodation, which can discourage workers with families from taking up long term residence. The second group is itinerant Indigenous people, whose situation is discussed below.

Indigenous people

The following comments were made with regard to the housing situation of Indigenous people in Hedland:

- Aboriginal people coming into town with no accommodation and no money.
- Overcrowding, with people coming in from the communities staying with relatives with examples of up to 50 people in a three bedroom house. This occurs due to family responsibilities for taking in relatives.
- Homelessness, with some people sleeping rough or in inadequate accommodation in the town camp.
- Increasing home ownership rates from their current low base should be part of any solution. This might be achieved by extending low-income loans schemes from ATSIC and the Department of Housing and Works.
- Any solution would require industry, government and Aboriginal people to get together, and tackle all aspects of the problem (housing, employment, poverty, health, community) at once. Only a holistic approach would allow the cycle of unemployment – poverty – homelessness – crime to be broken.
- Bringing back the HomeMaker program would be a good idea, to educate people on how to do the housekeeping.

Young People

Several consultees raised a lack of affordable independent and long term housing options for young people as an issues. "Young people have little option outside of Homeswest, apart from TAFE accommodation for its students."

4.3. Summary of Current Initiatives and Issues (19.8.05)

State Government

Increase in industrial and Port activity over the recent past

Opportunity to address issues in the Town

Enquiry by Design⁶³

Initiated

It was identified that further development in Hedland had the capacity to increase the conflict between residential and commercial uses. To prevent this conflict, future planning was seen as a key to sustainable development.

Process

Telephone survey of 350 and a three day workshop (October 30-1 Nov 2004) of 150 residents and representatives of community organizations

The plan was developed and altered according to community feedback over the three days

Each area, West End (Town Centre), South Hedland, Cooke Point and Pretty Pool, Wedgefield and overall plan were considered

Outcomes

Summary of key outcomes:

- Balancing development and the environment, especially the floodplains
- Environmentally appropriate building design including reducing the prevalence of dongas as temporary and permanent homes.
- Address social issues, including perceptions
- Re-consider residential zonings to increase population diversity
- Improved transport services and infrastructure, particularly between South and Port Hedland
- Improved education, health, recreation and shopping services
- Revitalisation initiatives for Town Centres
- Revitalisation of residential area of South Hedland through New Living Program (Dept of Housing and Works)
- Promotion of Tourism and associated activities eg arts, entertainment facilities
- Development of the foreshore
- Dust management
- Balance industry and residential usage
- Limit development initially in Pretty Pool to 200 lots

Action

Asked for community submissions (not considered by Council as of August 05)

⁶³ Department of Planning and Infrastructure, *Enquiry by Design*, November 2004.

Implementation Strategy written by Patric DeVilliers

Need to identify a person or group who will bring together the different stakeholders and drive change.

*Port Hedland Enhancement Scheme*⁶⁴

Four year program jointly funded by State and BHP Billiton Ltd to enhance the visual and physical amenity of the Port Hedland Town Centre

\$4.5 Million each will be contributed by State and BHP Billiton over 4 years

The scheme is to be designed and implemented by the Pilbara Development Commission and Town of Port Hedland.

Initiatives have included:

- Redevelopment of foreshore areas including Port Hedland Community Park, Pretty Pool Park and the Civic Centre Performing Arts area
- Beach shelters installed
- Stairway to the Moon viewing platform
- Bus shelters
- Boardwalk
- Future plans include Town Centre Improvements including Arts Precinct, Heritage trail, Mystery Bay Redevelopment, Wedge and Edgar Street upgrades, and Sutherland Street Footpath extensions, provision of a portable performing arts stage

General

- Implementing *New Living Program* in Port Hedland. Upgrading and selling 270 Homeswest homes to reduce the percentage of public housing to 12% of the overall housing stock.⁶⁵ Will use the money to buy in areas in Hedland where they are unrepresented.
- Introduction of the *Good Neighbour Policy* for Homeswest tenants to prevent anti-social behavior. The program aims to work in conjunction with other programs to integrate public housing into the general community.⁶⁶
- Increased training and new uniforms for the Ngooda Gardy Patrol. Funding will be comprised of \$300 000 from BHP and \$100 000 from the Department of Indigenous Affairs.
- Expecting sustained growth of mining industry in the area as a result of the increasing demand for resources in Asia.⁶⁷ Exports from WA represent 38% of China's total imports.⁶⁸ Large proportion is gas and iron ore from the Pilbara. Need for sustainable population to ensure housing, health, infrastructure are provided.
- In the 2005 budget promises \$500 000 for dust reduction.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Pilbara Development Commission, *Enhancing Port Hedland: Port Hedland Enhancement Scheme, Issue 2, 2005.*

⁶⁵ Australian Broadcasting Commission, *Dept. re-thinks South Hedland public housing*, Available online at [<http://www.abc.net.au/news/australia/wa/northwa/200502/s1297575.htm>].

⁶⁶ Logan, F. *Media Statement: Crackdown on unruly tenants*, 22.4.05

⁶⁷ McTiernan, A. 2004, Opening of BHP Billiton; Products and Capacity Expansion (PACE) Project - Port Hedland, 16.2.04.

⁶⁸ Gallop, G. WA leads the nation in developing trading relationship with China, 20.5.05.

