



# **A review of international best practice homeless response strategies suitable for Broome WA**

**April 2008**

**Prepared by Jim Anthony  
on behalf of Shelter WA  
for  
Broome Circle**

### **About Shelter WA**

Shelter WA is a not-for-profit community organisation established in 1979 that has developed into one of Western Australia's peak housing research organisations.

Shelter's research aims to eliminate homelessness, housing disadvantage and housing stress. Shelter promotes the development and growth of a sustainable social rental system with a range of social housing providers that has the capacity to respond to demand from low income households, particularly those with complex needs who are disadvantaged in the private housing market.

### **About Jim Anthony Housing Consultant**

Jim Anthony has worked in the housing profession for 5 years. He gained a Bachelor of Science with Honours (1<sup>st</sup> Division) at Murdoch University in 2003. Jim has worked for the Department of Housing and Works, the Australia Housing and Urban Research Institute and Shelter WA.

### **About Broome Circle**

Broome Circle is a non-profit local community organisation, incorporated in 1988, which provides a financial counselling and family support service. The financial counsellor helped establish the Residents Action Group in February 2007 aiming to:

- Research and raise awareness of housing issues
- Seek solutions to the housing shortage
- Help homeless people find accommodation
- Support tenants to keep housing

Broome Circle received funding in September 2007 to pursue these aims. This report forms part of the "Housing Broome" Activity which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under the National Homelessness Strategy."

## Table of Contents

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>PART 1</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>8</b>
1.2 Methodology and Scope .....	8
1.3 Report Structure.....	8
1.4 Definitions of homelessness .....	8
1.5 What constitutes best practice homelessness strategies? .....	9
<b>PART 2</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 HOMELESSNESS IN THE UK</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.2 Legislative framework .....	11
2.3 Homelessness trends in England .....	11
2.4 Best practice framework and strategies.....	13
2.5 Tackling priority issues on homelessness .....	14
2.6 Chapter summary .....	19
<b>2.7 HOMELESSNESS IN GERMANY</b> .....	<b>20</b>
2.8 Legal rights of homeless people .....	20
2.9 Homelessness trends .....	20
2.10 Best practice in Germany.....	21
2.11. Chapter summary .....	24
<b>2.12 HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA</b> .....	<b>25</b>
2.13 Legal rights to accommodation.....	25
2.14 Homelessness trends .....	25
2.15 Best practice in Australia .....	28
2.16 Chapter summary .....	34
<b>2.17 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>PART 3</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC HOMELESSNESS FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>3.1 BEST PRACTICE STRATEGIES FOR BROOME</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>41</b>

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: Homeless households in England..... 12

Figure 2: Total dwelling stock in England..... 15

Figure 3: Households in different types..... 17

Figure 4: Homeless persons..... 21

Figure 5: SAAP clients, ..... 26

Figure 6: Flow Chart of homelessness..... 37

**List of Tables**

Table 1: Main reason for seeking SAAP ..... 18

Table 2: Metro and regional comparison..... 27

Table 3: SAAP support ..... 27

## Summary

This report provides a review of international homelessness policies that have achieved reductions in homeless populations. The purpose of the report is to inform the development of an integrated and holistic best practice homeless response strategy for the Town of Broome (situated in the Kimberley region of Western Australia) characterised by a high Indigenous population and one of the highest rates of homelessness in Australia.

### Best practice in the UK

- a) In recent years England has introduced major policy reforms addressing homelessness. Driving the changes is one of the most powerful pieces of legislation responding to homelessness in the western world, England's *2002 Homelessness Act*. This legislation provides an enforceable right to settled accommodation for people who are unintentionally homeless.
- b) At the centre of English homeless reforms is a statutory requirement that Local Housing Authorities (LHA's) conduct comprehensive reviews of homelessness in their area. This informed the development of local strategies and was crucial in targeting areas where services were needed. The review required mapping homeless services both government and non-government organisations (NGO's) and gaps in current provision were clearly identified and able to be addressed. Specialised NGO's emerged as critical players in reducing homelessness through their role linking different agencies and resolving applicants housing problems by conducting needs based assessments and interviews providing information about appropriate housing options. Homelessness strategies in the UK are administered and implemented at the local level with LHA's, Housing Associations (HA's) and NGO's charged with particular areas of responsibility for addressing the needs of local homeless people.
- c) The UK's most widely adopted approaches to homeless prevention have been in the areas of:
  - Enhanced housing advice;
  - Rent deposit and similar schemes to progress access to private tenancies;
  - Family mediation; and
  - Procuring long term tenancies.

Housing Associations (HA's) have a major role in homeless prevention including:

- Management of rental tenancies; and
- Through expanding their existing stock.

Housing Associations are now the leading provider of intermediate and settled accommodation in the UK.

- d) Access to intermediate (transitional) and settled (permanent / secure) housing are critical components of homelessness prevention. The UK government has significant social housing stock complemented by 'social housing hybrids' (private/public partnerships) which are extensively utilised to reduce homelessness and accelerate access into settled housing. Rising housing costs and prices have highlighted the need for government to attract more providers of affordable housing into the market. As these new private providers deliver affordable housing stock, along with a significant increase in funding for new social housing the homelessness reforms should continue to deliver a downward trend in the UK homeless population.

## **Best practice in Germany**

- a) Although Germany has seen their homeless population reduce by half over a ten-year period, this review concentrates on the performance of the German State of North Rhine – Westphalia. North Rhine has achieved an even greater drop in its homeless population and this seems to be related to North Rhine being one of the few German states that has developed a strategic homeless framework. The framework focuses on prevention and addressing social exclusion and this approach seems to be succeeding.
- b) In Germany, the NGO sector has a major role in the provision of homeless services, originally responsible for helping single persons whilst municipalities assisted families. This has now changed and NGO's provide services for a range of households and family types. The North Rhine model continues to be monitored. In recent years policy changes have responded to the need for better integration in service delivery. As a result many NGO's and municipalities now work together under one roof as a holistic and comprehensive homeless service unit. The importance of homelessness prevention is illuminated through North Rhine's pro-active approach that requires NGOs to intervene before households face eviction notices. Reintegration into permanent housing is also a key feature of the North Rhine model and there is a good system of 'floating support' for ex-homeless people living in self-contained accommodation.
- c) The German social rental system is an adequately resourced programme unlike any other in Western Europe. Subsidies targeted at private landlords with conditions requiring households pay no more than 20% of their income on rent have bought substantial numbers of private landlords into long term contractual arrangements. A key aim of the programme was to deliver a range of social housing providers and address shortages in affordable housing stock.

## **Best practice in Australia**

- a) In Australia homeless people do not have an enforceable right to accommodation. Australian homeless data shows relative stability in the numbers of homeless people over a five-year period. The Support Accommodation Assistance Programme (SAAP), Australia's overall response to homelessness, has maintained the volume of service provision at a time when most Australia States have undergone significant population growth and substantial house price growth.
- b) Despite the steady picture revealed by the data, there has been significant growth in people requiring SAAP in some States and also clusters of high levels of homelessness in regions such as the Kimberley and Broome of WA. This indicates long-standing homeless problems requiring the development of new homelessness policy. In particular there is a need for distribution of SAAP services in Broome and the Kimberley region evidenced by a lack of homelessness resources and very high rates of homelessness.
- c) Only two Australian States have developed a Homelessness Strategy and both have produced outcomes. In WA the SAAP programmes work in isolation from each other - without a central referral system to link and facilitate effective information flows. Funding and development of adequately resourced Housing Advice Services (HAS's) in areas with high homeless populations are required. Such services require skilled staff to conduct individual and household needs based assessment and housing

options interviews. The WA Strategy is effectively dissolved and it is difficult to see how performance reporting can be undertaken. An opportunity presents to develop a framework that can be adapted and applied throughout WA's regions which includes:

- Surveys of homeless populations;
- Common social housing waiting lists;
- Common referrals;
- Sets homeless reduction targets; and
- Includes other key components of a best practice framework relevant to local homelessness issues.

- d) The Victoria Homelessness Strategy has a much stronger regional focus than WA. This is reflected in key programmes run and implemented by NGO's and in some instances regional public housing offices and NGO's work hand in hand. The Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) is a regional programme that issues bond loans based on the different housing prices in different regional markets. The loans are paid as a grant and reduce the impact of new housing costs on an impoverished sector of the community. The effectiveness of HEF is clear in that its usage has almost doubled since it was introduced in the mid 1990's.
- e) None of the Australia States have seen any reduction in homeless populations. There are examples of good practice in WA and Victoria and other isolated projects such as a Private Rental Brokerage programme in NSW. However evidence provided by this review suggests that a strategic framework offers the best solution to alleviate homelessness.
- f) There is a need for Commonwealth, State and Local government to commit to developing and growing Australia's social rent sector. In WA the market presence of public housing stock has dropped from 6% in 1996 to 4.2% in 2007. The large and diverse social rental system in the UK (approximately 18% of the market) has been a very effective preventative measure against homelessness, linking with Housing Advice Services able to assess client's needs and offer a range of different tenure options.

## **PART 1**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This report presents a review of best practice homeless strategies in Australia and overseas. The report forms part of the Broome Circle Financial Counselling Service “Housing Broome” homelessness project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), through the National Homelessness Strategy.

#### **1.1 Aim and Objectives**

The overall aim of the review is to:

- ⇒ Develop a strategic homeless response for the Town of Broome.

The research objectives are to:

- ⇒ Provide an international and national review of homelessness models that have accomplished significant lowering in homeless populations; and
- ⇒ To identify best practice strategies that can be adapted, replicated and if implemented will enhance existing homelessness policies and programmes.

#### **1.2 Methodology and Scope**

The research part of the project was a desk-based review and analysis of homeless policies in Europe and Australia. The review concentrates on strategies that have gained recognition for achieving significant reductions in homeless populations. This review will inform the development of a regional homelessness framework and therefore regional and local strategies will be looked at in detail.

#### **1.3 Report Structure**

The report contains three parts:

- ⇒ Part 1 Introductory chapter;
- ⇒ Part 2 Literature review of research examining best practice homelessness strategies in Europe and Australia; and
- ⇒ Part 3 A strategic framework informed by the best practice review and the Broome Circle *Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey* (2008).

#### **1.4 Definitions of homelessness**

In Australia there are three broadly accepted categories of homelessness<sup>1</sup>. These are:

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2004, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, RMIT, Melbourne.

- ⇒ **Primary homeless:** People without conventional accommodation (rough sleeping on the street, living in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, parks, under bridges etc);
- ⇒ **Secondary homeless:** People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another; includes people in Crisis and Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme (SAAP)<sup>2</sup> housing; and
- ⇒ **Tertiary homeless:** Medium to long-term boarding house residents.

The Australian 3 tiered definition is interesting in comparison with the UK model. The Australian definition refers to the particular living circumstances of homeless people, whereas the English definition is framed in terms of a person's entitlement, or right, to a home<sup>3</sup>. A person is legally homeless in England if either:

- ⇒ There is no accommodation that they are entitled to occupy; or
- ⇒ They have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation.

