

# news **letter**

December 1999

## National Housing Conference

The first National Housing Conference was held in Sydney on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Conference was attended by more than 500 delegates from around Australia and overseas.

The Conference was supported by the NSW Department of Housing, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, First Software, National Shelter, the National Community Housing Forum and State Housing Authorities.

The Conference theme of **reform and renewal in social housing –responding to social exclusion** was explored over the two days with speakers from Australia, Ireland, Britain and the United States providing different perspectives.

The concepts of social exclusion and marginalisation of communities were examined in national and international contexts. The changing social and economic profile of communities and the role of social housing and social policy in responding to the changing needs of communities were central themes of the Conference.

The importance of developing strong and supportive partnerships between tenants, communities and service providers was consistently highlighted throughout the two days.

The following is a summary of some of the highlights of the Conference:

Dr Andrew Refshauge, Minister for Housing in New South Wales spoke on contemporary approaches to social housing in New South Wales highlighting the importance of collaboration, innovation, local solutions and building communities. A strong, flexible

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## ***National Housing Conference continued...***

and effective social housing system is critical in government and community responses to social exclusion. There has been a shift from building homes to building communities. The future of social housing presents huge challenges in terms of finance and supply issues, changing needs of tenants and the role of the private rental market.

Mavis McDonald has been the Director General of Housing, Construction, Regeneration and Countryside, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in the United Kingdom since 1996. She is also Chair of The Social Exclusion Inter-Departmental Group on Neighbourhood Renewal. Mavis spoke about housing responses to social exclusion in England and Scotland. In the United Kingdom social exclusion is understood as a combination of linked problems including unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. The changing economic infrastructure, developing technologies, public policy failures and poor public service delivery have contributed to social exclusion. Government responses to social exclusion need to focus on community outcomes and developing tools, partners and targets.

Eva Cox has been active in social policy debates in Australia for many years. She delivered the ABC Boyer Lectures in 1995 and the text 'A Truly Civil Society' has informed her work on social cohesion and cooperation. She currently lectures in social sciences at the University of Technology in Sydney. Eva spoke about social exclusion, social justice and the concept of social capital. Social capital is one

of a number of kinds of capital including financial, cultural and human capital. Trust is a measure of social capital and can be developed by processes such as genuinely acknowledging local expertise and the time taken to develop relationships. There is a difference between "bridging capital" – the capacity of people to bridge out and be part of a broader community - and "bonding capital" – the more immediate links between people and within particular communities. The process of building trust and relationships is important in creating social capital.

Bill Payne is Chief Executive Officer of Yorkshire Housing, a not for profit landlord with 9,000 homes for rent in the UK county of Yorkshire. Bill spoke about the concept of 'housing plus' and the role of partnerships in social housing provision. A 'housing plus' approach recognises that housing is more than a landlord service and plays a role in education, community development, health, crime, the needs of young people and the aged. Social housing providers can be catalysts for change by working with communities and shifting their focus from 'bricks and mortar' to strengthening communities. A partnership approach needs to be informed by the concept of citizenship. This includes rights, respect and recognition; skills and ability; and willingness and intention. Partnerships need to have effective processes that build communities.

There were many papers delivered at the Conference That have not been summarised here. If you are interested in finding out more the Conference Papers will be available in the Shelter library.

## *Shelter Housing Forums*

**E**ach year Shelter holds a number of forums to hear about housing issues in different communities and regions.

The aims of the forums are to:

- ◆ provide an opportunity for discussion and exchange of information on issues such as Homeswest policy, tenancy issues, and access to affordable and appropriate housing
- ◆ establish direct links with communities and organisations
- ◆ support communities and organisations in developing and implementing strategies to address the issues raised.

Shelter WA will be holding two forums in the first half of 2000.

In March 2000, a forum will be held focusing on housing issues for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the Perth metropolitan area. Towards the end of the financial year, a second forum will be held in the Albany region.

Shelter WA will be making contact with communities and organisations before the forums are held to identify local housing issues. The preliminary consultations will be used to target and prioritise issues so that the forums are used effectively.

If you would like more information or to know the dates of the forums please phone Catriona Cameron at Shelter WA on 9325 6660.

## *Shelter WA Management Committee into the*

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**A**t our AGM in October, Shelter WA reluctantly said goodbye to some committee members, welcomed the ongoing involvement of others and was delighted to welcome those who join the committee for the first time.