⁶⁹ Department of Treasury and Finance, 2005-6 Budget Overview: Delivering Our Commitments, 2005

- New 56 bed Aged Care facility to be built in South Hedland, will replace 42 existing beds and provide 14 new beds.⁷⁰ Further spending will include \$1.5million on housing for medical staff and \$65 million dollars on a new hospital and \$2.5million upgrading the existing hospital
- Negotiating with traditional owners, the Kariyarra people, for the release of land, 19ha, in Pretty Pool for release in 2006.⁷¹

Local Government: Town of Port Hedland

*Enquiry by Design response*⁷²

Did not make comment in normal submission time. They have asked for extra time.

Comments Summary

Generally:

- Preservation of cultural heritage
- Will respond to rezoning and infrastructure considerations through a review of its Town Planning Scheme. This is due to commence in August 2005 under the requirements of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928. Will take 3-4 years for preparation and gazettal.
- As part of the review a Local Planning Strategy will be undertaken.

By locality:

West End:

- Need to balance community desire to down zone with identifying areas for increasing density to ensure diverse housing stock and sustainability of housing areas
- An amendment to the current Town Planning Scheme No 5, can be undertaken as an interim measure prior to gazettal, if down zoning is required to limit development in this area
- Need to investigate health impact of the dust, Interagency report due by the end of 2005

Cooke Point/Pretty Pool

- Any lot release other than the initial 200 lots will require substantial investigation into environmental impacts

South Hedland

- Need to address social perceptions
- Need to assess road network and location of infrastructure
- Support New Living program to increase property values, decrease crime and anti-social behaviour
- Require a co-ordinating body to deliver social, economic infrastructure outcomes in South Hedland

Wedgefield

⁷⁰ Gallop, G. Logan, F. 2005, MCGinty J, Media Statement: Green light for South Hedland Aged Care Facility, 13.6.05.

⁷¹ McTiernan A., Media Statement: Port Hedland benefits from agreement between Kariyarra and State Government, 18.8.05

⁷² Town of Port Hedland, Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council, 22 June 2005

- Uses need to be considered and determined through the Local Planning Strategy due to the complex interaction between industrial and residential uses and conflicting advice from the Enquiry by Design and the Port Hedland Industrial Landuse Strategy (PHILS)

BHP Billiton Ltd

Expansion

Due to the development of Mining Area C and corresponding expansion of the port facilities, BHP will required accommodation for extra employees commencing from 2003. Accommodation will be required for temporary construction employees and new permanent employees.

As of August 2005, the volume of exports contributes \$6 billion to Australia's balance of trade. According to projections, export volumes will increase 30% over the next few years.

As part of the commitment to Social Responsibility BHP are committing \$10 million dollars annually to community investment in the Pilbara. However, they feel that they do not get the recognition that they deserve. They feel that this is due to the fact that there is no overarching vision for Port Hedland, in particular, and that they are working in isolation.⁷³

Indigenous workforce:

Targeted to be 12% of BHP's workforce by 2010. However, as noted in the Iron Chronicle (BHP 2005), the employment is in the area of gardening.

⁷³ BHP, Iron Chronicle, June 2005.

5. Community Consultations, 29 August – 1 September 2005

Shelter WA visited Port Hedland in late August 2005 to conduct consultation with housing consumers. A wide variety of people were consulted in order to identify gaps and potential solutions. A series of 11 meetings were held comprising of 1 forum for the general public, 2 discussion groups (1 by invitation to tenants of Homeswest Housing and 1 women's only), 2 visits to community groups, 1 key stake holders focus group, and 5 agency visits. In all, 54 people attended the consultations.

The names of the participants in the consultations have not been included in this report due to privacy concerns. However, a comprehensive overview of the consultations has been included as Appendix 1 to this report.

Participants in the forum and focus group were presented with a discussion paper.⁷⁴ The participants were able to review the validity of the paper and its findings as well as make their own contribution. Questions presented to community groups were based on the much simpler model of identifying the best and worst aspects of living in Port Hedland. The discussion groups were informal opportunities for people to tell their stories, express concerns and make suggestions.

The views expressed by housing consumers and agency representatives fell into nine broad categories: Indigenous people, Older People, Young People, Homeswest Housing, Homeswest and Accessibility, Homeswest Policy, General Housing Issues, BHP and Council. These categories are discussed below.

1. Indigenous People

The Indigenous people that participated in the consultations stressed two key principles: independence and respect for culture. The suggestions made by this group tended to reinforce these two principles. One theme that emerged was that of the low rate of home ownership amongst this group. The idea of an Aboriginal Housing Cooperative was raised in order to encourage home ownership. The aim would be to encourage a sense of pride in developing and maintaining housing.

In addition, an Aboriginal Housing Cooperative would potentially allow Indigenous people to look after their Seniors in a culturally appropriate manner. The provision of an Indigenous Seniors accommodation was generally discussed at the focus group. However, most of the Indigenous Seniors spoken to wanted to remain in their home for as long as possible. The provision of an Indigenous Home for the Frail Aged was not discussed. It was suggested that further consultation needs to be undertaken with the Communities to ask them what type of housing management structure they would like for the different segments of their community.

Recommendation 1: That the State government undertake consultations with Indigenous people regarding establishing an Independent Housing Co-op(s) and investigate the feasibility of the provision of accommodation for Indigenous frail aged people.

