



newsletter

February 2003

EDITORIAL: Housing for Young People

by Karel Eringa

Affordable housing has become increasingly less accessible to people on low incomes throughout Western Australia. House prices and rents have increased substantially, while social housing is offering an alternative to a falling proportion of Western Australians. Among people on low incomes, young people are amongst the worst affected groups because, amongst other factors:

- they receive lower statutory incomes and wages than other groups,
- they are often regarded as 'high risk tenants' by real estate agents,
- they often don't have a rental history, ie. they can't obtain references, and
- there is a general lack of suitable accommodation for this group.

As a result, young people are far more likely to be homeless than their older counterparts. A series of surveys that is currently being conducted by Shelter WA has revealed that more

than half of the homeless people in WA are under 25, with children (under the age of 15) and young people (between 15 and 25) each accounting for roughly 30% of homeless people. More than half (58% in the latest survey) of these young people identified as Indigenous.

Chamberlain & Mackenzie in their study, *Youth Homelessness 2001*, also record a high rate of youth homelessness and estimate that 1.8% of 12-24 year olds in WA are homeless. This study also finds that compared to their interstate counterparts, homeless young people in Western Australia are the most likely to be unemployed and least likely to be in some form of education or training.

Over the last twelve months, Shelter WA has been involved in four projects aimed at identifying, prioritising and developing strategies to resolving housing issues for young people in WA. The first of these was a survey of young people and youth

agencies, conducted in February 2002. The survey revealed the close links between income, employment and housing, and was used to inform a community forum on the barriers young people face obtaining affordable housing, co-hosted with the Youth Affairs Council of WA in April 2002.

The key findings of this forum were summarised in a report, *Youth Housing and Social Exclusion in WA*. This report again highlighted links between income, employment and housing were highlighted, and also identified the lack of public awareness as a key issue: "while youth housing and social exclusion remain on the margins of political/ electoral agendas, the fortunes of this group are unlikely to improve." However, the report did develop a number of strategies to address key issues identified at the forum. In addition to raising awareness about the issue, strategies included increased statutory incomes for young

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Housing Young People in WA

by Tim Davis

This article outlines some of the major challenges and opportunities facing WA young people trying to access appropriate and affordable housing. The article summarises a report developed by Shelter WA for the Department of Housing and Works as part of the WA Housing Strategy.

KEY TRENDS

Private rental is no longer a largely transitional tenure; 40 percent of private renters have been renting for more than 10 years. This especially affects the housing careers of the majority of independent WA young people who rent privately as they attempt to make the transition from renting to home ownership (Figure1).

One and two person households are expected to continue to increase dramatically over the medium term to 2016, increasing demand for small to medium sized dwellings suitable for independent young people, which is already severely restricted by the dominance of single detached housing in WA.

While real youth wages have fallen over the last two decades, incomes for the rest of the population have risen and young people's access to appropriate housing has diminished. Contributing factors include reductions in affordable rental stock, increasing house prices and rents, and declining affordability.

Many real estate agents are reluctant for under 18 year olds to sign a lease, and regard them as a financial risk. This causes young people great difficulty in accessing private rental due to discrimination based upon low income, lack of references, and perceived inability to effectively manage a tenancy due to age/ inexperience.

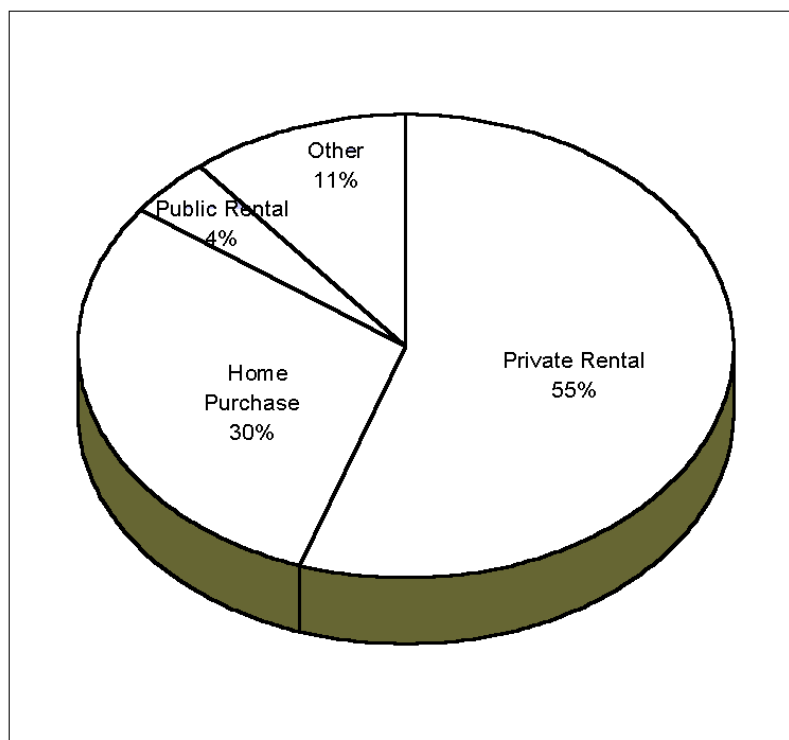
Inadequate housing appears to be both a cause and a result of the array of problems facing