Firstly Shelter would like to thank the outgoing committee members for giving up their time and for their contribution and commitment to the organisation over the past year. Outgoing members were: Leanne Barron – Individual (Chairperson); Pauline Logan – Tenants Advice Service (Vice-Chairperson); Tim Garrett – Individual (Secretary); Mike Newbiggin - Federation of Housing Collectives (Treasurer); Cathcart Weatherly - Community Housing Coalition of WA; Bronwyn Kitching – Council to Homeless Persons; Kath Mallot – Individual; Josephine Williams – Warrawee Women’s Refuge; Jane Evans – Centrecare Marriage and Family Service; Kym Gabriel – Fremantle Housing Association; Simon London followed by Evan Hillman – Fremantle Community Youth Service.

Secondly a warm welcome to the new committee which has been filled by the following people:

### **Bronwyn Kitching - Chairperson**

Bronwyn came onto the committee for the first time last year and represented the Council to Homeless Persons. Bronwyn established herself on the committee with ease and contributed a range of skills and expertise consistently throughout the year. We welcome Bronwyn back onto the committee as the representative for Anglicare. We acknowledge her ongoing commitment to the organisation and congratulate her on being elected as Chairperson.

### **Pauline Logan - Vice Chairperson**

Pauline represents the Tenants Advice Service WA and has had an ongoing involvement with Shelter WA over the past nine years. Pauline continues to make a very significant and valuable contribution to many aspects of Shelter WA and we are delighted at her re-election as Vice Chairperson.

### **Leanne Barron - Treasurer**

Leanne is an individual member of the Committee who has extensive experience in both the non-government sector and social housing. Leanne is currently undertaking a Masters of Public Policy and works part-time as a Policy Officer at WACOSS. Leanne has had a long-standing commitment to the organisation and continues to be a significant source of skill and expertise. We welcome Leanne back on the committee, in particular her continued involvement in the Executive of the committee.

## *New Millennium*

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### **Tim Garrett - Secretary**

Tim Garrett is an individual member who came onto the committee for the first time last year. Tim quickly settled in and contributed a range of skills and experience consistently throughout the year. We welcome Tim back on the committee and appreciate his ongoing commitment to the position of Secretary.

### **Mike Newbigin – Committee member**

Mike has represented the Federation of Housing Collectives over the last six years and has made a significant contribution to Shelter WA during this time. This year, he once again joins the committee and represents the Community Housing Coalition of WA. Mike's knowledge of social housing and his continuing commitment to the organisation is greatly appreciated.

### **Juanita Barron - Committee Member**

The Warrawee Women's Refuge was represented on the committee for the first time last year. We are delighted at Warrawee's ongoing commitment to Shelter WA and welcome Juanita as their representative.

### **Karen Grove – Committee Member**

Sussex Street Community Legal Centre has been involved with Shelter WA in a number of different capacities over the years, including being represented on the Management Committee. We are delighted at their involvement once again on the committee and welcome Karen as their representative.

### **Ian Main – Committee Member**

Ian has been a member of Shelter WA and involved in our organisation for a number of years. Ian's ongoing commitment to Shelter WA is greatly appreciated and we welcome him onto the committee as an individual member.

### **John Ballard – Committee Member**

Community Aid Abroad South-West Indigenous Projects is represented on the committee for the first time this year. John brings a range of skills and experience to the committee and we welcome him to the committee.

## **ASERP Update**

**A**s reported in the August newsletter the United Nations Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights will be reviewing the Australian government in 2000.

The review will assess how the Australian government is meeting its obligations as a signatory to the Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. Article 11 of the Covenant addresses the right to an adequate standard of living, with a particular focus on the right to adequate housing.

### **Report on Housing in Western Australia**

In Western Australia, non-government and community organisations have been developing a housing report to submit to the United Nations Committee. The report will provide an overview of housing in Western Australia and highlight key issues to the Committee. The report is being coordinated by Community Aid Abroad South West Indigenous Projects with many organisations contributing information and case studies.

Some of the issues the report will highlight include:

- ◆ The deficiencies in the Government report and the lack of any information in relation to the right to adequate housing in WA
- ◆ The state of housing for indigenous people and communities in WA
- ◆ The increasing levels of homelessness in WA
- ◆ The links between the right to housing and other human rights including the right to health, education, work and culture.

### **National Reports**

Reports addressing the right to adequate housing and other articles under the Covenant are being developed in other states. Working Groups have been established in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. In addition to this a number of peak organisations including ATSIC, the Australian Education Union and Women's Rights Action Network are developing reports to address specific issues around human rights and industrial relations, education, the Olympics, the rights of indigenous people and women.