England and Scotland represent the only countries in Western Europe where unintentional homelessness carries a legally enforceable right to housing<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.5 What constitutes best practice homelessness strategies?**

This report builds on a range of government and independent research demonstrating that a strategic homelessness framework developed in cooperation with all levels of government and Non Government Organisations (NGO's) offers a positive contribution to alleviating homelessness.

A homelessness strategy's ability to reduce homelessness is the single meaningful criteria for success as measured by governments, NGO's and the public<sup>5</sup>. A best practice framework provides a 'menu' of strategies. These strategies include:

- ⇒ A range of preventative programmes articulated through homeless response units in city and regional locations well integrated with smaller agencies;
- ⇒ Good access to intermediate and settled housing;
- ⇒ Housing surveys and housing needs projection modelling to plan for supply;
- ⇒ Common housing allocations and common referral system;
- ⇒ State funding support and guidelines for service provision
- ⇒ Regular mapping, monitoring, reporting and auditing of homeless services; and
- ⇒ Targets aimed at reducing homeless populations.

---

<sup>2</sup> SAAP is a joint Commonwealth and State Government programme which provides funds to not for profit agencies to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including as a result of domestic violence.

<sup>3</sup> This relates to Statutory homeless: Households that are legally homeless and have been accepted by local authorities as being in priority need (New Policy Institute, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> See Fitzpatrick, S & Stephen, M, 2007, *An international review of homelessness and social housing policy*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> See, David Wright-Howie, 2003 *Homelessness strategies in Australia: Will they make a difference?* Council to Homeless Persons, Victoria

## *Best practice homelessness strategies for Broome*

---

Best practice frameworks capable of delivering a reduction in homelessness needs the ongoing support of a number of different government functions (i.e. policy guidance, legislative requirements and grant funding).

For the purpose of this review, the single best practice criterion is defined as:

- ⇒ Homelessness frameworks and strategies that have made significant and lasting reductions in homeless populations.

## **Part 2**

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

#### **2.1 Homelessness in the UK**

This section concentrates on the homeless policy framework in England over the past five years. During this period government departments and non government organisations (NGO's) reached consensus as to what constitutes best practice and the type of strategies required to maintain best practice. This 'new way' of addressing homelessness was underpinned by amendments to homeless legislation.

#### **2.2 Legislative framework**

Amendments to the English *Housing Act 1996* saw the English *2002 Homelessness Act* emerge as the centrepiece homelessness legislation<sup>6</sup>. The new *Acts'* main intention was to change the way local authorities approached the issue of homelessness. The Homelessness Act did this by requiring Local Housing Authorities (LHA's) to:

- ⇒ Carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to formulate and publish a Strategy based on the results of their review within one year of the *Act* coming into force; and
- ⇒ Take a more comprehensive approach, promoting prevention and taking an overview of future needs<sup>7</sup>.

In addition central government provided considerable funding and policy guidance to achieve the statutory aims for homeless prevention. Government produced a best practice guide for LHA's that set out service improvements and publishes annual reviews of what is working well<sup>8</sup>. England's' pro-active approach to addressing homelessness is bringing strong outcomes.

#### **2.3 Homelessness trends in England**

There has been a remarkable decrease in homelessness figures since the implementation of the *2002 Homelessness Act*. Figure 1 demonstrates that between 2003-04 and 2006-07 households in priority need declined by 62,000. This represents a halving of the homeless population. When comparing these figures to other industrialised countries the results of the strategic UK approach are unparalleled.

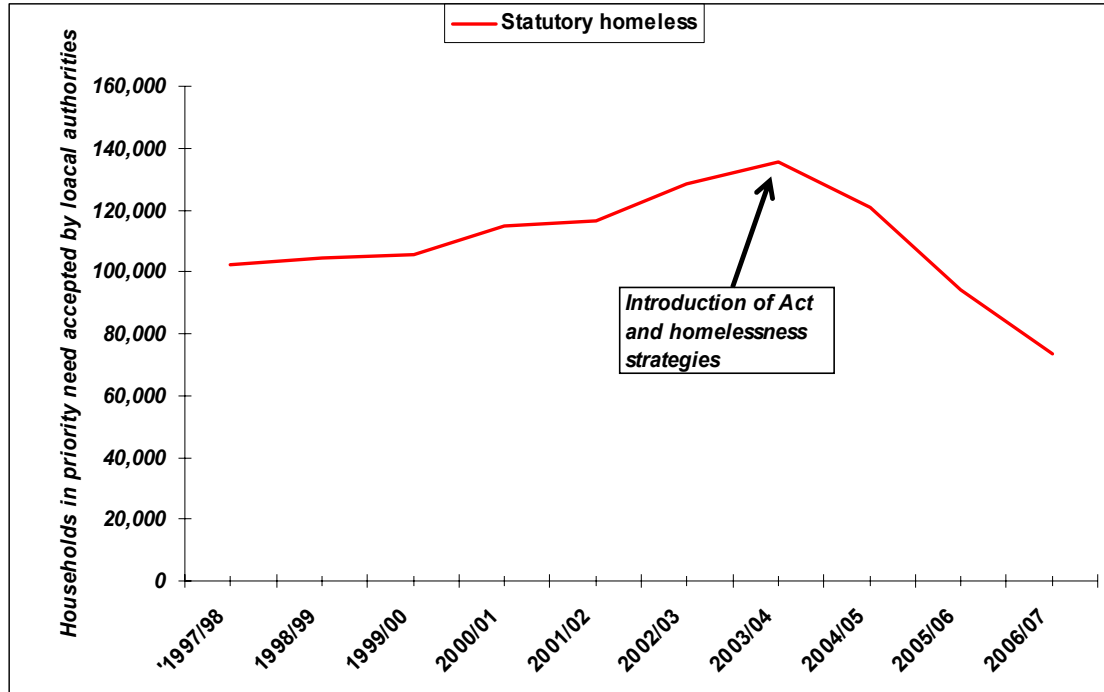
---

<sup>6</sup> See New Policy Institute, 2007, *About homelessness: English legislative framework*, [www.npi.org.uk](http://www.npi.org.uk)

<sup>7</sup> See office of Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, *Local Authorities homelessness strategies: Evaluation and Good practice guide*, [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk). In England LHAs along with Registered Social Landlords (housing associations) are the main suppliers and managers of public housing stock.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 1: Homeless households in England in priority need accepted by local authorities, 1997- 98 to 2006- 07**



Source, (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008)

It is worth noting that the reduction in homelessness occurred during a period when housing prices in England doubled in real terms over the last decade. The average English house now costs over £210,000, more than 8 times the average salary<sup>9</sup>. With house prices rising and social housing stock remaining static the indications are that the implementation of the 2002 *Homelessness Act* and its focus on establishing a range of new prevention measures have made a significant contribution to the reduction in the homeless population.

Research exploring homeless trends in England suggests there are strong links between fewer numbers of homeless people and:

- ⇒ Amendments to legislation;
- ⇒ Increased funding (since 2002 the Department of Communities and Local Government has invested more than £360 million in grant funding to help local authorities deliver the preventative schemes)<sup>10</sup>;
- ⇒ The development of a best practice framework within which homelessness surveys are a central component; and
- ⇒ Setting targets to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007, *Homes for the future: More affordable, more sustainable*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> See Pawson et al, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, Department for Communities and Local Government [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

In 2005 the United Kingdom set a target to halve homelessness by 2010. The target looks like it will be achieved - homelessness rates have reduced by 50 per cent between 2003–04 and 2006–07<sup>12</sup> and the number of rough sleepers in the UK now stands at a record low.

## **2.4 Best practice framework and strategies**

Over 40 English local authorities committed to best practice progress reporting and these authorities have developed frameworks and strategies setting the standard for best practice. Local strategies were informed by the authorities' homelessness reviews and widespread consultation with service users and agencies has resulted in a new emphasis on prevention<sup>13</sup>. Most of the frameworks apply the following headings:

- ⇒ **Tackling priority issues on homelessness:** prevention strategies listed; and
- ⇒ **Access to settled (secure) housing:** includes increasing access to private sector housing, maximising use of existing stock and provision of new social housing

An important part of homelessness strategies is a broad understanding of the local homeless population, their characteristics, numbers and household types, causes of their homeless circumstances and why the housing system is not responding to their housing needs.

### **The homelessness review process**

Knowledge of the local or regional homeless population is essential to develop an effective homelessness strategy. UK legislative amendments required LHAs to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to publish a strategy based on the results of this review<sup>14</sup>. Audits of these reviews identify two processes that produced good strategy outcomes:

- ⇒ A process that analysed the causes and scale of homelessness in the current situation; and
- ⇒ A process that identified what gaps existed and what needed to change in the provision of services to meet the needs identified.

The importance of the initial scoping review in the formulation of best practice standards is clear. The local review enables an overview of current and projected levels of homelessness and ensures that LHA's use the information to develop evidence based targeted strategies to make real improvements in services.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Shelter UK, 2007, *Policy briefing: Homelessness prevention*, [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

<sup>12</sup> See Pawson et al, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, Department for Communities and Local Government [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> See Office of Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, *Local authorities' homelessness strategies: Evaluation and good practice*, [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

<sup>14</sup> See Office of Deputy Prime Minister, 2004, *Local authorities' homelessness strategies: Evaluation and good practice*, [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

## 2.5 Tackling priority issues on homelessness

### Improving Housing Advice Services:

In 2003 over 80 per cent of English local authorities identified the need to improve Housing Advice Services (HAS's) and use them in the front line of homelessness prevention<sup>15</sup>. The focus of HAS's changed from providing specialised tenancy legal advice to prevent eviction, to a more pro-active intervention role so that problems are now addressed at an early stage before eviction is threatened.

Another change in the way HAS's operate is the linking of housing advice and homelessness assessment work. Under the *Homelessness Act 2002* LHA's are required to conduct both housing options and homelessness assessment interviews. The housing options interviews are proving very popular with clients and housing advice services:

- ⇒ Housing options interviews provide a tailored range of available housing choices best suited to the homeless person's needs; and
- ⇒ Housing options interviews provide faster transition through temporary accommodation by facilitating access to private rental. Such referrals are attractive to many households compared to a lengthy stay in temporary accommodation due to long waiting lists for social housing.

The example below outlines the way HAS's are developing as a major homeless prevention measure in the UK. Case study 1 highlights the use of an NGO that is well organised, strongly linked, delivered by skilled and experienced staff with adequate resources as the central reference point to 50 other smaller agencies<sup>16</sup>.

#### Case study 1

*Bournemouth's Housing Advice Service (BHAS) is a good example of where best practice Housing Advice Services are heading in the UK. The service is contracted to Shelter UK with the central objective to provide housing advice that empowers clients to take action themselves or by referrals to other organisations. Shelter provides housing options and tenancy training for a network of voluntary agencies throughout the borough. BHAS is designed to tap into the intimate knowledge of small agencies, health visitors or support providers in close contact with clients, to facilitate early referrals to BHAS before a person's situation reaches crisis point<sup>17</sup>.*

An analysis of nine months BHAS caseload statistics showed that homelessness was prevented for 80 households. The research also highlighted the cost effectiveness of the programme with significant public sector savings resulting from the reduction in the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation to households deemed to be homeless in priority need<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Pawson et al., 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>16</sup> A review of homelessness policies in Europe's 22 member states found that the UK HASs are providing improved access to health care for homeless people, for example through joint health and homelessness strategies agreed between health care and housing providers" (FEANSTA, 2006).