public housing capital funding, public housing stock has fallen below 5% of total housing stock in WA, causing an increase in the waiting list for public housing for young people.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The ageing of the West Australian population has led to a perceived lack of policy focus on the needs of young people, as reflected in a medium density public housing construction focus on seniors units. Policy makers must not allow the albeit clear and justified demands

Figure 1 Housing Tenure 15-24 year olds WA 2001



Source: Census 2001 OPP Space Time Research P/L 2001

at risk young people including substance abuse, mental health and Indigenous cultural issues.

As a result of contracting Commonwealth commitments to

of an ageing population to detract from the state's responsibility to all citizens.

The following are among a range of urgently needed youth housing policy responses:

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Creative and inclusive housing support models (e.g. the Busselton Partnership in Housing Pilot) need to be implemented to assist young people to access, and succeed in, private rental.

An expansion of programmes like YES housing (Youth Externally Supported) and FRESH (Fremantle Regional Externally Supported Housing) is

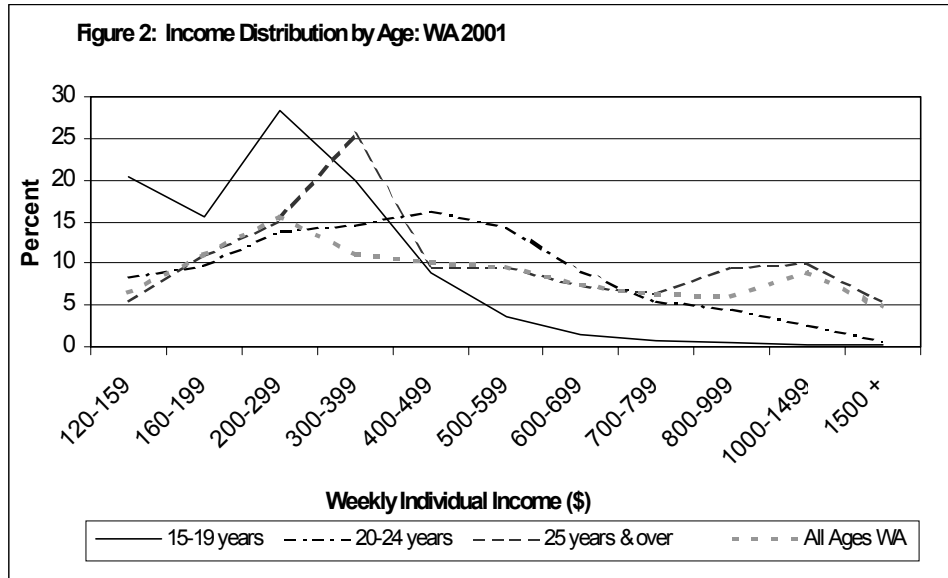
urgently needed to assist young people to not only succeed in public tenancy, but also to facilitate their transition to private rental and home ownership.

A substantial increase in funding for public housing is required if the unmet demand for housing appropriate to young people is to be addressed. The magnitude of the

unmet need necessitates an increase in funding from the Commonwealth and from the State Government's Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Means tested rebates and concessions that target entry-level owner-occupiers and give incentives for investing in low cost private rentals (eg targeted negative gearing tax provisions) need to be expanded.

