

information sheet

Tenant Support Services

The following provides information on some of the services that support tenants in Western Australia. It includes services for tenants in both the public and private sectors, and specific services for Aboriginal tenants in public housing and aged people. Where appropriate, contact details for these services are included.

Public Tenants

Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP)

The SHAP was established in 1992 by Homeswest. SHAP is funded by the Department of Housing and Works and aims to assist Homeswest tenants who are at risk of eviction to avoid becoming homeless. SHAP workers visit tenants in their homes on a regular basis to discuss issues and options and to provide assistance with managing budgets and developing 'homemaker' skills.

SHAP is an early intervention strategy that effectively saves many tenancies from the prospect of eviction. Participation in the program is with the tenants consent but sometimes becomes a condition of the tenancy where there has been a prior tenancy history including debts, property standards in breach of the tenancy agreement and anti-social behaviour.

SHAP is holistic in the sense that it works on a wide range of issues which impinge on the ability of the tenant to maintain his or her housing. Some common issues include: housekeeping skills, budgeting, domestic violence, child abuse, drug and alcohol problems and mental illness. The program breaks down many barriers and clients are often referred to other agencies for assistance with underlying issues where relevant. The program also assists people with low skills but who do not necessarily fit into mainstream mental health or disability services programs.

The agencies employ staff who are trained and experienced in dealing with people with multiple problems. SHAP operates in the metropolitan and rural area with country programs locally based and operated. Aboriginal staff are employed in some areas. The following community organisations have SHAP workers:

- Mission Australia: SHAP Support Services: 9342 8820
- Supported Accommodation Family Services: 9493 2447
- Youth Accommodation Support Services 4080
- Centrecare: Supported Accommodation: 9325 6644
- Anglicare : 9325 7033

SHAP Contractor – Anglicare WA

Anglicare works with SHAP to build a better relationship between the tenant and Homeswest.

Anglicare's SHAP workers can help tenants to deal with problems in the areas of financial arrears, maintaining property standards and complaints about antisocial behaviours. Generally, Homeswest Accommodation managers refer tenants to SHAP, but tenants can also ask to be referred.

SHAP, as offered by Anglicare WA is independent of Homeswest, but is funded by Homeswest. It is a free and confidential service, but if a tenant chooses to use SHAP he or she will be asked to sign a consent form granting access to their tenancy records. On the client's agreement, a SHAP worker will meet with him/her and an action plan will be developed together. A SHAP worker may negotiate or advocate on a tenant's behalf. They may also offer counseling and advice, or referrals to other agencies. Anglicare WA has SHAP services in Albany, Bunbury, Collie, Fremantle, Halls Creek, Katanning, Mandurah and Narrogin.

Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged

ACHA is a Commonwealth funded program set up in 1996 targeted at over 55s who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The program is based on the premise that low-income frail older people are at greater risk of premature entry to residential care due to their reduced ability to access housing and community care services. The ACHA program assists these high-risk individuals to access secure accommodation and care services appropriate to their needs.

A caseworker provides short-term support to stabilise threatened tenancies or secure more appropriate housing. Services can include advocacy, liaison with other agencies, outreach or social support, provision of small household goods, financial and practical resettlement support, referrals, casework, low-level counselling, financial counselling, etc

ACHA commenced as a pilot program in 1994, with \$3.9 million allocated nationally over three years. According to the Department of Health and Ageing, ACHA has since become



an ongoing program in light of the significant demand for its services. There are currently 46 ACHA service providers, including 4 in WA, and an allocation of \$2.65 million nationally for the 2002-03 financial year. ACHA programs in WA are operated by:

- Care Options Inc. ph: 9550 7114
- The City of Belmont ph: 9277 1511
- Housing Advocacy & Support Service at Anglicare in East Perth ph: 9325 7033
- Kimberley Aged & Community Services ph: 91921202

Aboriginal Tenants Support Scheme

Please note that this information is out of date due to a current review of ATSS. Also, services in Port Hedland, Albany, Carnarvon, Wyndham will be put out for re-tender before end of 2004, with current services to cease 31/12/04

The ATSS is managed by the Aboriginal Housing Infrastructure Directorate (AHID) within the Department of Housing and Works. ATSS provides culturally appropriate support and information

to Aboriginal tenants or prospective tenants in non-metropolitan areas of WA

ATSS aims to

1. assist clients applying for housing to address previous tenancy issues and to understand and meet the eligibility criteria.
2. advise and assist tenants, especially new tenants with little experience in renting housing or tenants with a history of poor tenancy, to understand their rights and meet their responsibilities.
3. advise and assist tenants to resolve issues in order to maintain their tenancy.