A major issue raised at most forums, was the role of carers. It was noted that Indigenous grandmothers took on a substantial carer role in the family, often caring for adult children and young grandchildren. It was felt that carers did not receive enough support or respite. One instance was quoted where a carer, the grandmother, was given respite accommodation, but due to lack of support had to take her adult, mentally ill, child with her.

⁷⁴ Karel Eringa and Helen Doran-Wu, *Community Consultation Forum: Hedland's Housing Needs Discussion Paper*, Shelter WA, August 2005.

Recommendation 2: That the State Government increase its support for carers in Port Hedland.

For those Indigenous people moving into Homeswest housing, two strategies were suggested. The first strategy was to provide more support aimed at preventing rather than responding to problems when they arise. In particular, a number of respondents made mention of reinstating the Home Maker⁷⁵ program as well as extending the My Space⁷⁶ program. Both of these programs essentially aim to give people the opportunity to know their rights and enable them to manage their home and finances. One participant suggested that a cleaning kit be provided to new Homeswest tenants to complement these programs.

In a follow up interview, the Regional Manager of the Department of Housing and Works acknowledged the potential benefits of this strategy, stating that the Home Maker program would be re-introduced in Port Hedland. Overall the community thought that Home Maker would save the Department of Housing money in the long term.

Secondly, transitional, medium term housing would be required for those people coming in from the desert while waiting for long term housing. This is particularly important for young men aged between 20 and 25 years of age. As they are not a high priority group they wait for a long time for housing and the alternatives are not appropriate. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that apprentices are not eligible for Company Housing. A subsequent interview with BHP revealed that this situation arises because apprentices are employees of Apprenticeships WA rather than employed by BHP directly.

Another vulnerable group in need of medium term accommodation was Indigenous women whose husband had died. For cultural reasons they and their children had to move out of their family home. They then usually moved in with relatives. This situation leads to overcrowding and potential health issues. Without diverse housing stock the range of housing options available to vulnerable women are limited.

Recommendation 3: That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development develop an adequate supply of medium term, transitional accommodation.**Recommendation 4: That the Department of Housing and Works expand the My Space program.****Recommendation 5: That the Departments of Housing and Works, Community Development and Treasury jointly establish and fund an early intervention program such as HomeMaker. The way in which this program is delivered should be established through extensive consultation with the local Indigenous population.**

Housing design for Indigenous people was discussed in some detail. The conclusion reached was that house design had to be culturally appropriate and not built to be dependent on air-conditioners. In addition, housing should be designed to be sufficiently flexible to meet changing family needs. The impact of improvements in these areas would be to decrease the cost of living and improve environmental

⁷⁵ Dodson, PL. 1991, Royal commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; Regional Report of Inquiry into Underlying Issues in Western Australia

⁷⁶ Youth Involvement Council, My Space, www.yic.com.au/YAP/My%20Space.htm, accessed on 22/9/05.

sustainability, as well as increase the adaptability of housing stock for changing needs in the community. The design elements suggested included:

- verandahs,
- breezeways (ie. large corridors that went through the house),
- outdoor cooking areas,
- louvres as internal walls to allow air flow and breeze.

While the above could be incorporated into general housing designs, specific elements catering for the Indigenous population, as suggested by them, included:

- 4-5 bedroom houses,
- stainless steel bathrooms, and
- larger blocks for breeze and family visitors

Recommendation 6: That the Town of Port Hedland conducts its Town Planning Scheme Review as a matter of urgency. That the Town of Port Hedland as part of its proposed Local Area Planning Strategy and Town Planning Scheme Review consults with the local population with regards to the social impact of housing, how to achieve culturally sustainable housing mix, zoning, incorporating environmentally and culturally appropriate design elements.

Recommendation 7: That the Department of Housing and Works and BHP be included, and play an active role, in the consultations.

Recommendation 8: That the Department of Housing and Works, as part of the New Living Program, conduct consultation with the local Indigenous population as to what design elements meet local Indigenous cultural and environmental requirements.

In all forums, participants expressed strong views about the proposed Town Camp. The views were quite split. One group felt strongly that the Camp was a good idea as long as it was managed well with a lot of support services provided. Some people were misinformed about the location of the Camp and preferred for it to be not located behind the shops. Support was given for the Camp to be located next to services aimed at Aboriginal people.

The alternate perspective expressed very strongly by the Indigenous women's group was that a hostel, rather than a Town Camp, should be established next to the existing Aboriginal Hostel. These women felt that the hostel was managed well and would be a safer alternative to a Town Camp. Further, they requested that any idea should be developed in conjunction with the Indigenous population.

2. Older People

The cost of housing in Hedland has a serious impact on older people, particularly those who are no longer eligible for subsidised employer housing. As noted elsewhere in this report most people leave Port Hedland when they retire. Seniors felt that one of the reasons for this was that the private market in Hedland does not offer quality affordable housing, although some expressed a hope that the proposed development in Pretty Pool would create diverse housing stock.

Affordability issues were particularly severe for people who still had a mortgage. Those who had already paid off their home were generally able to budget for their needs and remain in their home. For those choosing to remain in Port Hedland, one option was to move into the retirement units. However, the perception was that there were not enough retirement units.