Measures to redress an oversupply of large family sized private rental dwellings to broaden the range of accommodation options of young people. Local and State government planning incentives are needed to facilitate the development of a housing market capable of addressing the needs of all market segments.



Source: Adapted from ABS 2001 Census Weekly Individual Income by Age

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people, better access to social housing and a greater range of supports; a profile of one support agency, Fremantle Community Youth Services, is included in this Newsletter.

Since the report was released in May last year, Shelter WA has actively promoted the twin issues of youth housing and youth homelessness with a number of key decision makers and agencies, including the Minister for Housing, the

Housing Advisory Committee, the Department of Housing and Works and the Department of Community Development. In addition, Shelter WA is currently engaged in a project developing innovative solutions to youth housing needs in the Shire of Broome, and has produced the Youth Issues Paper for the State Housing Strategy.

There are ways of addressing the current housing crisis faced by young people.

However, for young people perhaps even more than for other groups, housing issues are inextricably linked to income and employment. Any approach to addressing the crisis will therefore require the State and Federal Governments to work together with the community on a number of different fronts, including income support, social housing and employment. Shelter WA is continuing to work to generate the public awareness and the political will required to achieve this.

The Homeswest Page(s): Information & Update

Homeswest is aware that with the Christmas and the school holidays over, the costs involved in getting children back to school impacts on many of its tenants in terms of maintaining rental account payments.

Homeswest recognises many families have difficulties in maintaining their rental payments at this time of year. It is important that tenants who are having difficulties contact their accommodation manager immediately to enable an arrangement to be reached. If you don't contact Homeswest we don't know you are having difficulties.

If you are having difficulties with other debts (car payments or gas and electricity) it is important you inform the people you owe money to sooner rather than later. You maybe be able to renegotiate the payments to a lower amount over a longer period.

Many people are experiencing difficulties with overpayments by Centrelink for Family Tax Benefit payments. Therefore it is essential that whenever you contact Centrelink that you make sure that your income estimate is as accurate as possible as this may help minimise any overpayments you may receive due to changed income (increases). Where an overpayment of benefits occurs then Centrelink will require repayment or will reduced future payments.

Child Maintenance payments are another area where some tenants don't get regular money from their ex partner. It is important to advise Homeswest if these payments are not being made.

Listed below are some agencies that may be able to assist with financial and other matters.

<p>Mission Australia <i>Ph: 9421 1199 (or the phone book to find your nearest office).</i></p>	<p>Have many offices throughout the metro area. They offer free financial counselling, supported housing assistance, youth services, alcohol & drug services.</p>
<p>HOPE <i>Ph: 9221 5021101, Goderich St, East Perth (ring before attending the office).</i></p>	<p>Food assistance, clothing and advocacy services and support. HOPE is open Tuesday and Fridays only between 1pm and 4pm.</p>
<p>Wesley Mission <i>Ph: 9321 9711 2nd Floor, 93 William St, Perth.</i></p>	<p>Emergency relief (by appointment only Monday and Thursday) and assistance as well as other support services such as financial counselling (Creditcare - 9212 1921) but appointments are essential.</p>
<p>Anglicare <i>Ph: 9325 703357, Murray St, Perth (or the phone book to find your nearest office).</i></p>	<p>Have many offices throughout the metro and country areas. Youth services, drug & alcohol services, free financial counselling, parenting courses, self-help courses and family counselling services.</p>
<p>Salvation Army (Family Support) <i>Ph: 9328 1690 (or the phone book to find your nearest office).</i></p>	<p>Have many offices throughout the metro and country areas. Assistance is available from various offices (must contact your nearest office).</p>
<p>St Vincent de Paul <i>Ph: 9475 5444 (or the phone book to find your nearest office).</i></p>	<p>Have many contact centres throughout the metro and country areas. They offer free financial counselling, supported housing assistance, youth services, alcohol & drug services and furniture and clothing supplies.</p>

Homeswest Update continued...