At this stage negotiations are underway to coordinate a national report from the non-government and community sectors. The West Australian report will form part of the national report as well as being submitted as a 'stand alone' report.

### **Changes to the Review Timeline**

The reports will be submitted to the UN Committee early in the new year for the preliminary review in May 2000. The Committee will use the non-government and community sector reports to develop a list of issues to submit to the Australian government for their response. The aim of the list of issues is to elicit further information or clarification on relevant issues in Australia. The Government's response will then form the basis of the second stage of the review.

The second stage of the review was originally scheduled to take place in November 1999. This

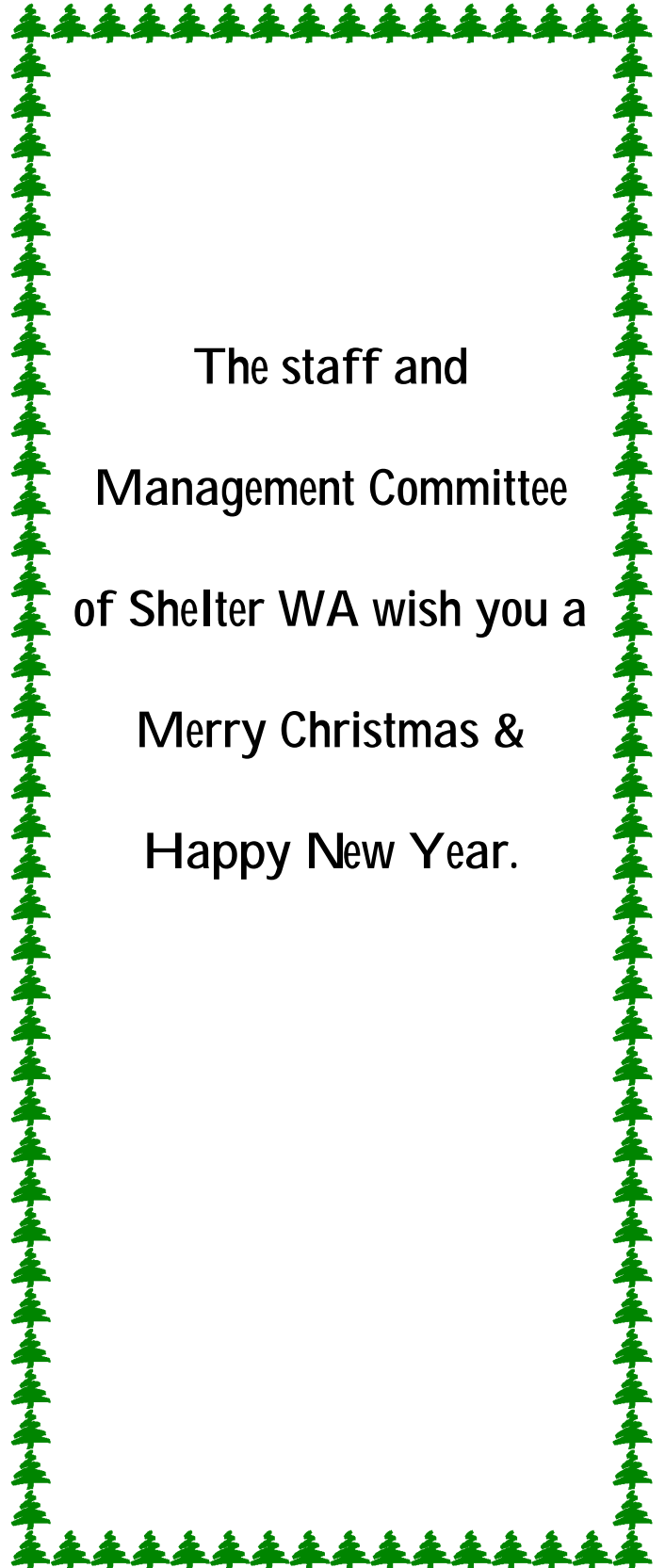


has changed and the Australian Government will now appear before the Committee in May 2001 for an oral review .

With the change in timing of the review's second stage there will be more time for the community sector to develop and submit substantive reports to the UN Committee.

**More Information**

If you would like more information please contact John Ballard at Community Aid Abroad on 08 – 9358 2090. Shelter WA will continue to provide updates on the review process in forthcoming newsletters.



