



Draft Discussion Paper:  
Housing Issues for Humanitarian Entrants  
with Large Families in the South West  
Metropolitan Area

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## **Introduction**

On 14 February 2007 Shelter WA attended a meeting convened by the South West Metro Community and Linguistically Diverse Network. The meeting focused primarily on housing issues which affect new CaLD arrivals and those arriving as Humanitarian Entrants. Of particular concern to the Network was the severe shortage of large family homes, long waiting times for public housing and lack of access to private rental and home ownership.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs report that *“WA is the fourth highest settlement location in Australia, settling approximately 14,197 arrivals (combined Migration and Humanitarian Programme) over the past five years (2001-05), or 8 per cent of the national intake over that period”*

Humanitarian arrivals made up 43% (6,129) of Western Australian arrivals over the same period.

## **Severe shortage of large family homes**

The group was extremely concerned about the severe shortage of appropriate accommodation for very large families. This shortage exists throughout the South West Metropolitan area and across all housing tenures, including home purchasing, private rental, public housing and community housing. Previous consultations undertaken by Shelter WA have identified that the shortage of larger homes has contributed to families being split up, with family members accommodated across a number of dwellings. The shortage of appropriately sized accommodation is also making it increasingly difficult to place new arrivals, resulting in some cases in approved refugees being unable to come to Australia.

## **Proxy National Occupancy Standard**

Earlier work by Shelter WA identified that many humanitarian families find that Australian housing providers have a different idea about how many bedrooms are required by their family than they do. For instance, it is not unusual for members of African families to share rooms. The differing cultural perceptions result in there being even fewer houses available that are considered to be appropriately sized for large refugee families.

The size of dwellings required to house different sized families is measured with the use of the Proxy National Occupancy Standard (Standard). This standard was developed in Canada and is now 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:

Household type	Dwelling type
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

Between 2001 and 2005, 1,770 families arrived in WA as humanitarian entrants, 16% of these families had 6 or more members and this group accounted for 34% of people arriving in WA under this program. Using the occupancy standard as a guide, Table 1 shows that these families require four bedroom housing in order to be adequately housed.

**Table 1:** Humanitarian entrants to Western Australia 2001 to 2005: families, people and dwelling requirements.

Family size	No. Families	Total people	No. Families	Total people	Dwelling Requirement
1 person	549	549	31%	9%	<b>1 to 2 bedroom</b>
2 person	220	440	12%	8%	
3 person	235	705	13%	12%	
<b>1-3 persons</b>	<b>1,004</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>29%</b>	
4 person	309	1,236	17%	21%	<b>3 bedroom</b>
5 person	174	870	10%	15%	
<b>4-5 persons</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>2,106</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>36%</b>	
6 person	123	738	7%	13%	<b>4+ bedroom</b>
7 person	74	518	4%	9%	
8 person	55	440	3%	8%	
9 person	21	189	1%	3%	
10 person	5	50	0%	1%	
11+ persons	5	57	0%	1%	
<b>6-11+ persons</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>1,992</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>34%</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,770</b>	<b>5,792</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Source:** DIMA, Western Australia: Settlement Needs of New Arrivals 2006 and the Proxy National Occupancy Standard.

As a general rule separate houses are the main dwelling type with four of more bedrooms. Census data for each of the five local governments in the South West corridor reported in Table 2 shows that 51% of separate houses in the region contain four of five bedrooms, while Fremantle has only 21% in this group compared to 58% in Rockingham.

**Table 2:** Separate houses by number of bedrooms in the South West Metropolitan area.

Separate house no. bedrooms	Cockburn	East Fremantle	Fremantle	Melville	Rockingham	SW Metro
None	11	0	13	21	11	56
One bedroom	86	26	126	80	88	406
Two bedrooms	709	324	1,579	1,940	717	5,269
Three bedrooms	8,528	818	3,346	10,449	8,141	31,282
Four bedrooms	9,387	441	1,183	11,604	11,026	33,641
Five or more bedrooms	1,239	99	192	2,462	1,370	5,362
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,960</b>	<b>1,708</b>	<b>6,439</b>	<b>26,556</b>	<b>21,353</b>	<b>76,076</b>
None	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
One bedroom	0.4%	1.5%	2.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Two bedrooms	3.6%	19.0%	24.5%	7.3%	3.4%	6.9%
Three bedrooms	42.7%	47.9%	52.0%	39.3%	38.1%	41.2%
Four bedrooms	47.0%	25.8%	18.4%	43.7%	51.6%	44.3%
Five or more bedrooms	6.2%	5.8%	3.0%	9.3%	6.4%	7.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: ABS Census 2001