The seniors who participated in the consultations said that they budgeted to meet the cost of living. Most agreed that split air-conditioning and solar hot water systems were invaluable at reducing costs. However, the cost of fuel, water, gas and maintenance were not easily resolved. In particular, the current high cost of petrol meant that some seniors are not getting out as much as they should. The impact was on increasing isolation, lack of mobility and detrimental to their mental and physical health. Finally, several participants mentioned that they could not use their ovens or showers due to the cost of gas.

Recommendation 9: That Homeswest give priority to seniors in implementing its program installing solar hot water systems in all its stock.

Recommendation 10: That the State government investigate the development of a range of affordable housing to cater for the needs of Seniors.

Medical services are a key component of many seniors' support systems. The seniors in the consultations requested that there be more doctors employed to decrease the workload of the existing doctors. They felt that the doctors were currently underpaid and stressed. As noted elsewhere in this report, essential services are not being filled due to lack of housing and the high cost of living.

Recommendation 11: That the State government investigate the creation of housing packages to attract doctors and other professionals to Port Hedland

Seniors in Hedland have a very established sense of community and wanted to enhance that experience. In particular, a number of seniors expressed a desire for more opportunities for leisure activities during Hedland's long hot season. The people consulted suggested that a Senior Citizens Centre / Indoor Recreation Centre that catered for local well aged seniors as well as baby boomer travellers should be established. It was felt that there would be flow-on effects such as improved health, reduced isolation and encouraging visitors to stay and enjoy what Hedland has to offer. It is feasible for a facility that caters for the whole community would encourage community development and would be a more economical proposal. It was felt that seniors eligible for HACC services were well catered for.

Recommendation 12: That an indoor recreation centre is built to enhance leisure activities in Port Hedland that caters for a wide range of activities, including Seniors.

3. Young People

Accommodation for children in the under 10 and 12-15 year age brackets was identified by the Youth Crisis Accommodation Centre as a key gap in housing. No one catered for the under 10's in crisis. The staff at the Centre described this group as "frightened and hungry" and as having no short or medium term housing alternatives. Children in the 12-15 year age bracket while able to stay at the Centre in some circumstances had no medium term alternatives if the family situation was unsuitable.

An identified short term need was the provision of a sobering up centre for under 15's. The sobering up centre in Port Hedland caters for adults and is not a suitable environment for minors. Currently, the only options for under 15 year olds are friends and hospital.

Further, a number of young people aged over 15 require forms of support that are currently not available in Hedland. One example was that of young people who were living at home with parents with mental health issues. As the teenagers have a home, it was reported that it was harder for this age group to get priority housing. Crisis accommodation is not always appropriate for teenagers and affordable long term housing solutions need to be found. It was reported in the Focus group that some landlords are charging up to \$200 per week for a room. Also considered at the focus group were the high rate of teenage pregnancies. Overall, due to demand for priority housing, the YCA service recommended that the number of houses available for crisis accommodation needs to be increased.

Recommendation 13: That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development develop short term and medium term accommodation options for children under 15, particularly those under 12 needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 14: That the Departments of Housing and Works and Community Development investigate establishing a sobering up centre for under 15's should be provided.

Recommendation 15: That the Department of Housing and Works investigate expanding the availability of exit housing options for 15-24 year olds.

4. Homeswest Housing

The consultations revealed a high degree of consensus that some of the planning decisions that were made when South Hedland was first established were one of the root causes of some current social issues. The two key factors involved in this respect, as discussed in Section 4.2, are the Radburn design of the suburb and the fact that the initial development in South Hedland was clustered according to proposed usage, often using 'superlots' - multiple dwellings situated on one large lot.

Many consultees expressed a view that the social impact of these superlots was most severe on Indigenous Homeswest tenants. As the existence of superlots means that development options for the Department of Housing and Works are relatively limited, these tenants are often congregated into confined geographical areas.

People reported that the superlots thus created a social division along geographical lines, with certain streets and precincts known as 'Aboriginal areas'. Indigenous people felt angry and frustrated at what they perceived as segregation and discrimination. Non-Indigenous people felt a lack of personal safety. As a result security has become a key issue for the community. For example, there were requests made at forums for retirement homes to have 24 hour security. Requests were also made for the upgrading of doors, windows and fences in Homeswest houses.

Discussions with the Department of Housing and Works indicated that the Department is aware of the problems outlined above. One of the aims of the New Living program is to diversify the housing mix in established areas. The creation of superlots would be avoided on new land releases, thus encouraging a variety of housing stock and a social mix.

During the forums people indicated a desire to be consulted further about how the Enquiry by Design recommendations would be implemented. Both the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Patric de Villiers concurred with the need for ongoing consultation. However, the New Living program will be implemented prior to the Enquiry by Design and the Town Planning Scheme Review but it will have an impact on the stated objectives of both those documents. Therefore, it is necessary that the New Living Program is seen in context and ensures that overall community outcomes will be achieved.

The New Living program also needs to be adapted to meet local conditions. The Equal Opportunities Commission Report, *Finding a Place*⁷⁷, stated that New Living can lead to an increase in prices in the private rental market and declining housing affordability. As already stated, Port Hedland is characterised by a lack of affordable housing and high private rental costs.