The staff and  
Management Committee  
of Shelter WA wish you a  
Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year.

# Social Housing Cartoon Resource Kit

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The Social Housing Cartoon Resource Kit has been developed to provide a fun and practical resource for use by non profit organisations with a commitment to the development of affordable housing provision.

The Kit contains a series of twenty cartoons that were created through a series of workshops facilitated by skilled cartoonist Rona Chadwick.

While copyright of the cartoons belongs to the artists, Shelter WA has permission from the artists to reproduce the cartoons. The artists have also given permission for other non-profit organisations with a commitment to the development of affordable housing provision to reproduce the cartoons.

The cartoons can be used in newsletters, flyers and other publications. A selection of postcards featuring the cartoons have also been printed and will be distributed with the December and March edition of the newsletter.

The Cartooning Project was made possible with funding from Arts WA in conjunction with the Lotteries Commission and through the Community Arts Network.

If you would like a copy of the Cartoon Resource Kit please contact Shelter WA on 9325 6660. The Kit is also available in Disk format.



Cartoon by Catriona Cameron, Shelter WA  
Social Housing Cartoon Resource Kit

# *Australian Labor Party Housing Issues Paper*

**A**nthony Albanese, Federal Member for Grayndler and Labor Parliamentary Secretary for Housing, was in Western Australia last month to meet with representatives in the housing sector.

During his visit to Perth, Anthony presented an Issues Paper at a forum convened by Shelter. The forum was well attended and provided an opportunity to discuss national and local housing issues and trends.

The Issues Paper is part of a policy development process in the lead up to the Labor Party's national conference in 2000. Anthony has been meeting with a variety of housing sector, industry and finance groups to consult on policy for adoption into the ALP's national platform.

The Issues Paper presented a range of housing issues for discussion including:

- addressing the supply side of the housing equation, particularly low income private rental housing
- examining links between housing, superannuation and employment policies
- redressing inequalities of the taxation system and establishing incentives for investment in low income housing
- supporting the future of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement to meet social housing obligations
- developing national tenancy legislation
- developing an integrated approach to housing and physical, economic and social infrastructure.

If you would like a copy of the Issues Paper or the publication *Bringing Down the House: the impact of the GST on housing* (a summary of evidence presented to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Impact of the GST) please contact Shelter.

# Housing Advisory Committee Update

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**H**AC is an independently chaired committee with representatives from a number of peak consumer organisations, Homeswest, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, the Minister's office and the Aboriginal Housing Board. The committee advises the Minister for Housing and the Executive Director of Homeswest on Homeswest policies and programs as well as identifying housing needs in the community.

Shelter WA is a key member of HAC and is funded to provide some research and resource capacity for HAC members. Some of the key issues dealt with by the committee since the last newsletter include:

## **POLICY**

### **Bond Assistance**

In the June newsletter we reported on a number of changes to the Bond Assistance Policy. The good news is that lobbying from HAC and community workers in the sector has resulted in some of the changes not being progressed.

The status of each of the proposed changes is as follows:

- ◆ The clause stipulating that applicants need to be resident in WA for at least 3 months will not be introduced;
- ◆ The proposal to pay a bond float to the Bond Administrator is being progressed;
- ◆ The requirement to pay an up-front instalment

of \$10 at the time of the loan approval has been implemented;

- ◆ The proposal to implement a credit check for all applicants has not been further explored by Homeswest at this stage. It was also agreed that HAC would be involved in the development of any such proposal; and
- ◆ The proposal to conduct an income type survey for existing bond account holders in default has not been further explored by Homeswest at this stage.

### **Maintenance**

In the last newsletter we reported that Tenants Advice Service and Shelter WA had developed a submission in response to proposed changes to the Maintenance Policy. Following a meeting with the Ministry of Housing, some of our recommendations have been adopted. The new policy will be available in the near future – refer to information about policy updates for details of how the policy will be made available.

### **Rental**

The review of the Rental Policy has been finalised and the latest version will appear on the internet in the next couple of weeks - refer to information about policy updates for details of how the policy will be made available.

### **Privacy**

In the last newsletter we reported that the Ministry of Housing had developed a draft Privacy and

Confidentiality Policy. HAC had subsequently developed a submission and met with the Minister of Housing and Greg Joyce to discuss our position. At this stage we can report that the Ministry of Housing is currently finalising the policy and we'll update you in the next newsletter.