<p>CLAN and PARENT LINK</p>	<p>Parent Link Ph: 1800 654 432 is a home visiting service which assists parents with children from 0 to 6. CLAN (Community Link & Network) Ph: 9228 9006 or the phone book to help find the service nearest you. CLAN is also a home visiting service, which assists parents of children of various ages and can link families up with all services in their area.</p>
<p>Commonwealth Carelink Centres Ph: 1800 952 222</p>	<p>Links you into your nearest Carelink centre, which can give support to seniors, people with disabilities and their carers and families with children who have disabilities.</p>
<p>Tenants Advice Service Metro Ph: 9221 0088 Country Ph: 1800 621 888</p>	<p>Will assist with tenancy matters and advice on both Homeswest and private rental accommodation.</p>
<p>Centrecare Ph: 9325 6644 (or phone book to find your nearest office) .</p>	<p>Services include youth, supported housing, relationship and grief counselling.</p>

Financial counselling services can be the most important service required by people on low incomes. Most local community groups, legal centres and Department for Community Development

Offices will provide you with advice or can refer you to the right agency that can help you. Each case is assessed on its merits and more assistance may be provided dependent on level of need. All sorts of

arrangements can be negotiated by these services, so it is certainly worth having a chat to them about your situation and the options available.

Centrelink now has a bill paying service available called Centrepay whereby you can nominate to make payments from your Centrelink benefit for private rent payments with agreement from your landlord, water consumption; Western Power and Alintagas to name a few. Discuss this service with your nearest Centrelink office, or check with their Social Workers to find out available services.

Mostly the services are free of charge and do not require a referral, so, please contact your nearest centre and tell them Homeswest sent you!!!

Please let Homeswest know if you are having difficulties in paying your rent. We can't assist if you do not tell us.

Busselton & Margaret River Housing Forums

Shelter WA has responded to requests from individuals and organisations in the Margaret River/Busselton area to undertake research into the housing needs by commencing our Housing Forum process in the area. We have begun the facilitation of community input to the development of housing policy by conducting two focus groups. The first was in Margaret

River on Tuesday 15 October 2002, and the second was in Busselton on Wednesday 16 October 2002.

As a result of these focus groups, Shelter WA was able to get a picture of the issues surrounding affordable housing in both locations, and some of these include;

- Growth in homelessness,
- Lack of crisis accommodation,

- Significant lack of affordable housing, particularly for young people,
- Difficulties in obtaining, Homeswest accommodation,
- Impact of rapid population growth eg. housing costs,
- Black listing of people, particularly youth, in the private rental market,
- Impact of seasonal changes

A summary of Fremantle Community Youth Services

Fremantle Community Youth Service focuses on the provision of services to the most disadvantaged young people and young families in the community, particularly in the areas of accommodation for the homeless, outreach support programs and activities, and influencing policy so as to maximise opportunities for all young people.

Practical Assistance

The service offers practical assistance to young people 20 years and under, and young families 25 years and under. This includes

- Emergency relief
- General Information
- Advocacy
- Referrals

Proof of age and identity is required.

Housing

Following an assessment, young people and young families may be offered supported accommodation. Young people will be on the waiting list until accommodation becomes available. Support is provided by a youth housing worker.

Medium-term

accommodation - tenancy is initially for 6 months and may be extended to a maximum of 12 months and then tenants are assisted in shifting to other accommodation options.

Long-term accommodation - support for young people

(under 18 years) and young families (under 25 years) to access the Department of Housing and Works housing. Support is offered for up to 9 months after which time the young person retains the lease on the accommodation. 50% of single young people and 50% of young women with children housed under these programs are Indigenous young people.

Outreach Service -

This service aims to improve opportunities for street present young people via the development of positive relationships, and assisting in the development of new and exiting services for those young people.

Types of Support

The types of support we offer in housing are:

- ◆ practical - eg assistance with moving in and getting furniture, getting phone gas, etc.
- ◆ how to manage tenancy agreement,
- ◆ how to negotiate with Homeswest,
- ◆ Centrelink, information provision,
- ◆ Personal support - assistance with personal issues, such as family and relationship conflict, problems with drug use, hearth stuff, and emotional support,
- ◆ linking up with other agencies with specialist skills, eg. sexual assault centres, family planning association,

- ◆ Political support - assistance with understanding where you fit in with the community, what your rights are,
- ◆ advocacy with government departments eg. centrelink police

Housing Stock

Medium housing - We have 12 CAP properties, (mainly 2 bedroom) which are head lease or deed of trust from DHW

- ◆ The service employs a property manager who manages these units
- ◆ Support provided through SAAP funding.