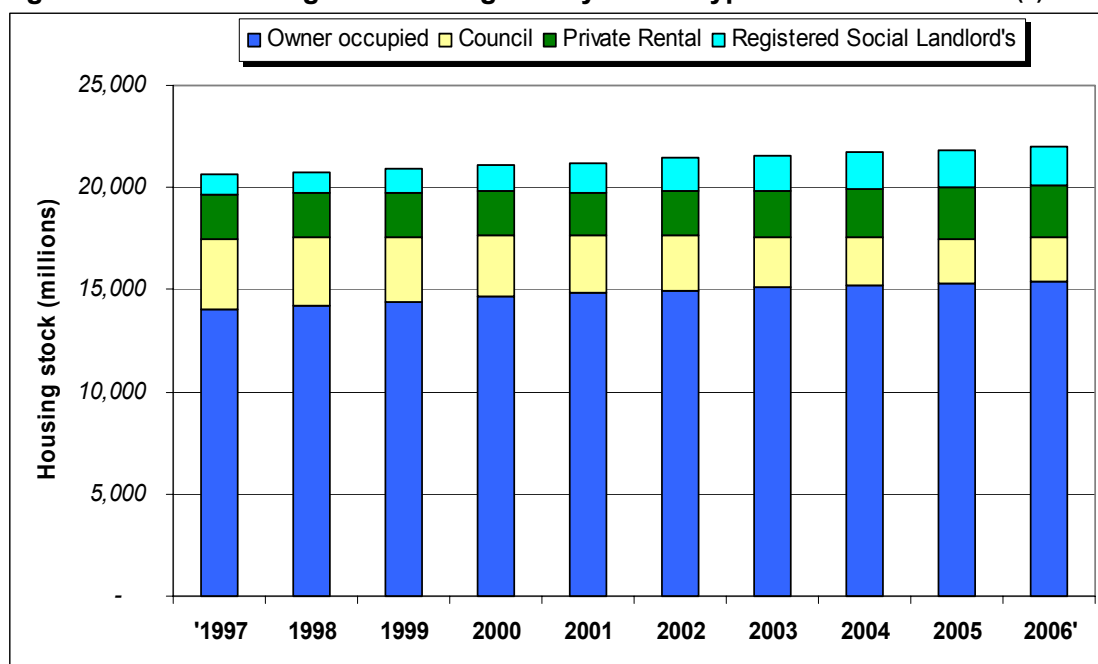
<sup>17</sup> See Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Facilitating access to private housing:

The UK system also earmarks private rental as a key component in the fight against homelessness by facilitating homeless households access to more private tenancies. Such schemes are partly motivated by recognition that – unlike social housing – the private rental housing sector has been expanding (Figure 2)<sup>19</sup>.

Figure 2: Total dwelling stock in England by tenure type from 1997 to 2006 (1)



(Source, DCLG, 2008)

(1) Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) is technical name for a body registered with the Housing Corporation. Most Housing Associations are RSL's (DCLG, 2007).

Private rental now comprises 12% of total housing stock. Private rental increased its overall share of housing stock by 2% from 2001 to 2006. Figure 2 highlights the contraction in council housing which has reduced its share of total stock from 21% in 1997 down to 18% in 2006. The graph shows housing associations increasing their portion of social housing by 25% between 1997 and 2006. This was largely due to Large Scale Voluntary Transfers<sup>20</sup> (LSVT's) from council to Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)

## Registered Social Landlords and private rental:

Significant numbers of private rental stock are now managed by RSL's through the Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS) and this has been a key initiative driving the increase in private rental shown in Figure 2<sup>21</sup>. An increasing demand for housing associations to manage private rental stock is due to HA experience dealing with

<sup>19</sup> See Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007, *Homes for the future: More sustainable, more affordable*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>20</sup> LSVTs: a scheme operating under the 1988 Housing Act where councils can sell their stock to a housing association or housing company (Reeves, 2005)

<sup>21</sup> See Pleace et al., 2008, *Tackling homelessness: Housing associations and local authorities working in partnership*, Housing Corporation, [www.york.ac.uk](http://www.york.ac.uk)

complex needs tenants, their capacity to manage large housing stock and staff expertise. These factors have helped government leverage more private/public partnerships to address homeless though longer-term and intermediate housing.

### **Intermediate housing:**

There are advantages to having Social Housing Organisations (SHO's) competing for access to and management of private rental stock. One advantage is that private agents can choose between alternate financial models under competitive tendering. It is intended that competitive tendering should raise standards in social housing management processes. In terms of assisting people to access secure tenure, Social Housing Organisations' intermediate accommodation provides a temporary housing solution better than options such as B&B and rough sleeping.

The use of private/public partnerships has enabled LHA's to move a large number of households out of hostels and B&B's. Figure 3 shows the use of RSL's increased by 300% between 1997 and 2007 and the use of B&B's declined by 67% from 2002 to 2007. Since the late 1990's the UK government has had two special operations, the B&B Homelessness Unit and the Rough Sleeping Unit, working on reducing rough sleeping and B&B usage<sup>22</sup>.

### **Local rental deposit schemes:**

An increase in private rental stock and willingness to work with social housing providers has established rent deposit schemes as an important homeless prevention measure. Rent deposit schemes funded by local government and in some instances contracted to NGO's are accessed by homeless people for Assured Shorthold Tenancy arrangements in the private/public partnerships described above<sup>23</sup>. Local rent deposits are adjusted in response to increases in market rents, and are therefore more responsive to local housing affordability issues than a uniform national bond system.

An example of the rent deposit scheme pioneered by Harrow local government is shown in Case Study 2. The Harrow scheme represents one of many different bond schemes used by LHA's in England. This model can also offer landlords the option of a smaller bond payment accompanied by one year's insurance cover against loss of rent, legal expenses and (limited) property contents.

#### **Case Study 2**

*The 'Finders Fee' model does not assume that the payment constitutes a bond for eventual repayment (by either landlord or tenant). The fee is a non - refundable premium, the value of which is scaled to the size of the property. Harrow Local Government justifies payments on a 'grant' basis because they provide the council with more leverage with landlords in relation to the terms of the tenancy.*

Another example of a local rental deposit scheme is from Bristol where the council has marketed its introductory service for landlords. Here, a landlord with a property to let would approach the council seeking a tenant nomination. The property would be inspected and – provided it is compliant with a number of specified criteria – accredited,

---

<sup>22</sup> See ODPM, 2005, *Review of settled housing for former rough sleepers in London*, [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

<sup>23</sup> Most common letting arrangements in the private sector, has a minimum lease of 6 months (Reeves, 2005)

## Best practice homelessness strategies for Broome

---

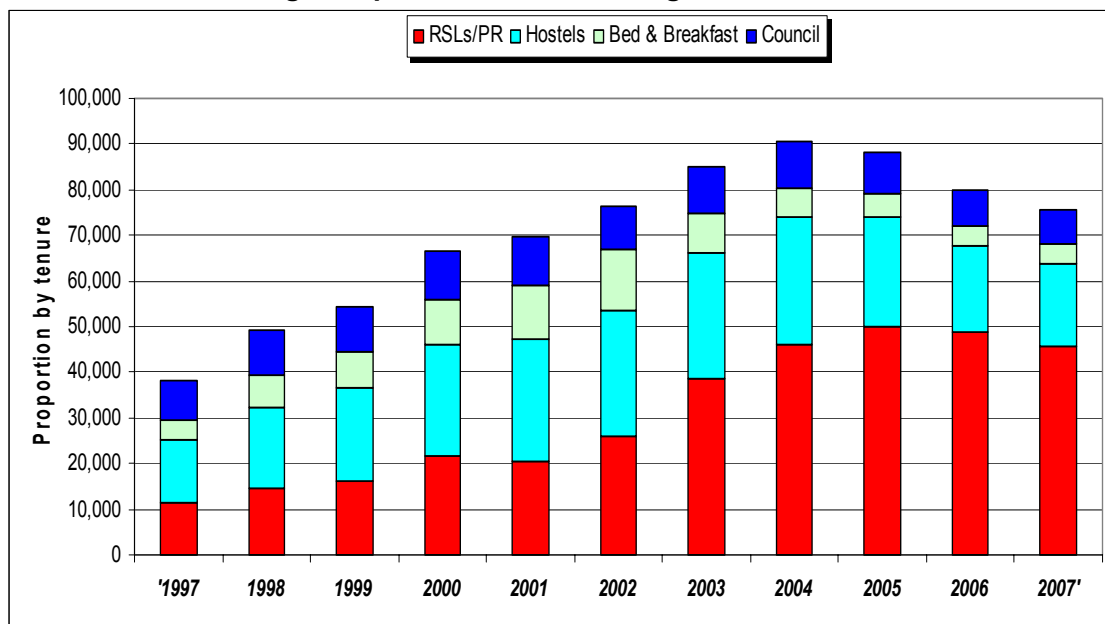
the council would nominate a suitable tenant, depending on the landlord's willingness to grant a term of at least 12 months<sup>24</sup>.

Landlords participating in Bristol's introductory service benefited by receiving:

- ⇒ 12 months free contents insurance and 12 months guaranteed rent;
- ⇒ A deposit payment; and
- ⇒ Professional advice made available to both landlord and tenant.

Both the Harrow and Bristol schemes were assessed for their cost effectiveness (i.e. bond assistance and insurance versus the cost of B&B) and both schemes produced significant savings to council. In Harrow in 2004-05, 57 households were assisted into private tenancies under the scheme. In 2006 best value performance indicators were introduced to assess if such placements are sustained for more than 6 and 12 months.

**Figure 3: Households in different types of accommodation arranged by local authorities after being accepted as homeless, England, 1997-2007**



(Source: DCLG, 2008)

In implementing any initiatives of this sort, it is clearly beneficial for local authorities or their agents (some rent deposit schemes are operated by NGO's) to develop a detailed picture of private landlords in their locality, and to use this as a basis for establishing friendly relations with property owners. By tailoring schemes appropriately, rent deposit-type initiatives can be successfully targeted to a range of different client and cultural groups.

### Family mediation and domestic violence schemes:

<sup>24</sup> See Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

Preventing homelessness by improving family mediation and domestic violence schemes has been a key objective of the new pro-active prevention model in England. Table 1 reveals that in 2005/06 more than one in two households seeking priority assistance was due to the breakdown of relationships in both Western Australia and England.

**Table 1: Main reason for seeking SAAP by client group, Western Australia, 2005–06 (%) and Homeless households in England in priority need accepted by local authorities, by reason for loss of last settled home, 2006 (%) (1)**

	<i>Relatives/friends no longer able or willing to provide accommodation</i>	<i>Violent relationship breakdown with family/partner</i>	<b>Total</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>W Australia</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>59%</b>

(Sources: *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; DCLG, 2008*).

(1)The Western Australia figures are similar to those for the rest of Australia (AIHW, 2007).

Table 1 provides an interesting comparison between Western Australia and England and shows that both jurisdictions have similar proportions of homeless people needing assistance due to family breakdown and/or abusive relationships. However whilst WA and Australia have not seen a reduction in the proportion of people presenting for housing due to violent relationships, England has achieved a 40% reduction<sup>25</sup>. With a substantial lowering of people presenting as a result of family violence, mediation prevention strategies are an effective tool.