### **Fixed Term Tenancies**

HAC recently developed a submission in response to the Ministry's draft Fixed Term Tenancies Policy. Key points raised by HAC were:

- ◆ Homeswest has an obligation to afford tenants procedural fairness or natural justice if a decision is made not to renew a tenancy. That is, Homeswest should provide tenants with information outlining the reasons why the tenancy is not to be extended and the tenant should be given the opportunity to respond.
- ◆ That if Homeswest uses fixed term tenancies, 6 months is a more appropriate term than 3 months. This would enable the tenant to settle into their tenancy and provide some flexibility in the initial period where there may be some minor difficulties.
- ◆ That the proposal for monitoring the tenancy through fortnightly visits by the Accommodation Manager be replaced with alternative mechanisms to support the tenancy, for example, SHAP or external supports.

At the November HAC meeting, the Ministry of Housing agreed to incorporate all of these points into the policy.

### **Waiting List Management**

The Equal Opportunity Commission's review of Mirrabooka has been completed and we have been advised that the Ministry of Housing will update us at the February HAC meeting.

### **Policy Updates**

The Ministry of Housing will be sending a letter indicating that policies are available on the internet and that people should contact the Ministry if they require a disk or hard copy.

### **Refurbishment Program**

Some of you may be aware that the Ministry of Housing has developed a 10 year refurbishment program aimed at upgrading rental stock in the metropolitan area that is over 10 years old. HAC has been represented at the working group and recently developed a response to the draft guidelines for this program – we'll keep you updated.

## **SUB COMMITTEES OF HAC**

### **CSHA Sub-Committee**

HAC has provided comments and feedback on the draft bilateral agreement which is currently being finalised. We'll keep you updated.

### **Community Housing Advisory Sub-Committee**

The CHASC recently held a planning session to develop its position on the key issues that need to be incorporated into the development of strategic

# HAC Update

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plans by both the Ministry of Housing and the sector.

## **Customer Service Executive Council**

The December meeting was postponed due to a number of apologies.

## **Home Finance Advisory Committee**

The research project is progressing well with the statistical analysis and interviews with financial counsellors completed. The next stage will be a focus group to examine issues identified to date and to develop recommendations/suggestions for the Committee's consideration.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

### **Meeting with the Minister**

Representatives from HAC will meet with the Minister on a quarterly basis to update him on matters before the committee and to raise any issues of concern. The first of these meetings occurred in September in which the following issues were discussed:

- ◆ The role of HAC including communication mechanisms between HAC and the Minister and the Ministry of Housing. The Minister supported the current direction of the committee including the formation of the Rental Services Policy Subcommittee and the intention to establish links with the Office of Policy as a means to having input into the strategic priorities and directions of

the Ministry of Housing. The Minister also reiterated his support for meeting with the committee on a quarterly basis.

- ◆ HAC's position regarding the draft Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.
- ◆ The need to ensure that there is provision for low income housing in redevelopments such as Subiaco and East Perth.

### **Chairperson**


The committee has been really fortunate to have Nola Kunnen as Chair over the last 18 months and we were sad to receive notice of her resignation due to having a number of competing commitments. On behalf of Shelter WA we would like to thank her for her contribution - her resignation will be a great loss to the committee. We'll keep you updated on her replacement.

### **Rental Services Policy Sub-Committee**

HAC's proposal regarding resourcing and coordination of the Rental Services Policy Sub-Committee has been approved. In accordance with HAC's proposal Shelter WA was nominated to fulfil the Secretariat function. Please refer to the article on page 20 for further details about the sub-committee and plans for filling the regional and Aboriginal positions on the committee.


### **Private Rental Market Research**

Gavin Woods from Murdoch University attended the last committee meeting to discuss research he is undertaking in relation to the private rental market.



In collaboration with Richard Watson, the project examines the impact of fiscal and regulatory measures on the private rental sector, including the costs faced by individual investors and how this impact on rents. To date, findings indicate that current incentives such as negative gearing are of greatest benefit to high-income investors which in turn promotes growth in luxury housing rather than low income accommodation. A paper has been published on the findings to date which is titled “Private Rental Investors’ Costs: Why Who You Are Matters” which is published in *Australia’s Housing Choices* by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Shelter WA has a copy in our library which can be accessed during working hours - please contact us at the office if you would like to arrange a time to come in.

The remainder of the project will focus on the impact of changes to capital gains tax, what motivates investors and the relative cost of owning versus renting.



# Homeswest Page

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The Ministry of Housing is one of a number of state government agencies contributing to the commemoration of the Centenary of Women's Suffrage in Western Australia 1899-1999. A Centenary of Women's Suffrage Committee was established to coordinate a wide range of celebrations.