In order to help achieve the outcomes of the New Living Program appropriate that community consultation occur on how the Program should be implemented. This would allow the DHW to actively avoid re-enforcing or exacerbating current social perceptions and housing conditions, and to take on board the lessons of previous investigations on housing and Indigenous people.⁷⁸

Such consultations could also indicate how the community, Industry and the State Government should work together to achieve positive social outcomes, diversity and affordable housing. This would enable all stakeholders to have ownership of the project. Consequently, the New Living Program, Enquiry by Design and Town Planning Scheme Review can work together rather than compete with each other, and remain relevant.

Recommendation 16: That the Department of Housing and Works conduct community consultation as to how the aims of the New Living program should be achieved and implemented.

Recommendation 17: That BHP, the Town of Port Hedland and the Pilbara Development Commission be involved in the process.

Some of the tenants at the Homeswest Forum were supportive of the New Living Program and expressed a desire to enter home ownership. However, there was a consensus that the Department should educate prospective owners about their rights and responsibilities as part of a strategy to foster home ownership.

Debt and debt management was an issue that residents felt was a part of their lives. However, an area that was considered could be changed was skip bins. Several groups felt that in order to help improve the appearance and general maintenance of the streets skip bin costs should be born by the Council or Homeswest. The Focus Group did concur that skip bin policies, and the ongoing implication for compounding vacated debt, could be re-assessed along with improving overall debt management policies and agency support. However, to meet the demand, agencies would require an increase in funding.

Recommendation 18: That Department of Housing and Works establish a program educating tenants who have expressed an interest in purchasing their own home regarding the rights and responsibilities associated with home ownership.

⁷⁷ Equal Opportunities Commission, *Finding a Place*, 2004, Perth.

⁷⁸ Dodson, PL. 1991, Royal commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; Regional Report of Inquiry into Underlying Issues in Western Australia

Recommendation 19: That the Department of Housing and Works reconsider policies on skip bins, improve debt management policies, and provide Cleaning Kits for people moving into Homeswest housing.

To enable Homeswest to provide a better service several strategies were suggested at the forum for Homeswest tenants. Firstly, clients were concerned about the current high rate of staff turnover within front line positions in the Department. As a consequence, clients said that they were unable to establish relationships with staff. Constantly having to explain the situation they were in to new staff, contributed to the sense that staff do not care about their housing issues. They felt that it contributed to the poor follow through of maintenance issues. Better training and reducing the client / worker ratio were seen as ways to improve quality and increase staff retention.

Recommendation 20: That the Department of Housing and Works develop strategies aimed at encouraging staff retention, including improved training and a lower client / worker ratio.

Secondly, it was felt that Homeswest should have a one week response time to maintenance queries. People were reporting having to wait months for property to be maintained. They felt that if they wanted anything done, the Local Member of Parliament had to be contacted.

A common suggestion was the establishment of experienced maintenance teams. When this suggestion was put to DHW it was confirmed that they would like to do this but contracts were difficult to fill. An ongoing issue is getting experienced trades people. Endemic problems reported included leaking roofs, water getting into the electricity systems, mould, loose tiles, rotting paint, rotting cupboards. Poor contractors were reportedly just putting sealer on tiles and patching up problems rather than fixing the cause. People feel worried about the safety of their homes and feel neglected and angry at the state of the house.

Gardens are also neglected. The environmental issues faced in the gardens included water, reticulation and resilient prickles. Without regular maintenance, these problems become insurmountable. Then the residents felt that they would be accused of neglecting their property. If teams were unavailable then the residents felt that they would like to be given the tools and plants to do the gardening themselves.

However, fundamental to the maintenance issue is the overall condition of the houses. When residents were reporting extensive water and termite damage to windows and doors some questioned not only the rate of maintenance but also, due to a history of neglect, whether or not the houses themselves are now at a stage that they need to be replaced at a faster rate. The Focus Group added another dimension to this argument by stating that houses subject to high turnover wear out faster than those with stable tenants. While the New Living Program is designed to address major repairs and refurbishment of some houses, will the program achieve success at a socially acceptable pace and meet the demand seen in the community forums?

Recommendation 21: That the DHW establish experienced maintenance teams, encourage pride in gardens and re-consider the proposed rate of refurbishment of existing houses in light of demand.

The community consultation results indicate consistency with the findings of the National Housing Survey.⁷⁹ That is that the houses in harsh environments are in a

⁷⁹ Colmar Brunton Social Research, *National Social Housing Survey of Public Housing Tenants 2003*, The Department of Family and Children's Services, Canberra, 2004

poor condition and that consumers have high levels of dissatisfaction with maintenance. The external areas of high concern are secure windows, doors and fences.

5. Homeswest and Accessibility

During the community consultations it was indicated that older stock was in urgent need to be upgraded to cater for the changing physical needs of seniors. For example, where showers are installed in baths, rails should be attached to the wall. Seniors expressed the view that hanging onto taps was not appropriate. Homeswest are pursuing a policy of universal accessibility. However, the rate of conversion of homes is not catering to the demand of the tenants.

Recommendation 22: That the Department of Housing and Works increase the budget for converting Homeswest homes for accessibility. That any new homes built should be designed using universal access principles.