Long term -

FRESH - agreement with DHW for up to 16 units.

DHW - undertake the property management; and

FCYS - provide support Indigenous people: FCYS currently have 6 FRESH Indigenous tenants (out of current 12, ie 50%) and 5 CAP (out of 10 current, again 50%).

Afternoon Service

No appointment is required during afternoon service between the hours of **2pm-4.30pm, Monday to Friday.**

Contact Details

Our street address is:
7 Quarry St, Fremantle.

Postal address:

PO Box 807
Fremantle WA 6959
Ph: 9432 9824

Contact:

Megan Griffiths (Manager)

Management Body:

City of Fremantle

Addressing Housing Issues - Upcoming Housing Conferences

Two important housing related conferences will be held later this year.

Coming up first is the Third National Homelessness Conference, which will be held in Brisbane between 6 and 8 April. The conference is organised by the Australian Federation of Housing Organisations, AFHO.

Homelessness is typically caused by one or several underlying factors such as domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and particularly lack of accessible and affordable housing. Regardless of the reason of homelessness the cost to society, not to mention the victims own predicament, is substantial. Homelessness serves to exacerbate social and economic inequalities in society, and as well as being caused by poverty and unemployment generally contributes to it.

The conference is intended to be a forum for discussions and development of policies and ideas on the issue of homelessness, as well as an exchange of information skills and knowledge. Finally it provides the opportunity for any challenges to the agency community and regional levels to be highlighted and discussed.

Secondly, the Third (again) National Housing Conference will be held in Adelaide from 26 to 28 November. The theme of the Conference will be the future of the housing system in the next 10 to 20 years, and the conference will focus on:

- Key demographic changes (eg. structural ageing, changing household size) and the needs, expectations and preferences of Australian consumers,
- Labour market trends,
- Changing economy,
- Public policy responses and

the role of Government,

- Changing social values, and
- Rapid technological advancement.

The conference organisers, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute and the South Australian Department of Human Services, have now invited submissions of abstracts for presentations in housing or housing related fields which assist in addressing the Conference aims, for instance by highlighting current research, policy or practice, advocating consumer views, or positing topical issues for debate. The closing date for submissions is Friday 14 March, and submissions can be made on line at the Conference website.

Details on both the Homelessness and the Housing Conference can be accessed via Shelter WA's website - go to www.shelterwa.org.au and click on 'Links'.

Busselton & Margaret River Forums continued from page 5

on the availability of housing and employment.

Based on the issues identified at the Focus Groups we have begun to develop a Report and Action Plan on housing in the Margaret River and Busselton areas. This report will be further developed at Forums in both regions planned for late April.

This Plan will be presented to the Minister for Housing and will be progressed through the Housing Advisory Committee, as well as presented and promoted to other relevant government bodies and politicians. It will also be accessible via our website, and publicised in our newsletter and through the media. If there are any other actions

the Forums decide are necessary, such as making presentations to local government, Shelter will endeavour to undertake them.

If you would like any further information please contact either Paul Pendergast or Samantha Lambert on Ph: 9325 6660 or by email: samantha@shelterwa.org.au.

Role of Shelter WA

Shelter 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 aims to ensure that every person has access to affordable, appropriate, secure and safe housing that is free from discrimination.

We do this through:

- co-ordinating and representing community sector views to government;
- developing and responding to policy;
- providing education and information ; and
- promoting alternative housing models.

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The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of Shelter WA. If you have any queries or comments regarding the articles in this newsletter, or if you would like to contribute to future Shelter WA newsletters, please contact Karel Eringa by email: karel@shelterwa.org.au or by phone (08) 9325 6660.



Membership Application / Renewal

NAME:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS: POSTCODE:

EMAIL:

PHONE: FAX:

I enclose a cheque for \$.00, made out to **Shelter WA**. See reverse for membership details. Fill-out, stamp and mail today!

Annual Membership Fees (All membership fees include GST)

- Individuals.....\$10.00
- Concession/Students.....\$5.00
- Organisations with budgets under \$100,000.....\$15.00
- Organisations with budgets between \$100,000 & \$200,000.....\$35.00
- Organisations with budgets over \$200,000.....\$50.00