Western Australia was among the first places in the world where women gained the right to vote in state government elections 100 years ago. The right of women to vote in federal elections, whether they had state voting rights or not, was gained in 1902, shortly after federation.

Women have been able to access public/government housing assistance in Western Australia since 1912 with the commencement of the Worker's Homes Board, and continue to be a significant customer group of the Ministry of Housing. There are currently a wide range of products and services available to assist people into housing through the provision of home ownership schemes, rental housing and land. In addition the Ministry also provides housing managed by non-profit, non-government organisations through the various Community Housing programs and a bond assistance scheme to help people enter the private rental market.

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Homeswest has sponsored the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) since 1990. The aim of the SHAP is to provide support to those tenancies that are at risk of failure due to poor financial management, conflict with neighbours or through a lack of care for the property they occupy. The program utilises the expertise of non-government agencies to provide practical in home assistance and advice in the conduct of the tenancy. In 1999/2000 Homeswest has budgeted expenditure on the SHAP program of \$956,000 which it is estimated will support around 100 tenancies throughout the State.

A major review of the SHAP was undertaken through private consultants earlier this year. Homeswest accepted the major findings and recommendations stemming from the review and as a consequence, specific guidelines relating to referral to the program and its operation have been instigated. It is envisaged that the changes will result in efficiencies of operation, ultimately allowing more admissions to the program.

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The Ministry of Housing has committed itself to refining and improving its communication with newly arrived migrants through its input into the State Settlement Plan for 1999/2000. The main areas under review are Interpreter Services, Staff training, and dissemination of information to customers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Reviews of existing services will result in greater efficiencies in the Ministry's dealings with customers not familiar with their new surroundings.

*(The page where Homeswest has it's say)*

**T**he Ministry of Housing is a major builder, home financier and land developer in Western Australia with total assets in excess of \$4.7 billion.

One of the Ministry's key aims is to provide a balanced spread of public rental housing. To achieve this balanced spread the Ministry has initiated New Living, a program designed to transform estate areas where there is a high concentration of public rental housing. New Living has commenced in Kwinana, Lockridge, Balga/Girrawheen/Koondoola/Westminster, Karawara, Coolbellup, Langford and Armadale. Through the program Homeswest is transforming these suburbs through property renovation, redevelopment of existing stock, demolition of older medium density flats and the sale of housing lots created through these demolitions. The program also includes revamping and beautification of streetscapes, the establishment of new parks and enhanced community security.

Extensive community consultation is part and parcel of the programs and through them the whole neighbourhood benefits through increased property values and the fostering of stronger community awareness and values.

Opportunities exist for people wishing to purchase in any of these areas. The Ministry offers a range of affordable loan schemes to assist people on low to moderate incomes make the transition from rental housing to home ownership. These schemes include finance to obtain full home ownership through Keystart and shared equity schemes to help low-income recipients via Goodstart. The Goodstart scheme is available to both current tenants of Homeswest properties and eligible people on lower incomes who seek the transition to home ownership.

Under the Right to Buy scheme long term rental tenants wishing to buy their rental property can benefit from substantial discounts available.

**H**omeswest recently reviewed its existing rental Zones structure by which rental applicants choose the area in which they wish to reside. The review resulted in changes to Zones in the North Metropolitan (Mirrabooka) and the South Metropolitan (Fremantle) Regions. Zone brochures showing the revised Zones are available from Ministry offices.

Applicants who had chosen a Zone under the previous alignment will not be affected by the changes.

The revised Zones are expected to reduce waiting times for rental applicants.

**W**ith the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) only six months away the Ministry of Housing is assessing the impact it will have on its financial position.

Whilst the GST will have specific implications for the Ministry there will be no impact on Homeswest subsidised rents. Tenants in receipt of a statutory income are to receive a one-off increase in benefits aimed at offsetting the impact of higher prices, post-GST, of certain goods or services. Homeswest however will quarantine this component of benefits so that it is not assessed for the purpose of calculating a tenant's rental subsidy.

## *National Shelter Update*

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### **New Executive**

At National Shelter's Annual General Meeting recently a new Executive was elected. The positions are as follows:

- ◆ Chairperson—Christine Black (Victoria)
- ◆ Vice Chairperson—Roskana Khan (Queensland)
- ◆ Secretary—Pattie Chung (Tasmania)
- ◆ Treasurer— Erin Gauntlett (Western Australia)

### **National Shelter Project**

Since the last newsletter a discussion paper has been developed which formed the basis for consultations held in all capital cities and at the ACOSS workshop. The outcomes of consultations will be incorporated into the final report which is due to be completed at the end of December.