A survey of local authorities' homelessness strategies in 2005 found that 80 per cent of them were operating mediation services in order to help prevent homelessness (ODPM, 2005). The main actions proposed by LHA's to address this route into homelessness were:

- ⇒ Mediation between young adults and their families;
- ⇒ Better access to housing advice;
- ⇒ Education about housing options; and,
- ⇒ Improving routes into permanent housing<sup>26</sup>.

Some households initially referred to mediation were subsequently helped to find private tenancies with Finders Fee assistance (see Case Study 2), highlighting the pivotal role HAS's have in the scheme.

Measured against the cost of placing and funding homeless people in B&B - the mediation schemes show significant savings for Harrow and other mediation service locations. In Harrow there was a gross saving of £322,400 and in 2004 -05, 56% of Harrow council housing referrals accepted an 'alternative housing option'<sup>27</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> See DCLG, 2008, Statutory homelessness in England, in 2007, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> An alternative housing option refers to the client being offered an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a private landlord – instead of a prolonged stay (which can occur in areas with high demand for council housing ) in temporary accommodation until a council house becomes available, See DCLG, 2004, *Homelessness strategies: A good practice guide*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

## **Access to settled and secure housing:**

Access to social and affordable housing is a vital component of effective responses to homelessness. The doubling of housing prices in England prompted the UK government to develop parameters and funding programmes aimed at enticing a wider range of organisations into the affordable housing market. Key features are:

- ⇒ An £8 billion programme for affordable housing in 2008-10, a £3 billion increase compared to the previous three years; and
- ⇒ At least 70,000 more affordable homes a year by 2010–11; 45,000 of these will be social homes (64%), representing a 50% increase in social housing in 3 years and more than doubling new provision since 2004-05<sup>28</sup>.

The suppliers of these homes are a diverse group of social housing landlords. For the first time in over two decades local government through contractual arrangements with Arms Length Management Organisations will be able to gain access to the next round of social housing grants. This means homeless people will be able to gain access to social housing from more social housing suppliers<sup>29</sup>.

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

- a) In recent years England has set in motion some major policy reforms addressing homelessness. Driving the change is one of the most powerful pieces of homeless legislation in Europe, England's *2002 Homelessness Act*. This legislation provides an enforceable right to settled accommodation for unintentionally homeless.
- b) At the centre of the homelessness reforms has been the statutory requirement that Local Housing Authorities (LHA's) conduct a comprehensive review of homelessness in their area. This informed the development of local strategies. The review also required mapping homelessness services including those of Non Government Organisations' (NGO's) and gaps in current provision could be addressed. Specialised NGO's have emerged as critical players in reducing homelessness through their role linking different agencies and resolving applicants housing problems by conducting needs based assessments and housing options interviews. Homelessness strategies in the UK are administered and implemented at the local level with LHA's, HA's and NGO's charged with responsibility for addressing the needs of homeless people.
- c) UK's most widely adopted approaches to homelessness prevention have been:
  - Enhanced housing advice;
  - Rent deposit and similar schemes to progress access to private tenancies;
  - Family mediation; and
  - Procuring long term tenancies.Housing Associations have a major role in homelessness prevention including management of private rental and by expanding their existing stock.
- d) Access to intermediate and settled housing are critical components of homelessness prevention. The UK government has significant social housing stock complemented

---

<sup>28</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government, 2007: *Homes for the future: More affordable , more sustainable*, [www.communities.gov.au](http://www.communities.gov.au)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

by 'social housing hybrids' (private/public partnerships) which are used extensively to reduce homelessness and accelerate access into settled housing. Rising house prices has advanced the need for government to attract more providers of affordable housing into the market. This, along with a huge increase in funding for new social housing stock should ensure that the homelessness reforms continue to advance the downward trend in the UK homeless population.

## **2.7 Homelessness in Germany**

Like England, Germany has managed to make significant inroads to reducing their homeless populations. The provision of social housing and homelessness services is provided at the municipality level. Non government organisations also play a significant role as direct providers of state funded homelessness assistance<sup>30</sup>.

## **2.8 Legal rights of homeless people**

In Germany there is no legal right to housing, but municipalities have a legally enforceable obligation (under police laws) to accommodate homeless persons who would otherwise be roofless<sup>31</sup>. In addition, Germany has 'indirect' rights to accommodation through social welfare legislation. This encompasses:

- ⇒ Legally-enforceable entitlement to support and advice for people in 'special social difficulties', amongst whom homeless people are the most important group; and
- ⇒ Assistance includes counselling, support for training and employment, and help with access to housing and maintaining a tenancy (not to housing itself)<sup>32</sup>.

Taken as a whole, these rights indicate a strong focus on prevention and access to settled housing.

## **2.9 Homelessness trends**

In the Federal German system there is no national system of homelessness data collection. Germany's national association of service providers give estimates of the national homeless population. The most recent estimates reveal a 47% decline in the homeless population from 590,000 in 1996/1997 to 310,000 in 2003<sup>33</sup>.

Germany has 16 regional states all with their own housing and homelessness legislation and a detailed review of each of the states is beyond the scope of this report. This Chapter concentrates on the state of North-Rhine Westphalia. This is one of the few states that records their own annual homelessness trends and has produced a significant number of research papers accompanying the homelessness data<sup>34</sup>.

North Rhine is one of the few German states that have introduced their own homelessness framework "Avoiding Homelessness – Securing Permanent Housing". Its

---

<sup>30</sup> See Stephens et al, 2002, *Social market or safety net: British social rented housing in a European context*, The Policy Press, Bristol

<sup>31</sup> See Fitzpatrick, S and Stephens, M, 2007, *An international review of homelessness and social housing policy*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

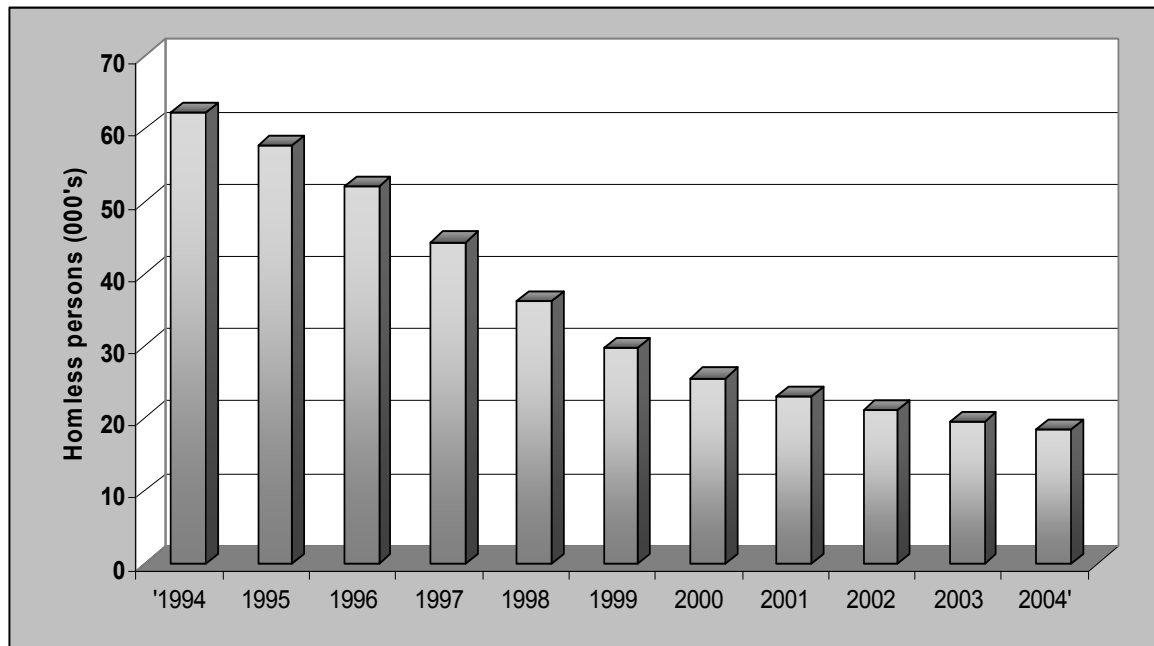
<sup>32</sup> See, Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2005, *Homelessness and the changing role of the state in Germany*, European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> North Rhine-Westphalia is the largest Federal State of Germany it has over 18 million inhabitants

introduction in the mid 1990's initiated lowering numbers of homeless persons housed in temporary accommodation. Since 1994 (see Figure 4 below) over a ten-year period there has been a 70% drop in homelessness. This decline is exceptional compared to other German states. The downward trend also occurred in parallel with reduction in social housing and rising levels of poverty and unemployment<sup>35</sup>.

**Figure 4: Homeless persons who are temporarily accommodated under the police law in North Rhine-Westphalia region, 1994-2004**



(Source: Busch-Geertsema, 2005)

## 2.10 Best practice in Germany

In the late 1980's all German municipalities committed as far as possible to avoid the use of temporary accommodation through better prevention strategies and by arranging permanent housing tenancies. This commitment has fashioned a pro-active approach to addressing homelessness by Germany's two main homeless service providers; municipalities and NGO's<sup>36</sup>.

### Homeless service provision:

The way homelessness services are provided in the German regions is interesting. The provision of services has traditionally been split between municipalities, who are the main providers of temporary accommodation for evicted families and also prevention services for households threatened with evictions, whereas NGOs focus on the single person homeless population. For most of their services for the homeless, NGOs receive funding from municipalities or state authorities.

<sup>35</sup> See, Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2005, *Homelessness and the changing role of the state in Germany*, European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA).

<sup>36</sup> See Mandic, S, 2006, *Fourth review of homelessness in Europe*, [www.feansta.org](http://www.feansta.org)

This separation of client base between the main providers is gradually being phased out. The North Rhine Homelessness Strategy undergoes continuing refinements and the latest policy development was driven by the need to overcome the traditional separation of responsibilities and to reach a better integration of services for different household types and different types of housing exclusion. This policy has produced districts with both the municipal housing authority and the NGO working together to provide services under one roof, see Case Study 3.

### **Case study 3**

*In the Hamm district office in North Rhine- Westphalia employees of the local NGO and the municipality are working together to provide services for homeless people and households threatened with homelessness. Alternative housing options are procured by this service for all household types in urgent need of housing. Similar approaches are also to be found in other cities<sup>37</sup>.*

### **The key role of NGO's:**

Due to the experience of NGO's, built up over many decades as the key provider of homeless services to single people, many North Rhine municipalities have transferred most responsibilities for the prevention of homelessness to NGO's. The NGO continues to provide service on behalf of the municipality or the district. This enabled NGO's to extend support in housing, originally targeted only to the reintegration of homeless single people to families and households threatened with homelessness who have never been homeless before.

This has resulted in an overall increase of clients who are not homeless among the users of NGO services for the homeless. Identifying and working with households before they become homeless is a key intervention strategy and as evidenced by a downward trend in the numbers of homeless, seems to be an effective prevention measure. A number of social rental agencies have also started to offer similar services to municipalities<sup>38</sup>.