Much of the older Homeswest stock consists of three / four bedroom dwellings. Where seniors occupy this stock, it often results in underoccupancy. Most seniors who participated in the consultations did not want to move for a variety of reasons, including: established support systems, have lived in their home for many years, their home caters for family visits and carer obligations. They felt that Homeswest needs to be sensitive to their needs and not just pressure them to move to smaller accommodation.

The Department has worked with Shelter WA on a strategy to address overcrowding and underoccupancy, which highlights the need to work sensitively with seniors to arrive at a solution that addresses the needs of the sitting tenant, larger families on the waiting list, and the Department itself.

Recommendation 23: That the Department of Housing and Works implement an incentive and education campaign to reduce underoccupancy in Hedland.

Aboriginal people felt that language was an important issue. They felt that if Homeswest employed Indigenous people, who could speak the language, then Homeswest would be more approachable. Therefore, problems would be easily explained and people would be more informed of their rights. It was also noted that not all tenants were literate.

The request for accessibility by Indigenous tenants is in line with the National Housing Survey⁸⁰. The survey reports that the probability of needing to contact a Homeswest office increases if the tenant is a) Indigenous and b) has children. Appropriate language would help facilitate relationships with tenants.

Recommendation 24: That the Department of Housing and Works provide a range of communication options for tenants, including employing Indigenous people who are proficient in local languages.

6. Homeswest Policy

As was argued above, the private market is not catering for a diverse range of people. Consequently, pressure is being put on Homeswest to meet a wider variety of needs. The Focus Group discussion suggested that given Port Hedland's lack of housing diversity and affordability, seasonal employment and high cost of living that

⁸⁰ Ibid

assessment criteria and the definition of low income should be adapted to meet local challenges. The effect would help prevent people from falling into the poverty trap and provide an incentive for people to work.

One initiative was to stagger the assessment of 2nd and 3rd income sources. For example, 1st income - assessed at 25%, 2nd income – assessed at 15%, 3rd income - assessed at 10%.

Further, seasonal income could be assessed over a whole year. Currently, eligibility for housing is re-assessed at the commencement of work. People become ineligible for DHW and have to find alternative accommodation. However, when the season is over, they cannot afford the private market and are unable to access Homeswest housing. Consequently, it was reported that this leads to over-crowding in relatives' houses, and ultimately homelessness.

The Focus Group also suggested that the income limits on eligibility be increased so that employed people can have access to affordable housing. Through discussion, and re-enforced by statistics (see main body of report), it was found that those on middle incomes were not able to cope with the high living costs. Therefore, one of three things happen 1) people leave Port Hedland 2) people work two jobs 3) there is a disincentive to work. None of the options create a sustainable community or workplace.

Recommendation 25: That the Department of Housing and Works investigate the assessment criteria for housing in high cost regional areas such as Port Hedland.

7. General Housing Issues

General housing issues related to the sustainability of Port Hedland's society and environment. On a broad level housing prices need to be more affordable for the local community and a diverse market created.

A surprising finding in the discussions was the fact that people on middle incomes were having to work two jobs in order to pay for their cost of living. Pressure was felt on families and people were exhausted. Further, it was reported that mothers returning to work to help meet costs have limited day care options. There are limited day care options as child care workers are poorly paid and cannot meet the cost of living and housing themselves. The women consulted felt that it was more cost effective for service providers to work for BHP were possible. Further, people who worked on level 4 jobs or lower (GEHA), and apprentices (Apprenticeships WA through BHP) did not receive company housing. Hence, family stress and the lack of service provision can be directly linked to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing.

The impact then of high rent and house prices has a substantial flow on effect on families. While fly-in fly out is an alternative working arrangement, the consequential loss of people participating in the community was, it was felt, contributing to the decline of sporting groups, break down of families, the decline in schooling, and the range of essential services available.

The issue for decision makers is to balance the long and short term housing needs of residents in this environment. Comments were made in most forums that small businesses and service providers were not staying in Port Headland due to the high living costs and strategies need to be developed to attract them. At the Focus group a proposal that was considered was linking housing to the skills shortage. Another suggestion put forward was for the Country Housing Association play a greater role

in financing housing for small businesses. These can then be used as employee housing.

Environmentally sensitive design was seen as not only appropriate but also as a means of cutting costs. The suggestions included solar hot water systems, building design and orientation, split air-conditioning systems, and greywater re-use.

Recommendation 26: That the State Government and Local Council investigate methods of enforcing principals of environmentally sustainability in housing.

One of the largest concerns for residents voiced was the lack of indoor recreation facilities especially for young families and Seniors. Mothers stated that the only alternative was to go to McDonalds. They felt that Hedland was designed for men and couples not for families. Coupled with the lack of day-care and pressure in the high schools, there was not a lot of incentive for families to stay. It was reported that there seemed to be a lot of movement between Port Hedland and Darwin. Darwin provided a positive alternative in terms of employment and facilities. It was also seen that an indoor facility would encourage visitors to stay in Hedland.

Without families, small businesses and service providers, a community is unsustainable. The State government needs to assess what role it wishes to play in the housing market, how to encourage partnerships with small and large business to diversify the housing market.

Recommendation 27: That the State Government investigate a range of intergovernmental and public private partnerships to facilitate diversifying the local housing market.