There is a real need to continue with this project through a more detailed exploration of the issues identified and to develop a range of policy strategies. The December Council meeting therefore agreed to extend the project until the end of January in order to develop a detailed proposal for Stage II and to explore funding options for the next stage.

### **Key Issues for National Shelter**

At the December Council meeting, the following were identified as priorities for National Shelter over the next year:

- Monitoring the CSHA;
- Positioning ourselves in the debate for post 2003 arrangements;
- The impact of the GST on low income renters;
- Participating in the 'welfare reform' debate;
- Continuing with the publication of the National Housing Action journal; and
- Continuing our representation on the National Community Housing Forum.

### **NEWSFLASH \*\*\*\*\***

Just prior to going to print National Shelter received the fantastic news that we have received additional funding from the Cavill Foundation. This will enable us to continue to hold National Council meetings and extend the project. The Executive will be meeting in the near future to finalise details around allocation of funds so we'll keep you posted.

# New Tenancy Services Funding Program

The following is an excerpt from an article from *TAS TALK*—the newsletter of the Tenants Advice Service.

A new funding program drawn from tenants bond interest monies has been established to provide advice and education services to tenants in WA. There is now a funded network of locally based tenancy services in several regional and metropolitan areas and a central Resource Unit to resource and support funded and unfunded services working with tenants throughout WA.

The program is the culmination of several years' work by Tenants Advice Service, (TAS) community agencies and the Ministry of Fair Trading (MFT). A total of \$625,000 has been allocated to the Program in 1999/00. This more than doubles monies provided to WA tenancy services in the previous year. The Program is being administered by the MFT on a 12 month pilot basis with the possibility of triennial funding being provided thereafter.

The network model is essentially a collaborative model of service delivery. The principles behind the model include that TAS' "expertise" is in tenancy and that local or special interest services know and are more closely linked to their local communities than TAS. More appropriate and comprehensive services can be developed through combining local knowledge and networks with TAS' tenancy expertise and resourcing capacity.

## Target Groups

Target groups under the Program are residential tenants (private and public), particularly those who:

- Speak a language other than English;
- Are Aboriginal;
- Are unemployed and aged 15 – 24 years.

## Resource Unit

TAS successfully tendered to carry out the Resource Unit functions under the Program. The resourcing unit functions are largely a consolidation of the work TAS has been doing in recent years.

## Regional Tenancy Services

Tenancy services are being provided in four regional areas by the following organisations:

- ◆ *Pilbara Community Legal Service* for Port Hedland & Pilbara Coastal Towns
- ◆ *Geraldton Community Legal Centre* for Geraldton region
- ◆ *Goldfields Community Legal Centre* for Kalgoorlie/Boulder region
- ◆ *Association for South West Accommodation* for Bunbury/Busselton/Augusta region.

## Metropolitan Tenancy Services

Metropolitan services are being provided in three corridors by the following organisations:

- ◆ *Northern Suburbs Community Legal Service* in conjunction with *Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service* for north metropolitan
- ◆ *Gosnells District Information Centre* in conjunction with *Sussex Street Community Law Service* for central and east metropolitan
- ◆ *Community Legal and Advocacy Centre* in conjunction with *Southern Communities Advocacy and Legal Education Service* for west and south west metropolitan.

## For More Information

Contact Tenants Advice Service on 9221 9499 or any of the services listed above.

## ACOSS Social Housing Workshops

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In the August newsletter we reported that the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) was hosting a series of three social housing workshops with representatives from the federal Government, the community sector and academic institutions.

The final workshop of the first series has been held and focussed on key social housing research initiatives. A report has been produced which identified the following key outcomes:

- ◆ There was agreement that the role of the community sector in the development of the content of the bilateral agreements and the data agreement under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement will be revisited in the next series of workshops;
- ◆ There is ongoing interest in the progress of the restructuring of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). Many participants are keen to ensure that the community sector is more closely involved in the institute's work under the new model. In particular, the sector would like the opportunity to participate in the identification and development of research projects to be undertaken by AHURI. Participants are interested in discussing the detail of AHURI's proposed research agenda at a later workshop, and then providing AHURI with a copy of the outcomes of the discussion for consideration;
- ◆ Participants valued the opportunity to discuss the preliminary findings of the two research projects (*Results from the 1998 Survey of Rent Assistance Recipients* presented by

Maryann Wulff and *Interim Results from a Study into the Supply Side of the Rental Market* presented by Judy Yates). The researchers agreed to take on board the issues raised. It was agreed that, at future workshops, more time would be allocated to these sessions to allow for greater debate and discussion; and

- ◆ There was overwhelming support for the continuation of the workshops. The Department has agreed to fund a further series of three.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact us at the office.