### **North Rhine-Westphalia homelessness framework:**

North Rhine's achievement in reducing homelessness is not built on any enforceable legal right to housing (as is the case in England). Instead, it has been achieved through the commitment of local municipalities and policy guidance of the State funded "Avoiding Homelessness – Securing Permanent Housing" homelessness model. This model produced 100 good practice pilot projects from NGO's and municipalities. It was presented as an example of best practice by FEANTSA - the official assessor of good practice among Europe's 22 member states<sup>39</sup>.

Most importantly the Strategy is recognised as best practice by other German states, not only due to the significant impact it has had on reducing homelessness, but also because a key focus is to have a long lasting positive impact on homeless people. This

---

<sup>37</sup> See, Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2005, *Homelessness and the changing role of the state in Germany*, European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA).

<sup>38</sup> See Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2004, *German national report 2004 for the European observatory on homelessness*, [www.feansta.org](http://www.feansta.org)

<sup>39</sup> See Greehalgh et al, 2005, *Recent international and national approaches to homelessness*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Brisbane

## *Best practice homelessness strategies for Broome*

---

principle is highlighted through the Avoiding Homelessness – Securing Permanent Housing strategy's main aim:

- ⇒ To improve living conditions in urban districts by working in cooperation with the local community in order to foster personal development through participation in society and tackle social exclusion.

This aim is consolidated by the Strategy's other attributes which includes:

- ⇒ Targeted funding for initiating innovation and improvements at the local level of services (including housing advice);
- ⇒ Funding for the prevention of homelessness and successful reintegration of homeless people into permanent housing;
- ⇒ Resources for the development of outreach services to support and help people in urgent need of housing;
- ⇒ A system of 'floating support' ('portable' support in housing, 'attached' to the person, not limited by location or provider agency) for ex-homeless people living in self-contained accommodation;
- ⇒ Promoting and funding ways to enable cooperation between the municipality and NGO service providers in order to overcome the traditional distribution of tasks between the two sectors; and
- ⇒ Rewards and supports professionalisation - most of the NGO services are provided by trained personnel, often with academic education<sup>40</sup>.

The North Rhine model is continually monitored by performance indicators. The agency for monitoring performance is independent of government and based at a major university in North Rhine<sup>41</sup>.

### **Social rental sector:**

Germany has a number of different social housing suppliers currently delivering 8% of stock and a large private rental sector of about 48% and both are used for prevention strategies and to move homeless people into settled housing<sup>42</sup>. The definition of social rental housing in Germany is unusual compared to other western countries. In most European countries social rental is identified by ownership of stock (public and NGO), in Germany housing subsidies flow to both public and privately owned properties, and these subsidies are the criteria that identifies properties as social rental.

Subsidised housing loans were introduced into the German housing market over 40 years ago. Their main purpose was to promote a diverse social rental sector, provide affordable housing and eliminate a housing shortage<sup>43</sup>. These loans brought about favourable responses from private landlords and by 1978 18% of total housing stock was social rental, with private landlords supplying 50% of this. Most of the subsidised loans

---

<sup>40</sup> See, Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2005, *Homelessness and the changing role of the state in Germany*, European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> See Fitzpatrick, S and Stephens, M, 2007, *An international review of homelessness and social housing policy*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>43</sup> See Lowe, S 2004, *Housing policy analysis: British housing in cultural and comparative context*, Palgrave, London

have now been repaid and as a result a significant number of private landlords have sold their social rental properties to the private housing sector.

After decades of using a range of subsidies to address supply of social housing, much of the demand has been met and the emphasis has turned from housing supply to access to housing. Access, along with prevention measures are now viewed as the primary homeless issues in Germany.

## **2.11. Chapter summary**

- a) Germany has seen their homeless populations reduce by half over a ten-year period. This review concentrated on the performance of the German State of North Rhine – Westphalia. North Rhine has achieved an even greater drop in its homeless population, which appears to be related to North Rhine being one of the German States to develop a strategic homelessness framework. The framework concentrates on the prevention of homelessness and addressing social exclusion and indicators are that the approach is succeeding.
- b) In Germany the NGO sector has a major role in the provision of homelessness services. NGO's originally helped single persons whilst municipalities assisted families. This has changed and NGO's are now providing services for a range of family types. The North Rhine model continues to be monitored. In recent years policy changes have focused on the need for better integration in service delivery and as a result many NGO's and municipalities now work together under one roof as a homelessness service unit. The importance of homelessness prevention is illuminated by North Rhine's pro-active approach requiring NGO's to step in before households receive eviction notices. Reintegration into permanent housing is also a key feature of the North Rhine model and there is a good system of 'floating' or 'portable' support for ex-homeless people living in self-contained accommodation.
- c) The German social rental system operates a highly subsidised programme unlike any other in Western Europe. Generous subsidies targeted at private landlords have attracted a significant number of private landlords into entering into long term contractual arrangements. These subsidies come with conditions ensuring tenant households pay no more than 20% of their income on rent. The aim of the subsidy programme was to deliver a range of social housing suppliers and address affordable housing shortages.

## **2.12 Homelessness in Australia**

In recent years Australian Federal and State governments have implemented new initiatives aimed at addressing homelessness. These include a National Homeless Strategy and two State Homelessness Strategies. This section looks at their impacts in reducing homelessness. It also evaluates recent homelessness trends in Australia, concentrating on WA, the Kimberley region and the Town of Broome. The Kimberley region and Broome are experiencing chronic high levels of homelessness that show no signs of abating. These areas have large indigenous populations experiencing significantly higher homeless rates compared with the non-Indigenous population.

The discussion on homelessness in Australia opens with an overview of homelessness legislation, which as the UK review has shown, can make a substantial impact on policy development.

## **2.13 Legal rights to accommodation**

Unintentionally homeless people in Australia have no enforceable right to housing. There are however two pieces of legislation that establish some form of rights to homelessness assistance. These are:

- ⇒ The *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (1996)*, *The SAAP Act* is the legislation governing current SAAP programmes<sup>44</sup>. The shared Commonwealth and State funded SAAP homelessness programme is Australia's primary legislative response to homelessness; and
- ⇒ Recurring and increased funding is provided for SAAP under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) which is Australia's other main legislative response to homelessness under the *Housing Assistance Act (1996)*<sup>45</sup>.

Both Acts provide legislative vehicles for 5-year agreements, with priorities and funding negotiated. SAAP service providers are predominantly NGO's, and only in a few small communities is there any direct involvement of local government in service provision<sup>46</sup>. SAAP continues to be the core of Australia's overall response to homelessness.

## **2.14 Homelessness trends**

Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2004) revealed that on census night 2001 there were 99,000 homeless people in Australia<sup>47</sup>. The report also showed that Western Australia was over-represented, accounting for 12% (11, 697) of the nations homeless population whilst comprising only 10% of the total population of Australia. This constituted a small decline on ABS 1996 census data (105,000 homeless persons) and emphasises the need for a more strategic response to homelessness is required from Commonwealth and State governments.

---

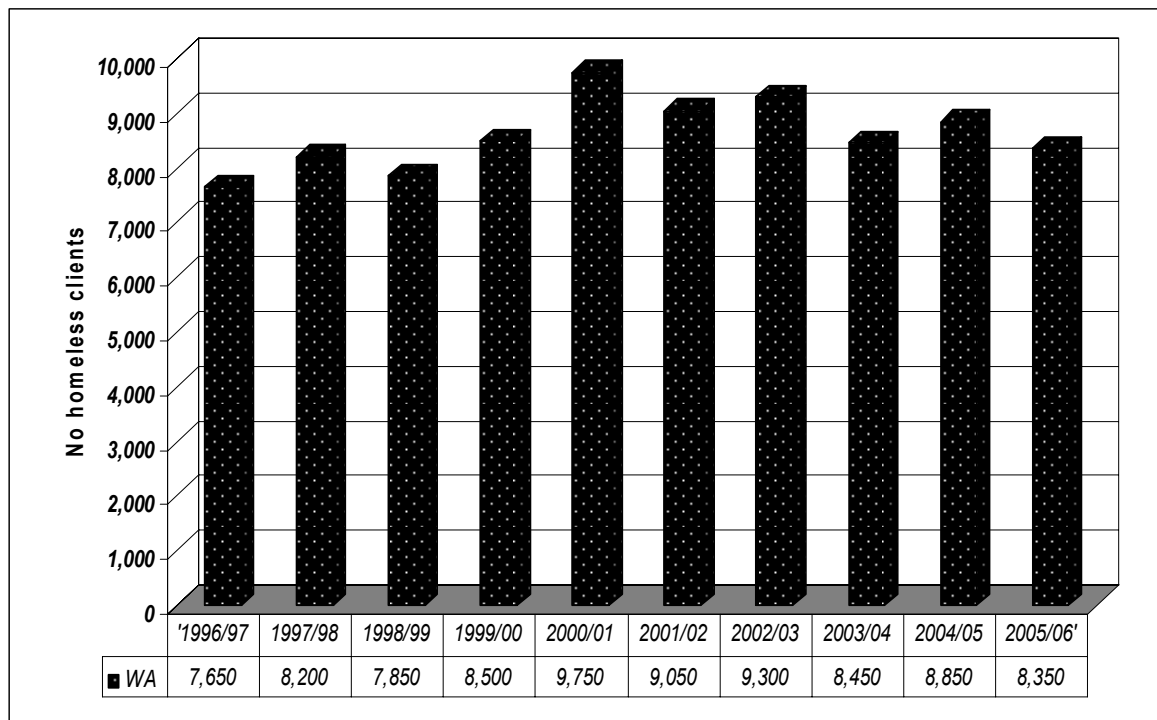
<sup>44</sup>See Greehalgh et al, 2004, *Recent international and national approaches to homelessness*, AHURI, Queensland

<sup>45</sup> The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (2003-2008) is the principal social housing policy framework in Australia through which policies are developed and funds provided by Federal and State governments for social housing (comprising public and community housing) and SAAP services (Commonwealth Government, 2003)

<sup>46</sup>See Fitzpatrick, S and Stephens, M, 2007, *An international review of homelessness and social housing policy*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

<sup>47</sup>See Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2004, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, RMIT, Melbourne.

Figure 5: SAAP clients, by reporting period, Western Australia, 1996/97 to 2005/06



(Source: AIHW, 2007)

In addition to the ABS Census, the Australia Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) also provide a crucial source of homelessness data. Importantly AIHW SAAP data gives an annual account of national, state and regional homelessness in Australia.

The most recent homelessness figures for Western Australia shown in Figure 5 demonstrate there has not been any significant change in the Western Australian homeless population for a decade. The graph highlights a 9% increase from 1996 to 2006 and displays gains made and lost over that period.

West Australian homelessness trends are indicative of other Australian States and Territories. It is worse in Victoria which has undergone a rapid increase in the number of requests for homeless services (up from 23,700 in 1996 to 37,650 in 2006 – a 59% increase). NSW had 26,650 clients requesting accommodation and support in 1996 and in 2006 there were 25,950 requests representing a 3% decline in demand.