ATSS services provide short term information, support and referral services. ATSS services will not provide financial counselling, legal advice or other specialised services but will provide referral and advocacy to assist tenants to access these services. The ATSS can be contacted via Aboriginal Housing on 9222 4777

Private / Community Housing Tenants

Private Rental Support and Advocacy Programs

The PRSAP is part of the Western Australian State Homelessness Strategy. Services work with families or individuals having difficulty in maintaining tenancies and provide assistance structured around the needs of each person or family.

The services aim to work with families before debts, or other tenancy management issues, become too large or eviction processes start. They use a case management approach to address identified issues that may lead to eviction and work with families until the tenancy is stabilised. The services are able, with the tenant's consent, to liaise with landlords and property managers to facilitate the maintenance of tenancies.

PRSAP may also provide support to people who have recently been homeless and have been identified as requiring ongoing support to maintain their new accommodation and avoid further episodes of homelessness.

A specialist Support and Advocacy Services for Migrants in Private Rental Accommodation has also been established to provide education and information about the program to migrant community groups, act as a consultancy service on migrant issues to the other services in the program, and; inform the real estate industry about issues affecting migrant tenants.

The following agencies provide PRSAP services:

- Ruah Tenancy Support pager number: 9480 5500 (Cannington/Armadale)
- Centrecare Support and Advocacy Service 9440 0400 (Mirrabooka/Midland)
- Supporting Tenancies, Anglicare Rockingham –STAR 9527 5322 (Rockingham)
- WAASP - WestAus Accommodation Advocacy Support 9582 9920 (Peel)
- Capes Accommodation Support and Advocacy (CASA) 9752 2855 (Busselton, Dunsborough, Magaret River)
- Private Residential Accommodation Casework(PRAC) 9964 3533 (Geraldton, Greenough)
- Multicultural Housing Advocacy Service Support and Advocacy Service ph:9238 2699

PRSAP Contractor – Ruah Tenancy Support; South East Corridor Team

Ruah Tenancy Support provides short term mobile case management support to individuals and families who rent privately in the south east corridor of the metropolitan area. The service is available to any household who identifies a risk to their tenancy, and there is a concern that it may result in homelessness. The aim of intervention is to support individuals to stabilise their tenancy through addressing current and underlying concerns that impact upon successful tenancy management.

Ruah Tenancy Support (RTS) initially connects with tenants 'on their patch' to stabilise the immediate threat of eviction. A tenancy support plan is negotiated by the tenant and the property manager within 48 hours with assistance from a Ruah worker. This determines how the eviction process can be discontinued; what the tenant needs to do to resolve the eviction threat; and what Ruah can do to resource them to achieve this.

Household members and RTS then work in partnership to develop and achieve personal support plans. These plans serve to address the underlying issues for the tenancy risk, and look at ways for tenants to build their capacity to decrease future risk. This is done in creative and culturally appropriate ways.

Ruah Tenancy Support works holistically and can cover mental health, substance use, parenting concerns etc by linking people effectively to long term local supports and resources. Skill building is also offered, predominantly in the area of problem solving, planning, and the development of other skills that assist people to prevent and manage crises.

Tenants conclude their involvement with RTS when both they and their Property Manager identify that the tenancy is stable, and tenants feel confident and resourced in managing their homes and other aspects of their lives.

Ruah Tenancy Support also offers a Perth metro wide support service in partnership with the Homeless Helpline to assist people to make a transition from homelessness to stable housing in the community. Access to this service is only available via the Homeless Helpline

Wesley HomeLink

Wesley HomeLink is a service that is separate from but related to the PRSAP Wesley HomeLink was also funded in response to the State Homelessness Taskforce and assists those experiencing a temporary housing crisis (about to become homeless, or newly homeless), to locate and access long-term accommodation in the private rental market. It is available to families and individuals who don't require support for ongoing issues to maintain their tenancy agreement HomeLink covers DCD's metropolitan region

Wesley HomeLink assists clients to enter into a tenancy by providing information on the rental application process, and on tenancy rights, obligation and procedures. They also help to identify housing needs and search for suitable properties and may also assist clients to coordinate physical aspects of the move, among other things.

The service is also available once a tenancy has been entered into and can provide education in maintaining a successful tenancy. HomeLink can then provide follow up support to clients and landlords / real estate agents to monitor ongoing success of the tenancy. Contact Wesley HomeLink on 9212 1926.