8. BHP

The mining cycle is part of the economic environment in Hedland. As stated, mining contributes to a boom/bust cycle. Generally it was felt that BHP had the potential to become involved in finding solutions to housing in Port Hedland. Most employment in Port Hedland is either directly or indirectly dependent upon BHP. Consequently, the consultations called for BHP to become more involved in the town as part of its corporate social responsibilities. In particular, as stated elsewhere in the report, the impact of the mining industry's boom bust cycle needs to be minimised. As a major land holder, DHW can affect the housing prices. To minimise pressure on prices DHW would have to build during the low part of the cycle. DHW stated that they have considered this strategy. However, Shayne Hills reported that they did have properties on the market but there was no interest. The interest occurred during boom periods.

Further, discussions referred to the level of Indigenous employment. It was suggested that if BHP employed and trained Indigenous people at a higher level in the organisation then this would contribute to breaking the poverty cycle, improve living conditions, decrease dependency on Homeswest, and improve health. It was acknowledged by some that due to cultural expectations that Indigenous people were obliged to take time off for funerals etc for members of the extended family. Counter to this, the example of Darwin was given. Due to increased employment and training the poverty cycle was being broken with overall health benefits. Darwin was seen as a great place for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people to live.

Recommendation 28: That BHP, the State government and Town of Port Hedland form a partnership to control the impact of the mining cycle on the community and house prices, establish a diverse housing market, establish company

housing for lower level employees, investigate the impact of fly-in/fly out practises and establish a comprehensive employment and training package for Indigenous people.

Finally, several respondents expressed an opinion that GEHA currently operates in a way that exacerbates the severity of the economic cycle in Hedland. In particular, GEHA currently leases rather than purchases or builds a significant proportion of its housing. This effectively increases demand for scarce rental housing, further driving rental prices up. If GEHA were to construct more of its dwellings, this could be timed to generate economic activity during the bottom of Hedland's economic cycle, further reducing economic fluctuations. While respondents thought that there was a place for GEHA leasing dwellings to deal with short term, unexpected increases in Government staff levels, it would be possible to reduce the proportion of leased dwellings below 5% of its stock.

Recommendation 29: That the Government Employees Housing Authority reduces the proportion of dwellings that it leases from the private sector to below 5% of its stock.

9. Council

Throughout the consultation people discussed their expectations of Town of Port Hedland and considered what role the Council had in the community generally and housing specifically. People were unsure what powers the Council had to enforce general property maintenance. Specific issues that were considered included:

- Ensuring that properties were well maintained,
- Ensuring that disused furniture, household rubbish etc was disposed of,
- Ensuring that rubbish on vacant lots was picked up,
- Better lighting and better footpaths, and
- Firebreaks on empty lots adjoining properties.

If properties and gardens were maintained and rubbish removed, people felt that the appearance of the area would improve and that any potential damage to property during cyclones would be minimised.

Consultations with the Pilbara Development Commission, the Council, and BHP confirmed that money was being injected into improving infrastructure through initiatives such as the Port Hedland Enhancement Scheme. Homeswest considered that the New Living Program would improve the general appearance of areas and make caring for homes easier.

Recommendation 30: That Council be proactive in using Local Laws relating to rubbish removal and maintaining buildings in order to facilitate community health and wellbeing.

Finally, the consultations revealed relatively poor links between planning, development and housing in Hedland. One way in which this could be achieved is to establish a staff position within the Pilbara Development Commission with responsibility for the nexus between housing and economic development.

Recommendation 31: That the Pilbara Development Commission establish a staff position with responsibility for the nexus between housing and economic development.

6. Conclusion

Port Hedland can be characterised as a town of 20,000 that provides housing to 12,000. A severely dysfunctional housing market acts as a key bottleneck that curtails the town's economic development and is a key cause of many of its social problems. Hedland caters poorly to many of its residents, with many workers staying in caravan parks or 'dongas' for extended periods of time, very little appropriate housing available for people in service industries and Indigenous people depending on Homeswest for their housing needs.

With regard to the economic cycle, Hedland's housing market is subject to the economic cycles of the mining industry, with accompanying fluctuations in demand for housing. Decision makers have allowed this situation to persist, on the implicit assumption that any increase in demand for housing will only be temporary, ie. until the next downturn of the economic cycle. However, the long term application of this type of reasoning has had three very unfortunate consequences.

Firstly, in the context of an economic cycle, a 'temporary' increase in demand may persist anywhere between a few years and several decades. During this period, a substantial proportion of Hedland-based workers will be inadequately housed. It may be argued that these workers are at liberty to make some sacrifices regarding their housing situation for monetary gain. However, this ignores the fact that the community consultations showed that in some cases the monetary gain can be very limited. More importantly, housing is a human right, which is breached when people are asked to live in substandard housing in order to gain employment.

In other words, under-investment in adequate housing condemns a significant number of people to secondary homelessness, on the basis that this "will only be temporary" and that they may be compensated with a well-paid job. Neither of these assumptions necessarily holds true. However, the breach of the right to adequate housing is most definitely real, and may persist for many years.

A second unfortunate effect of the inadequate response to 'temporary' increases in housing demand by supplying substandard accommodation is that Hedland, despite its size and status as a regional centre, is still as vulnerable to fluctuations in the mining cycle as much smaller mining towns. The failure to address the housing needs of such a large proportion of its residents has had flow-on effects into the rest of Hedland's housing market. This is characterised by high prices, often poor maintenance, lack of diverse accommodation stock, homelessness, overcrowding and at the same time underoccupancy.