What is particularly alarming about the data in Figure 5 is that Indigenous clients in WA comprised over one third of client requests in 2005-06, yet Indigenous people make up only 3% of the State's population<sup>48</sup>. This is a much higher proportion of indigenous requests than the national figures which revealed a much lower overall proportion of SAAP Indigenous homeless claimants' (16%), 3% of the Australian population identifying as Indigenous<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> See Australia Bureau of Statistics 2007, *2006 Census: Basic community profile, Western Australia*, Cat. No. 2001.0, [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

<sup>49</sup> See AIHW, 2007, *Homeless people in SAAP, SAAP national data collection annual report, 2005-06: Australia supplementary tables*, [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

## Best practice homelessness strategies for Broome

Regarding regional homelessness, the Kimberley region and the Shire of Broome display high levels of homelessness compared to the rest of the WA. The 2001 Census revealed that in the Kimberley region Indigenous people accounted for one in three of the homeless population<sup>50</sup>.

The Census also demonstrated that Indigenous people living in the Kimberley made up just 1% of the State's total population yet comprised 17% of the States' Indigenous homeless population. This amounted to the second highest proportion of indigenous homelessness in WA, with WA metropolitan regions having the highest levels of indigenous homelessness.

Table 2 shows that in the Perth metro region one in three homeless people (30%) were able to access SAAP and Boarding House accommodation, but only 6% of the Kimberley and just 3% of the Broome homeless populations were able to access SAAP services. The fact that the town of Broome had one of highest rates of homelessness in WA in 2001 at 1,108 per 10,000 head of population, 23 times greater than Perth at 256 per 10,000 head of population suggests that homeless assistance needs to be better targeted and distributed in regional centres where high demand for services exists<sup>51</sup>.

**Table 2: Metro and regional comparison of the number of people in different segments of the homeless population in WA, 2001**

	<i>Broome</i>	<i>Kimberley</i>	<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Boarding house	28	119	1,125	1272
SAAP	14	28	755	797
Friends/relatives	628	1,063	3281	4972
Sleeping rough	203	524	476	1203
Caravan park	363	589	502	1454
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1236</b>	<b>2323</b>	<b>6,139</b>	<b>9698</b>

(Source, Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2004)

The most recent homelessness trends indicate that the Kimberley still maintains the unenviable record of having the States highest regional homeless population (Table 3 below). The percentage of homelessness support periods for Kimberley in 2005-06 (15%) is similar to the 2001 Census data which estimated that the Kimberley contained 17% of the State homeless population, indicating there has been no real gains in alleviating homelessness over a five-year period.

**Table 3: SAAP support periods by district, Western Australia, 2005–06 (number and %)**

<i>Kimberley</i>	<i>Perth</i>	<i>Total in WA</i>
1700	2600	11,400
15%	23%	38% of total

(Source: AIHW, 2007)

<sup>50</sup> See Australia Bureau of Statistics 2002, *2001 Census: Basic community profile, Western Australia*, Cat. No. 2001.0, [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

<sup>51</sup> See Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2004, *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*, RMIT, Melbourne.

## **2.15 Best practice in Australia**

A best practice criterion, as identified in the introductory chapter, implies an effective homelessness strategy should offer a holistic framework developed in cooperation with different tiers of government and NGO's. It is unlikely that strategies developed and implemented in isolation will have much impact in reducing homelessness.

In 1999 the Australian Commonwealth government released the National Housing Strategy. One of its main aims was to:

- ⇒ Provide a strategic framework that will improve collaboration and linkages between existing programmes and services, to improve outcomes for clients and reduce the incidence of homelessness<sup>52</sup>.

This aim has failed to eventuate. The NHS is not a strategic framework, containing examples of good practice incorporated into a best practice framework. Nor does it have best practice guidance manuals. There are no indications that it will provide national leadership through legislative support or policy guidance. The NHS does not set any targets to reduce homelessness in Australia but provides for a number of one-off pilot projects.

The review of best practice in section 2.1 suggests that local initiatives and regional responses work well in preventing and reducing homelessness only if they are contained within an overall National or Statewide strategic policy framework.

### **Western Australia**

In 2001 the Western Australia government commissioned the State Homelessness Taskforce to investigate homelessness in Western Australia. The government's response to the taskforce recommendations was the State Homelessness Strategy (SHS) released on 9 May 2002<sup>53</sup>. The SHS identifies a plan of action for:

- ⇒ Practical, across-government and community strategies to prevent homelessness;
- ⇒ Providing effective support for those who are homeless; and
- ⇒ Providing support for people attempting to maintain their accommodation after an incidence of homelessness.

The government's commitment to the Strategy was through funding, initially providing \$32 million over 4 years from 2002 -06. A recently commissioned evaluation of the SHS recommended further funding. The government's response to this recommendation was initially positive<sup>54</sup> however the Strategy is currently in limbo and funding for SHS initiatives ceased in 2006. It remains to be seen how effectively funding can be targeted and programme improvements tracked outside a homelessness framework.

The SHS reads like a homelessness report card. Headline objectives identify change indicators assessed with reference to annual SAAP data and the 2001 Census is used

---

<sup>52</sup> See Department of Families, Housing, Communities Services and Indigenous Affairs, accessed in 2008, *National Homelessness Strategy*, [www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)

<sup>53</sup> See Department of Housing and Works, (accessed 2008), *Evaluation of state homelessness strategy*, [www.dhw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au)

<sup>54</sup> See Department of Treasury and Finance, 2007, *The 2006/07 State budget*, [www.dtf.wa.gov.au](http://www.dtf.wa.gov.au)

as the Strategy's baseline measurement. The Strategy incorporates an amalgamation of SAAP services that are targeted for more funding or service modifications based on performance.

Although the SHS has achieved only minor gains in reducing homelessness it does support a number of effective SAAP programmes striving to help homeless people in WA. Some of these services have been successful<sup>55</sup>. These include:

- ⇒ **Supported Housing Assistance Programme (SHAP):** There has been over a 100% increase in successful completions of tenancies maintained, from 73 client households in 2001 to 153 in 2005. These outcomes seem to be attributable to increased funding used to employ more staff;
- ⇒ **Homeless Helpline:** Telephone service is available from anywhere in WA. The Helpline works against homelessness by advising clients to apply for bond loans to access the private rental market. This also takes pressure off the public housing waiting list. However the total purse for bond assistance and the amount of bond assistance any one person or household can receive is capped<sup>56</sup>. In 2006 and 2007 there was a significant reduction in demand for bond loans and this could be related to the bond loan failing to keep up with the rapid increases in metro and regional rents<sup>57</sup>;
- ⇒ **Western Australian Drug and Alcohol (WADA):** Growth in the number of Sobering Up Centres, particularly in the North West region of WA, has resulted in a significant drop in the numbers of repeat admissions to treatment centres for drug and alcohol abuse, down from 737 in 2001 to 159 in 2005. WADA provides a range of services to clients, including access to GP's and referral to financial counselling as well as facilitating treatment pathways for those clients who need a more comprehensive treatment regime<sup>58</sup>;
- ⇒ **Financial counsellors:** One of the principal services to be funded by the SHS are regional financial counselling and counselling agencies that provide support and budgeting advice for people to access housing and personal and financial assistance for children in country refuges. Growth in funding and provision of new services for financial counsellors appears to be related to a reduction in the number of homeless households resulting from financial difficulties, down from 692 in 2001 to 84 in 2005; and
- ⇒ **Independent Living Programme (ILP):** The ILP provides long term supported accommodation for people with mental illness through head leasing arrangements with supportive landlord functions, care and assistance for people with a disability and clinical support to people with persistent psychiatric illness. There has been a significant increase in ILP accommodation, from 400 in 2001 to 668 in 2005. However, a survey of key mental health stakeholders revealed major disappointment with the SHS's failure to increase assistance to meet housing

---

<sup>55</sup> SAAP services provide transitional support in order to help homeless people achieve maximum independence. Assistance is provided in the form of short-term crisis accommodation, or a place in 'transitional' accommodation for up to 18 months. The programme also provides a broad range of support, including mediation, counselling, financial counselling and advocacy.

<sup>56</sup> See DHW, 2007, *Bond assistance*, [www.dhw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au)

<sup>57</sup> Bond loans issued reduced from 12, 500 in 2004 to 7,500 in 2007, (Personal communication with Department of Housing and Works)

<sup>58</sup> See DHW, 2005, *Western Australia state homelessness strategy; Report against performance indicators as at 30 June 2005*, DHW, Perth

demand from people with mental illness<sup>59</sup>. The concerns were taken seriously and in the 2006/07 State budget \$52.012 million was allocated to the Mental Health Strategy for the provision of additional community supported accommodation<sup>60</sup>.

The ongoing housing crisis and intractable levels of homelessness in WA suggest that removing the SHS from the housing policy agenda was a premature move. It is time to build on what has worked and formulate a new and improved overarching framework within which regional homeless strategies can be developed to respond to regional differences. A revised framework should include key omissions from the previous Strategy such as:

- ⇒ **Housing needs surveys:** identifying factors affecting homelessness and the lack of affordable housing supply;
- ⇒ **Regional housing advice centres:** to provide individual needs based assessment, a case management function for individual clients and housing options interviews as well as being a key housing referral centre linking regional and remote communities to resources;
- ⇒ **Homelessness services:** delivered in a manner that is accessible and appropriate for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and
- ⇒ **Setting homelessness reduction targets.**

Stakeholder and client feedback from a survey on the progress of the SHS indicated considerable support for homelessness services to be extended and located in regional centres<sup>61</sup>.

## **Victoria**

The Victorian Homelessness Strategy (VHS) was released in 2002. The VHS encompasses a strategic framework and an action plan<sup>62</sup>. It has a distinctive regional dimension and has developed programmes that are sensitive to different regional housing markets<sup>63</sup>. The VHS has five strategic objectives

- ⇒ Improving client focus and client outcomes;
- ⇒ Developing integrated and sustainable service responses;
- ⇒ Working across government and with the community to prevent homelessness;
- ⇒ Increasing access to, and supply of, affordable housing; and
- ⇒ Supporting and driving change.

Victoria has experienced a substantial increase in the number of clients seeking homelessness assistance<sup>64</sup>. These figures imply major constraints with access to, and

---

<sup>59</sup>See Estill Associates, 2006, *Evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the Western Australia state homelessness strategy*, Department for Community Development, Perth.

<sup>60</sup> See Department of Housing and Works, (accessed 2008), Evaluation of state homelessness strategy, [www.dhw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au)

<sup>61</sup>See Estill Associates, 2006, *Evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the Western Australia state homelessness strategy*, Department for Community Development, Perth.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Human Services (accessed 2008). *Victorian homelessness strategy: Strategic framework*, [www.homlessness.vic.gov.au](http://www.homlessness.vic.gov.au)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup>See AIHW, 2007, Homeless people in SAAP, SAAP national data collection annual report, 2005-06: Victoria, [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

supply of, social housing. Victoria's and indeed Australia's, stock of public housing continues to shrink, and without adequate affordable housing stock there has been negligible impact on reducing homeless figures in recent years<sup>65</sup>.

The VHS has promoted and implemented a number of regional pilot projects and programmes<sup>66</sup>. This provides a contrast to the Western Australian SHS which seems to be more centrally based. Lessons could be drawn from the regional emphasis of the VHS.