Newly arrived families are most likely to be looking for rental housing in order to get established in the local community. Data showing dwelling size by tenure is not readily available, so in its place Table 3 and 3a use separate houses to indicate larger dwellings and multi dwellings to indicate small ones. The tables reveal some worrying information for large families looking for appropriately sized housing in the rental sector. In three out of the five local government areas, the DHW has less than half its stock accounted for by separate houses, while the private rental sector has about two thirds.

**Table 3:** Dwelling type and tenure in the South Metropolitan Area (number).

	Fully owned	Being purchased	rent/buy	Rented				Other tenure	Not stated	Total
				DHW	Private	Not	Total			
<b>Cockburn</b>										
Separate house	7,184	9,016	207	681	2,418	26	3,125	370	584	20,486
Multi dwellings	946	423	18	658	1,128	51	1,811	116	164	3,478
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,130</b>	<b>9,439</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>3,546</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4,936</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>23,964</b>
<b>East Fremantle</b>										
Separate house	834	553	6	15	266	3	284	42	42	1,761
Multi dwellings	269	145	3	41	319	3	360	22	39	838
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>2,599</b>
<b>Fremantle</b>										
Separate house	2,889	1,918	38	288	1,195	18	1,501	123	299	6,768
Multi dwellings	815	515	15	825	1,400	24	2,249	117	366	4,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,704</b>	<b>2,433</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>10,845</b>
<b>Melville</b>										
Separate house	14,022	8,046	136	382	3,516	25	3,923	475	686	27,288
Multi dwellings	2,739	162	36	531	2,325	21	2,877	380	308	7,502
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,761</b>	<b>8,208</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>5,841</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6,800</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>34,790</b>
<b>Rockingham</b>										
Separate house	7,146	10,021	172	411	3,280	29	3,720	318	1,009	22,386
Multi dwellings	1,275	294	9	295	1,437	46	1,749	129	297	3,753
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,421</b>	<b>10,315</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>4,717</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5,469</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>1,306</b>	<b>26,139</b>
<b>South West Metro</b>										
Separate house	32,075	29,554	559	1,777	10,675	101	12,553	1,328	2,620	78,689
Multi dwellings	6,044	1,539	81	2,350	6,609	145	9,046	764	1,174	19,648
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,119</b>	<b>31,093</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>4,127</b>	<b>17,284</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>21,599</b>	<b>2,092</b>	<b>3,794</b>	<b>98,337</b>

**Table 3a:** Dwelling type and tenure in the South Metropolitan Area (proportion).

	Fully owned	Being purchased	rent/buy	Rented				Other tenure	Not stated	Total
				DHW	Private	Not	Total			
<b>Cockburn</b>										
Separate house	88%	96%	92%	51%	68%	34%	63%	76%	78%	85%
Multi dwellings	12%	4%	8%	49%	32%	66%	37%	24%	22%	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>East Fremantle</b>										
Separate house	76%	79%	67%	27%	45%	50%	44%	66%	52%	68%
Multi dwellings	24%	21%	33%	73%	55%	50%	56%	34%	48%	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Fremantle</b>										
Separate house	78%	79%	72%	26%	46%	43%	40%	51%	45%	62%
Multi dwellings	22%	21%	28%	74%	54%	57%	60%	49%	55%	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Melville</b>										
Separate house	84%	98%	79%	42%	60%	54%	58%	56%	69%	78%
Multi dwellings	16%	2%	21%	58%	40%	46%	42%	44%	31%	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Rockingham</b>										
Separate house	85%	97%	95%	58%	70%	39%	68%	71%	77%	86%
Multi dwellings	15%	3%	5%	42%	30%	61%	32%	29%	23%	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>South West Metro</b>										
Separate house	84%	95%	87%	43%	62%	41%	58%	63%	69%	80%
Multi dwellings	16%	5%	13%	57%	38%	59%	42%	37%	31%	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ABS Census 2001

**Public housing waiting list**

Less than 10% of Homeswest dwellings in the Fremantle Region have 4 or more bedrooms. While many families require large houses, they seem reluctant to put their name down on the DHW waiting list as indicated by the low numbers of large families appearing in Table 4 below.