In addition, the first of the second series of workshops has been held which focused on:

- ◆ the National Shelter project that examines the links between housing, employment and income support; and
- ◆ 'welfare dependency' and 'welfare reform'.

Following consultations in capital cities for the National Shelter project, this was another really good opportunity for Carol to present her work to date and get feedback from participants. Given that we have already reported on the National Shelter project in previous editions of the newsletter, suffice to say that the final report is due out at the end of December. For those who would like a copy of the discussion paper or if you would like a copy of the final report, please contact us at the office.

For the afternoon session there were presentations

by Peter Whiteford from the Department of Family and Community Services and Ian Winter from the Australian Institute of Family Studies in Melbourne.

Peter's paper focussed on issues in measuring welfare dependency including:

- ⇒ Defining welfare dependency
- ⇒ Trends in receipt of social security benefits
- ⇒ Specific groups
- ⇒ International comparisons
- ⇒ Understanding welfare dynamics.

Ian Winter's presentation provided a range of definitions for welfare dependency and then highlighted findings from case study research undertaken in a Melbourne suburb in 1966 and 1991. Essentially the research focused on employment, income, housing and social interactions in this area over a 25 year period. There were a number of interesting observations made, particularly in relation to people's aspirations and values. The findings have been published in a book titled *Social Change in Suburban Lives*.

Finally, Sue Monk from the Department of Family and Community Services provided the following update:

- ◆ Within the department, SAAP and housing are joining up;
- ◆ All States and Territories have signed the CSHA except ACT who are still making representations about the allocation of the \$269m GST compensation package;
- ◆ All States and Territories have signed the data agreement except ACT and Victoria;

- ◆ The performance measurement framework includes the national data agreement, performance indicators for the CSHA and performance measures for each bilateral;
- ◆ NSW, Qld, WA, SA and TAS have nearly finalised their bilateral agreements;
- ◆ Performance measures for the bilaterals need to be finalised by the end of March 2000; and
- ◆ State offices of FACS will have responsibility for monitoring bilateral performance measures.

A report on the fourth workshop will be produced in the near future and be available from Shelter's office.

## ***Rental Services Policy Sub-Committee***

The Rental Services Policy Sub-Committee has been established as a sub-committee of the Housing Advisory Committee (HAC).

The Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee are to:

- ⇒ advise the Housing Advisory Committee on operational policy issues affecting people who come into contact with Homewest rental housing programs
- ⇒ assist HAC in advising on the development of new operational policies related to Homewest rental housing programs

The Sub-Committee will be made up of representatives from Shelter WA, Tenants Advice Service, Council to Homeless Persons WA, Homewest Rental Operations Division, an Aboriginal representative and a regional representative.

The Sub-Committee will meet on a monthly basis. For non-metropolitan based representatives this will include two face to face meetings and ten teleconferences per year. Shelter WA will be taking on the administrative and policy coordination functions of the secretariat role.

**The Sub-Committee is seeking to fill two positions** – a regional representative and an Aboriginal representative.

Members of the Sub-Committee will be expected to represent the needs and issues affecting the range of people accessing Homewest services and will therefore need to have a broad understanding of housing and operational policy issues.

Applicants will need to demonstrate the following criteria:

- ⇒ the ability to represent housing issues as they relate to Homewest Rental Policy
- ⇒ the ability to represent a consumer perspective
- ⇒ established links with consumer networks.

Teleconference, travel and accommodation costs will be met by Homewest.

If you are interested in either of the positions please contact Shelter WA on 9325 6660 for an Information Kit.

### ***Role of Shelter WA***

**S**helter WA is a peak community managed housing organisation established in 1979, which seeks to represent the views of consumers and community groups on major housing issues. Shelter WA aims to ensure that every person has access to affordable, appropriate, secure and safe housing that is free from discrimination.

It does this through:

- Coordinating and representing community sector views to government;
- Developing and responding to policy
- Providing education and information; and
- Promoting alternative housing models.