### **Regional programme 1:**

**The Housing Establishment Fund (HEF):** An initiative that aims to expand homelessness services in the regions and develop integrated and sustainable regional service systems<sup>67</sup>. Programme features:

- ⇒ Nearly 90% HEF funds distributed to non-government Transitional Housing Management Services (THMS). The funding allocation is delivered through a regional needs-based model (see model details below) and targeted to clients encountering extreme financial hardship. It is provided only as a grant;
- ⇒ Regional THMS's accounts for 86% of the HEF budget. Specialised Housing Information Referral (HIR) workers are responsible for HEF grants and provide initial assessment of client housing and support needs, provision of housing information, assistance and advice;
- ⇒ The programme has a common and consistent set of principles and operations that are underpinned by common standards<sup>68</sup>.

It was difficult to obtain information on the numbers of households accessing HEF who had secured long-term housing stability. This data is necessary to measure performance as the HEF client base has more than doubled from 12,000 assisted in 2001 to 27,300 in 2005-06<sup>69</sup>. On many fronts the HEF seems an effective and integrated service targeted at large numbers of homeless people in regional areas.

### **HEF Needs Modelling for THMS<sup>70</sup>**

*HEF funding distribution is based on a regional needs model calculated using Centrelink data. Regional need is determined based upon the proportion of the regional population who are privately renting, in receipt of rent assistance and paying in excess of 30% of their income in rent. The principle of this model is to direct assistance to areas where clients are most likely to be at risk of losing their current housing.*

### **Regional Programme 2:**

**Social Housing Advocacy and Support Programme (SHASP):** Forms part of the growing VHS focus on addressing regional homelessness; SHASP is a new model for delivering regional advocacy<sup>71</sup>. Its key features are:

<sup>65</sup> By the end of 2006 public housing stock levels in Australia and across all the states was less than it was in 2002, See Productivity Commission, 2007, *Report on government services: Housing*, [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)

<sup>66</sup> See Department for Human Resources, 2006, *Everybody needs a home*, [www.homelessness.vic.gov.au](http://www.homelessness.vic.gov.au)

<sup>67</sup> Department of Human Services Office of Housing, 2003, *Housing establishment fund: Guidelines and conditions of funding*, DHS, Victoria

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> See AIHW, 2007, *Private rental assistance 2005-06, Commonwealth State housing agreement national data report*, [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au).

<sup>70</sup> Department of Human Services, Office of Housing, 2002, *Housing establishment fund review: Issues paper for consultation*, DHS, Victoria

<sup>71</sup> See Australian Housing Institute, 2006, *Housing Works: Sustaining tenancies*, Vol. 4, No.2, [www.housing.institute.org](http://www.housing.institute.org)

- ⇒ Delivery by case management approach, based on an assessment of the full range of issues impacting the tenant. SHASP is provided through 11 NGO's located in different regions; and
- ⇒ Development of effective working relationships between regional housing offices and community based SHASP providers<sup>72</sup>. To maximise understanding of each other's work practices SHASP workers spend time in regional housing offices.

The SHASP target is to establish 1400 successful tenancies per annum by providing on average, 3 month's intensive support and to deliver an average of 6 months support to 800 tenancies at risk of eviction. Regional programmes highlight sound preventative measures by providing good access points and ongoing support in tight private and public rental housing markets. VHS programmes such as SHASP are also complemented by regional pilot projects, one of which is discussed below.

### **Regional Pilot Project:**

**Housing Support for Indigenous Tenants:** This Indigenous project initiated in 2003, has helped more than 200 Indigenous Victorians living in public housing or community-managed housing to maintain their tenancy. The pilot was so successful that funding of \$842,000 a year has been allocated to support Indigenous tenants across the State.

Victoria has Australia's third largest Indigenous population, behind NSW and WA, and Indigenous people make up a significant portion of the Victorian homeless population. The pilot project, and the overarching HEF and SHASP programmes shows the VHS is responding to the challenge by developing tailored responses to the specific circumstances of Indigenous Victorians<sup>73</sup>.

### **New South Wales**

The NSW government have not yet developed a Homelessness Strategy. However this review identified a good example of a local programme that has potential for adaptation within a broader regional framework.

**The Private Rental Brokerage Service (PRBS):** The PRBS is a joint project between Department of Housing and NGO's. The project works with the Department finding housing and providing assistance to access the housing and NGO's delivering support to sustain tenancies. PRBS key elements include:

- ⇒ **Targeting:** Targets areas with high level of homelessness and where there is a high demand for public housing;
- ⇒ **Partnerships:** PRBS project has established strong relationships with local letting agents involved in the scheme<sup>74</sup>. Private agents show willingness to house tenants with complex needs due to the ongoing support provided by community organisations and the scheme also mitigates against financial risk by providing the bond, rent in advance and some tenancy guarantees (this is similar to the UK private rental schemes discussed previously); and.

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> See Department for Human Resources, 2006, *Everybody needs a home*, [www.homelessness.vic.gov.au](http://www.homelessness.vic.gov.au)

<sup>74</sup> See Jacobs, K et al, 2005, *A review of private rental support programmes*, AHURI, Melbourne

⇒ **Cost effectiveness:** The PRBS measured the average annual cost per client of a public tenancy subsidy against the costs of providing 12 months tenancy support plus rental assistance. The PRBS scheme come out with a significant saving using this comparison<sup>75</sup>.

## **Access to settled and secure housing in Australia**

Whilst the UK and Germany have been able to call on a large and diverse stock of social housing to help prevent homelessness, Australia's social rental stock has continued to diminish. Successive Australian governments have demonstrated a lack of commitment to developing and funding a viable social housing sector. In the last decade alone, the Commonwealth cut their share of CSHA funding by 25%<sup>76</sup>.

This reduction in Commonwealth funding has occurred at a time where public assistance is increasingly targeted to 'greatest need'. Consequently, the focus of public housing officers has turned to maintaining tenancies in recognition that many households have no other housing choice (ie. state housing authorities have become the 'provider of last resort'). These 'greatest need' households also have higher and often complex support needs and are unlikely to ever afford more than minimum rents derived from Social Security benefit payments. Previously, there has been greater turnover of tenants in public housing as they move into private rental or home ownership - public housing tenancy being only part of these peoples' 'housing careers', and a higher proportion of people on low and medium incomes other than benefits and able to contribute more than minimum rent.

The Western Australian public housing authority has struggled to deliver for the growing number of targeted 'greatest need' allocations<sup>77</sup> and has similarly not been able to house 'wait turn' applicants in a reasonable timeframe. In 2002-03 the proportion of greatest need applicants was 33%, increasing to 66% in 2005-06<sup>78</sup>.

The impact of this on households waiting to access public housing in Western Australia has been profound. In 1995-96, 6,559 new tenancies were created, but by 2005-06 the number of households newly allocated with public housing had declined to a ten year low of 3,704 (a 44% decline). Over the same period WA's public housing stock has reduced by nearly 2,000 dwellings and its market presence as a proportion of total housing stock has declined from 6% in 1996 to 4.2% in 2007<sup>79</sup>.

The Western Australia waiting list for public housing is the highest it has been for over a decade. Many eligible households in towns such as Broome (which has a current waiting list of 500 households) will wait five years or more before being allocated public housing<sup>80</sup>. The acute social housing shortages in towns such as Broome are exacerbated by scarce homeless services unable to meet increasing demand.

---

<sup>75</sup>See Australian Housing Institute, 2006, *Housing Works: Sustaining tenancies*, Vol. 4, No.2, [www.housinginstitute.org](http://www.housinginstitute.org)

<sup>76</sup> See Productivity Commission, 2007, *Report on Government Services 2007: Housing*, [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)

<sup>77</sup> Greatest need households are defined as low income households that at the time of allocation are homeless, in housing inappropriate to their needs, or in housing that is adversely affecting their health or placing their life and safety at risk, or that have very high rental housing costs (Productivity Commission, 2007)

<sup>78</sup>Ibid

<sup>79</sup> See Shelter WA, 2007, *The State of Affordable Housing in WA, in 2007*, [www.shelterwa.org](http://www.shelterwa.org)

<sup>80</sup> See Shelter WA, 2007, *Housing issues in Broome: A Shelter WA discussion paper*, [www.shelterwa.org](http://www.shelterwa.org).

## **2.16 Chapter summary**

- a) In Australia homeless people do not have an enforceable right to accommodation. Australian homelessness data indicates a relatively static number of homeless people assisted over a prolonged period. This suggests that SAAP, Australia's overall response to homelessness, is not showing variations that are expected at a time when most Australia States have undergone significant population growth and substantial growth in house prices.
- b) There is significant growth in people requiring SAAP in some States and there are clusters of very high levels of homelessness in regions such as the Kimberley and Broome. This indicates some chronic homelessness problems that require a fresh approach to homelessness policy. In particular there is a need for more effective distribution of SAAP services in the Kimberley region and Broome where homelessness resources do not reflect the regions' very high rates of homelessness.
- c) Only two Australian States have developed a Homelessness Strategy and both have produced outcomes. In WA the SAAP programmes work in isolation from each other - there is no central referral system to link them and provide effective information flows. There is a need for funding the development of well-resourced Housing Advice Services (HAS's), particularly in areas with high homeless populations. Such services require skilled staff to conduct individual needs based assessments and housing options interviews. The WA Strategy is effectively dissolved and performance reporting was minimal. The current environment presents an opportunity to develop a new framework that can be adapted and applied throughout WA's regions, informed by housing needs surveys of homeless populations, to set homeless reduction targets and include the key components of a best practice framework.
- d) The Victorian Homelessness Strategy has a much stronger regional focus than WA. This is reflected in key programmes run and implemented by NGO's; in some programmes regional housing departments and NGO's work hand in hand. The Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) is one regional programme that issues bond loans based on the variation of housing prices in different regional markets. The bond loans are paid as a grant thus reducing the impact of new housing costs on an already impoverished household. The HEF effectiveness is evident; usage has almost doubled since it was introduced in the mid 1990's.
- e) None of the Australia States have seen any reductions in homeless populations. There are examples of good practice in WA and Victoria and other isolated projects including NSW, but the evidence suggests that a strategic, integrated and comprehensive framework offers the most effective solution to alleviate homelessness.
- f) There is a need for Commonwealth, State and Local government to commit to developing and growing Australia's social rental sector. In WA the market presence of public housing stock dropped from 6% in 1996 to 4.2% in 2007. The large and diverse social rental system in the UK delivers an effective homeless prevention measure linking HAS's with Housing Associations, Council Housing and private rental properties offering a range of suitable tenure options.