This implies that the level of demand for these larger dwellings on the waiting list is understated relative to demand in the community. This is of concern because the Homeswest building program is based on its waiting list (see Table 4a and Table 4b).

**Table 4:** Homeswest demand by household type, September 2006

	Seniors	Singles	Family		Total
	1 bedrm	1 bedrm	2/3 bedrm	4+ bedrm	
<b>Kwinana Zone</b>					
Applicants	185	85	265	32	567
Dwellings	557	43	544	176	1,320
Dwelling/App. Ratio	3.0	0.5	2.1	5.5	2.3
Occupations	44	6	19	10	79
Wait time months	31	30	53	45	38
<b>Fremantle Zone</b>					
Applicants	205	353	571	54	1,183
Dwellings	1,657	244	2,221	300	4,422
Dwelling/App. Ratio	8.1	0.7	3.9	5.6	3.7
Occupations	70	9	43	13	135
Wait time months	48	62	64	49	56
<b>Peel Zone</b>					
Applicants	299	79	214	19	611
Dwellings	305	27	358	68	758
Dwelling/App. Ratio	1.0	0.3	1.7	3.6	1.2
Occupations	11	0	10	4	25
Wait time months	47	59	43	28	45

Source: DHW, How long will it take? September 2006

<b>Table 4a: Homeswest waitlist by household type 2001 to 2005</b>					
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Family	8667	7800	7268	7190	7495
Seniors	2021	2059	1886	1895	2077
Single	4768	4335	3827	3703	3553
<b>Total</b>	<b>15456</b>	<b>14194</b>	<b>12981</b>	<b>12788</b>	<b>13125</b>
Family	56.1%	55.0%	56.0%	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>57.1%</b>
Seniors	13.1%	14.5%	14.5%	14.8%	15.8%
Single	30.8%	30.5%	29.5%	29.0%	27.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Table 4b: Homeswest building commencements by dwelling type 2001 to 2005</b>					
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Family	491	479	530	522	541
Seniors	170	188	267	143	167
Single	309	264	200	262	181
<b>Total</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>997</b>	<b>927</b>	<b>889</b>
Family	50.6%	51.5%	53.2%	<b>56.3%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>
Seniors	17.5%	20.2%	26.8%	15.4%	18.8%
Single	31.9%	28.4%	20.1%	28.3%	20.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Table 4c: Homeswest stock by dwelling type 2001 to 2005</b>					
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Bedsitter	486	420	372	298	267
1 Bedroom	7163	7431	7650	7809	7935
2 Bedroom	9635	9677	9710	9791	9860
3 Bedroom	15018	14675	14305	14089	13686
4 Bedroom	2459	2493	2568	2604	2653
5+ Bedroom	350	372	420	447	469
<b>Total</b>	<b>35111</b>	<b>35068</b>	<b>35025</b>	<b>35038</b>	<b>34870</b>
Bedsitter	1.4%	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%
1 Bedroom	20.4%	21.2%	21.8%	22.3%	22.8%
2 Bedroom	27.4%	27.6%	27.7%	27.9%	28.3%
3 Bedroom	42.8%	41.8%	40.8%	40.2%	39.2%
4 Bedroom	7.0%	7.1%	7.3%	7.4%	7.6%
5+ Bedroom	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: State Housing Commission, Annual Report 2004 - 05: DHW

### Private Rental

The majority of humanitarian entrants are housed in private rental accommodation immediately on arrival. However, many families find it difficult to find appropriate rental accommodation due in part to the shortage of large dwellings noted above and also partly due to direct or indirect discrimination.

## ***Recommendations***

**1. Increase the component of large dwellings in the public housing building program.**

As noted above, the Department of Housing and Works bases its building program on demand expressed through its waiting list. The building program only reflects demand that exists in the community if it is expressed through the waiting list.

This process has resulted in the Department building relatively few large dwellings as relatively little demand has been expressed through its waiting list. However, to the extent that few of these dwellings are available, large families have a disincentive to put their name down on the waiting list.

*Recommendation 1*

That the Department of Housing and Works amend the way it calculates its building program by constructing large (5+ bedroom) dwellings at twice the proportion these dwellings represent on its waiting list.

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<sup>i</sup> DIMA, Western Australia: Settlement Needs of New Arrivals 2006.