The response has again been piecemeal. Specific groups have their housing heavily subsidised, including at the top end of the income scale the employees of large mining companies and at the bottom end Homeswest tenants. Many State and Local Government employees also have access to subsidised housing.

The crunch with regard to housing is felt by residents who are not eligible for Homeswest housing due to their income, but whose employer does not subsidise their housing. Due to its low housing standards and large fluctuations in rents and housing prices, Hedland has great difficulty attracting people to work in its service industries, including doctors and dentists, child care workers, store managers and so on. The resulting lack of services further reduces the attractiveness of the town as a place to settle permanently. As a result, people leave town as soon as employment opportunities in the mining sector fall, further exacerbating the severity of the economic cycle.

The final consequence of Hedland's failure to provide adequate housing to all of its residents is that those on low income, particularly the Indigenous population, face a

poverty trap. Whilst they are on low incomes, they are eligible for Homeswest accommodation where they pay 25% of their income in rent. However, should they find employment, they are likely to lose their Homeswest accommodation. Unless their employer subsidises their housing, this means that they will likely be financially worse off.

A solution to Hedland's housing problem is therefore a precondition to both its economic and social development. The severity of Hedland's economic cycle, its lack of services, and the dependence of its Indigenous population on Homeswest for its housing needs all stem from a common source, being a lack of appropriate and affordable housing. Any solution must start with a recognition by all key players that Hedland can no longer afford not to cater for the housing requirements of such a substantial proportion of its residents. The town must provide housing for all of its residents, and stop regarding housing needs generated by economic activity as 'temporary'.

The only way forward is for industry, State and Local Government to come together to develop a housing strategy for Hedland. Any strategy must address the consequences of poor planning in the past, which include the creation of segregated populations, conflict between industrial and residential users, poor road access between Port and South Hedland, a shortage of affordable land for development due to restrictions resulting from native title claims, different land tenures, appropriate zoning and proximity to flood plains.

The particular needs of a number of specific groups, including Indigenous people, young people, seniors, large families and singles, must also be met. Overcrowding and homelessness need to be addressed with a range of strategies, including medium term exit housing and a range of support options.

While there seems to be a growing recognition that Hedland needs to address its housing crisis in a sustainable manner to meet the challenges of the growing economy, the main political challenge for the area is to identify a driver for change. The role of the driver would be to create a united vision for Hedland and then bring together the different community, political and industrial bodies who have invested both time and financial resources in the area.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Community Consultations

30 August – 1 September 2005		
Purpose	Organisations Attending	Number of People
Focus Group – meet with key government and non-government stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept of Housing & Works • Town of Port Hedland • Port Hedland Regional Aboriginal Corporation • Pilbara Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation • Disability Services Commission • Dept of Indigenous Affairs • Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Corporation- Aboriginal Health and Medical Service 	8 (4 apologies)
Regional perspective	Pilbara Development Commission	Robin Crane
Sustainability perspective	Greens Party	Kelly Howlett
Mothers' perspective	Gateway Playgroup	3
Seniors' perspective	Twilight Ladies	9
Gain feed back regarding issues directly to do with Homeswest	Homeswest housing consumers	11
Ascertain information regarding Itinerants and any strategies being developed including the proposed Town Camp	Dept. of Indigenous Affairs	Helen Shanks
Evening session for the public to discuss general housing needs	General public	5 (including 2 semi retired private investors)
Morning session for Indigenous women to be able to express their views on housing and social issues	Pilbara Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation	9 (incl women from youth accommodation services, employment services, and the women's refuge, PIWAC and 3 members of the public)
Provide feedback to DHW on initial outcomes	Dept. of Housing and works	Shayne Hills
Assess in more detail youth accommodation gaps	Youth Involvement Council	4 staff members

Individuals consulted in February and August / September 2005:

Ron Attwood (Coordinator) and Doreen Langley (SHAP worker), Port Hedland
Regional Aboriginal Corporation

Zabia Chmeliewski, Town of Port Hedland Housing Officer

John Cornelder, Town of Port Hedland Manager Community Services Manager

Mark Hainsworth, Pilbara Development Commission

Sue Harrington, Youth Involvement Council

Shayne Hills, Regional Manager, Department of Housing and Works

Susan Murphy and Cheryle Wallace, Pilbara Meta Maya

Bob Neville, Bloodwood Tree Aboriginal Corp / Mayor

Rose Russo, Pilbara Community Legal Service

Kathy Stephens, BHP Housing Office

Tom Stephens, Member of Parliament

Roy Winslow, Town of Port Hedland Town Planner

Appendix 2: Canadian National Occupancy Standard

While there is no universally accepted measure for overcrowding, this report refers to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which is also used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This standard specifies that there should be no more than two persons per bedroom, with the provisos that:

- children between 5 and 18 years of age cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom if they are of different sexes, and
- single household members 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom, as should parents or couples.

Application of the standard results in the following bedroom requirements:

single adult:	0-2 bedrooms
single adult (group):	1 bedroom per adult
couple with no children:	2 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 1 child:	2 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 2 or 3 children:	3 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 4+ children:	4 bedrooms