## **2.17 General conclusions and recommendations**

The main conclusions from this best practice review are as follows:

1. Australian homelessness policy operates without any strategic direction and has weak linkages between Commonwealth, State and Local Government responsibilities. State Governments rely predominantly on annual SAAP homelessness data to inform their policy development. This reliable and robust source of data provides an opportunity for Australian governments to develop and implement more preventative and pro-active strategies. Recent homelessness trends in Australia suggest that policy responses are reactive rather than proactive. A key conclusion drawn from this review is that Australian governments need to prioritise the development of a best practice framework and set homelessness reduction targets before any significant inroads can be made in reducing the homeless population.
2. The priority given to homelessness policy in the UK is in stark contrast to Australia. The UK has a strong template to follow, not only because it includes legally enforceable rights for homeless people but also that all levels of government and NGO's have ownership of the homeless problem. Whilst central government has made legislative changes that propel homeless policy to a higher level of urgency, the comprehensive framework that has emerged and the way it is managed and implemented at the local level are producing impressive results.
3. The priority given to the social rental sector in both the UK and Germany to address a lack of affordable housing and prevent homelessness is the other key difference to Australia. It is difficult to understand why consecutive Australian governments have faith in market solutions to supply low cost rental housing when this policy has clearly failed for many years. The evidence is mounting that governments need to turn to the social rental sector and develop strategies to attract investment in affordable housing much more favourably. In regional areas with a high incidence of homelessness service requests and high Indigenous populations (i.e. Kimberley and Broome) there is a need for a greater number of social housing suppliers and homeless services to meet unmet housing need.

Specific recommendations were drawn from these conclusions:

1. **Recommendation 1:** That the Commonwealth government and WA State government consider developing a Homelessness Act or major amendments to the current Act to ensure the statutory right to a home for unintentionally homeless people.
2. **Recommendation 2:** The Western Australian State government should revive the homelessness strategy, build on elements of good practice and develop a best practice framework and guidelines that include:
  - Setting metro and regional reduction targets for homelessness;
  - Promoting the development and management of local and/or regional homelessness frameworks by NGO's, local government and other organisations using a competitive tendering process; and
  - Establishing regulations, protocols and standards for homelessness services.

3. **Recommendation 3:** The State government provide grant funding to encourage development of local best practice homelessness strategies in regional areas with significant demand for public housing and high homelessness rates.
4. **Recommendation 4:** Funding should require evidence of strong cooperation, communication strategies and the integration of regional homelessness services and also encourage homeless service partnerships between NGO's, regional housing authorities, regional development commissions, local government and regional housing associations.
5. **Recommendation 5:** State government should provide subsidies and incentives to encourage a variety of social housing providers in areas experiencing Indigenous housing overcrowding and significant homeless populations such as the Town of Broome and the Kimberley region.

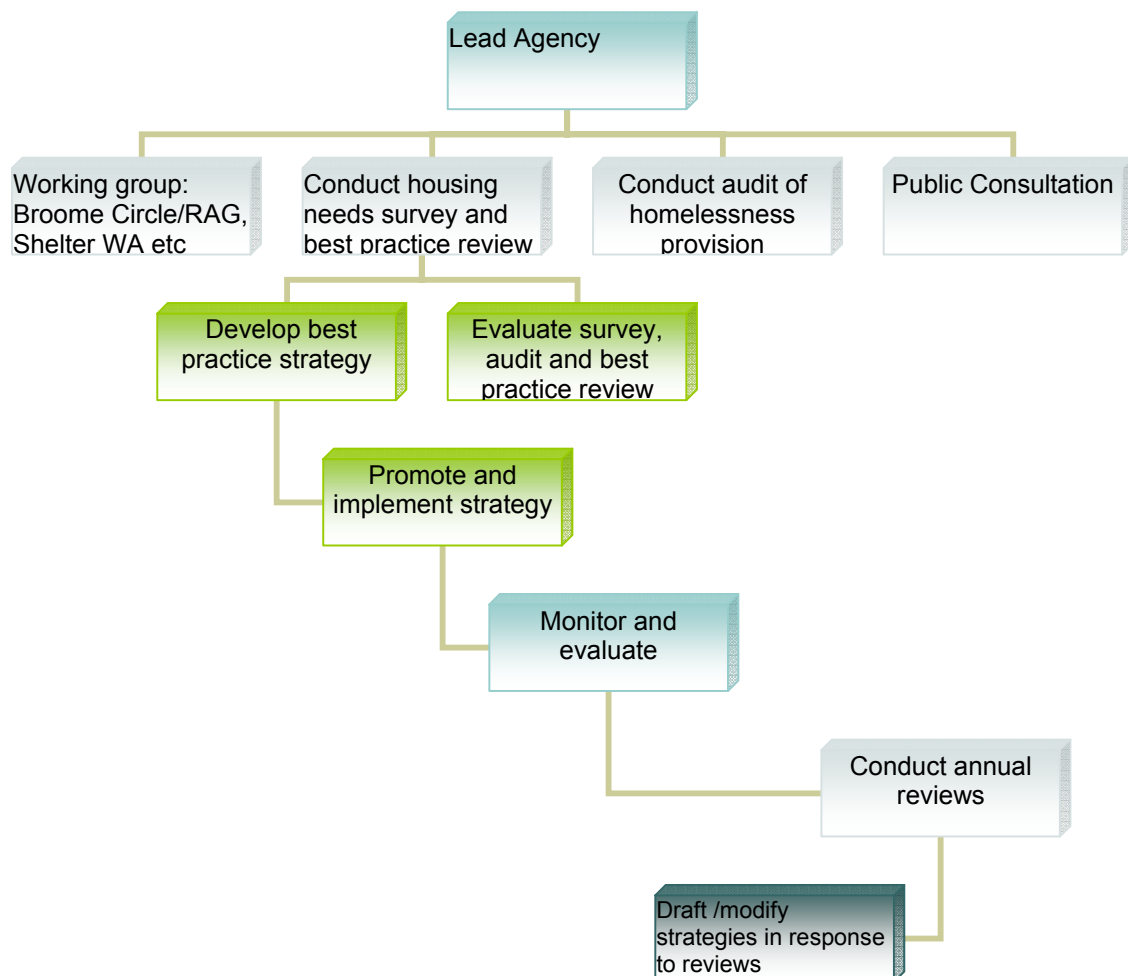
## PART 3

### Chapter 3: Strategic homelessness framework

The development of the Broome homelessness framework is informed by the best practice review in Chapter 2 and the Broome Circle *Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey* (2008).

Before outlining the main strategies it is important to state that a homelessness framework should identify performance indicators and undergo an ongoing process of quality improvement and modification in response to changing housing needs and homeless circumstances. The flow chart below represents one way of prioritising strategies within an overall framework.

**Figure 6: Flow Chart of homelessness framework for Broome**



### **3.1 Best practice strategies for Broome WA**

The points listed below represent suggested best practice strategies for Broome, based on overseas and Australian best practice, recommendations detailed in the previous Chapter and the Broome Circle *Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey* (2008).

#### **1. Housing Advice Services:**

Of the people that participated in the *Broome Circle Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey* (2008), 23% registered as experiencing various forms of homelessness with 13% of this group sleeping rough (primary homeless).

#### **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 1:**

*Provide skilled individual needs-based assessment services that can be used to track high-risk individuals as they move through different types of accommodation.*

#### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME RESPONSE 1:**

*Fund and develop a Broome Housing Advice and Support Service that includes professional and culturally appropriate housing advice services for a range of household types and age groups.*

#### **2. SAAP and Other Intermediate Housing Options:**

The *Broome Circle Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey* (2008) revealed none of the participants were staying in SAAP. It also showed that more than one in three (36%) of Indigenous homeless people stayed with extended family in public housing - risking these tenancies and creating other social problems as a result of overcrowding.

#### **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 2:**

*Increase housing options*

#### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME RESPONSE 2:**

*Fund and develop a Broome housing options service for homeless people unable to access SAAP or other low cost rental. This service could set targets for housing clients based on tenancy quotas with private affordable housing providers, regional housing associations and public housing. This service could link referrals from the housing advice and support service to suitable housing providers.*

### **3. Tenancy Maintenance Support Services**

Nearly one in two Indigenous people were homeless for more than 1 year, this compares to one in seven non Indigenous people who were homeless for more than 1 year.

#### **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 3:**

*Provide more resettlement and tenancy maintenance support services.*

#### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME RESPONSE 3:**

*Fund and develop a 'floating' or 'portable' support service within the proposed housing advice unit. Support provided to tenants in a range of rental circumstance and also for people in temporary accommodation, to help them cope in interim accommodation and prepare for permanent tenancy. This support should be linked to the person and not geographically restricted or restricted to provision by a single agency.*

### **4. Private Rental Access Schemes:**

Data reveals that Broome and the Kimberley have the second highest homeless population in WA and figures have been constant over a sustained period. This indicates that not enough affordable housing is being supplied.

#### **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 4:**

*Establish a local private rental access scheme.*

#### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME RESPONSE 4:**

*The private rental access scheme could include an introductory service for private landlords and tenancy support for private tenants. The service should feature:*

- Register of suitable private rental properties;*
- Rent deposit and guarantee schemes which help to overcome the lack of a deposit and rent in advance for homeless people; and*
- Advice and help for landlords, particularly those willing to house low income tenants at those at risk of homelessness.*

### **5. Housing Needs Assessment Survey**

The level of information needed for homelessness strategies will vary according to the scale and nature of local problems (the UK discussion in Chapter 2 of this review suggested that a comprehensive housing needs assessment was the most effective

strategy used by local government in England – it enables resources and services to be located in areas of high need).

The Town of Broome and the Kimberley region as a whole, experience a range of serious housing problems that show no sign of abating. This indicates an urgent need for a comprehensive regional housing needs assessment so that government, the private sector and NGO's can identify how much affordable housing is required now and into the future to meet unmet housing needs.

## **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 5:**

*Conduct a comprehensive regional housing needs assessment.*

*Lead agency to establish support for housing needs assessment with State government agencies (i.e. Department of Planning and Department of Housing), Local Government, Housing Associations and NGO's. A housing needs assessment should be located in the wider context of local housing needs and take account of factors including:*

- The backlog of people currently in need;*
- People in temporary accommodation unable to exit to secure affordable housing;*
- Need arising from new household formation related to demographic changes (such as separation and divorce rates, ageing, family formation and childbearing);*
- Housing need related to in-migration for employment, tree and sea change retirement patterns;*
- Existing households falling into need; and*
- Future projections of housing demand and supply including housing for people with disabilities, persistent mental illness and aged care.*

## **6. Improve access to secure housing**

Most homeless people have low incomes and access to social housing is likely to be their main option as a permanent home.

## **PROPOSED STRATEGY RESPONSE 6:**

*Garner support and develop incentives for more social and community housing providers to enter the Broome housing market*

*Lead agency to work with State Agencies (Dept's of Housing, Planning and Land Development) in partnership with housing associations to formulate strategies for meeting the housing needs of homeless people through the provision of social housing and more affordable private rental.*

## **References**

- AIHW, 2007, *Homeless people in SAAP, SAAP national data collection annual report, 2005-06*: Australia supplementary tables, [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)
- Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, *2003-2008 Commonwealth State Housing Assistance Act*, Commonwealth, Canberra.
- Department of Communities and local Government, 2008, *Statutory Homelessness: 3rd Quarter 2007*, England, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)
- Department of Treasury and Finance, 2007, *The 2006/07 State budget*, Perth
- New Policy Institute, 2007, *About homelessness: English legislative framework*, [www.npi.org.uk](http://www.npi.org.uk)
- Pawson et al, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)
- Productivity Commission, 2007, *Report on Government Services 2007: Housing*, [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)
- Reeves, P, 2005, *An introduction to social housing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Elsevier Butterworth, Oxford