

## EDITORIAL

by Karel Eringa

The past few months have been very busy for Shelter WA. In December we released two major reports, the first on homelessness and the second on housing in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

In January we prepared a submission to the Network City planning strategy, and in February we visited Port Hedland for initial consultations that will culminate in a full Housing Analysis of the area. In March we prepared a discussion paper on under occupancy of Homeswest dwellings and distributed the forms for our fifth annual survey of homelessness to some 300 West Australian organisations that deal with homeless people on a regular basis.

In the middle of all this, we have been subject to an independent organisational review. This review was initiated by the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Housing and Works, conducted by Ernst & Young and also included the Community Housing Coalition. It covered all aspects of Shelter WA's operations, and focused on the question whether the organisation and its activities provide value for money to its members, the broader community, and the DHW. The review also included an evaluation of the impact on the DHW and the broader community

if Shelter WA's core funding were to be withdrawn. While the review is still in progress, initial indications are that, in general, its findings are likely to be favourable to Shelter WA.

However, perhaps strategically the most important part of Shelter WA's work over the last quarter has been the state election. In an attempt to put housing on the political agenda, Shelter WA organised a pre-election forum with WACOSS on Tuesday 18 January. Some 40 people from a variety of backgrounds heard the Minister for Housing, Shadow Minister for Housing and housing spokespersons of three minor parties present their housing policies at the forum, as well as their response to a questionnaire on six key housing-related issues.

The final report found that while all parties expressed a degree of concern regarding falling housing affordability, there was a lack of firm targets and commitments to address declining levels of appropriate and affordable housing for people on low to middle incomes. With the exception of the WA Greens, none of the parties were prepared to make an unambiguous commitment to the measures outlined in the discussion paper for the forum.

Nevertheless, the forum proved useful as a way of getting the housing debate into the public eye.

It also provided Shelter WA with an opportunity to promote a range of key measures aimed at improving access to appropriate and affordable housing, including a substantial increase in social housing, encouraging investment in private rental, and better access to home ownership. Shelter WA will continue to promote these measures with the new Housing Minister, Fran Logan.

A more comprehensive report on the pre election housing forum is included elsewhere in this newsletter. Other articles include the regular Homeswest page, an update on the Port Hedland Housing Analysis, an analysis of the way in which Network City relates to housing issues, and articles on under occupancy and the homelessness survey.

Finally, there is an article on Shelter WA's new project, which is a series of local housing forums. These forums are intended to allow housing consumers and Shelter WA members an opportunity to provide direct feedback on housing issues in their area. For Shelter WA, the forums provide a means of providing more direct contact with members and individuals interested in housing issues.

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# Underoccupancy in Homeswest Dwellings

by Karel Eringa

When considering housing occupancy, over crowding is normally considered to be one of our most pressing housing issues. Ironically, the Western Australian housing system also suffers from high rates of under occupancy.

The Department of Housing and Works is concerned about under occupancy within its housing stock. This is not because the Department is doing badly in comparison to the private sector, but because Homeswest's waiting list for large family housing could potentially be cleared if all one, two and three person households occupying four plus bedroom properties were to relocate into more appropriately sized dwellings.

The Homeswest Operational Standing Committee (HOSC) has formed a working party to undertake research into under occupancy, consult with the community and develop the HOSC's recommended response to DHW. The Working Party includes representatives from Shelter WA, Department of Housing and Works, Tenants Advice Service and Department of Employment and Consumer Protection. Its terms of reference are as follows:

- 1) Investigate the broader community context in which Homeswest is operating and in particular, the extent of under occupancy.
- 2) Establish the impact of under occupancy on Homeswest, those on the waiting list and Homeswest tenants likely to be effected by any proposed policy changes.
- 3) Investigate the legality of Homeswest utilising the Residential Tenancies Act to require existing tenants to relocate and/or to terminate tenancy agreements for under occupying their dwellings.
- 4) Identify the location and extent of under occupancy within Homeswest and quantify:
  - the proportion and location of stock effected;
  - identify the level of demand (wait list) for larger dwellings; and

- identify Homeswest's ability to address the problem through stock acquisition and transfers.
- 5) Propose incentives and policies to facilitate the continued match of households and dwellings, these proposals should allow consistent application across Homeswest Offices.
  - 6) Conduct consultations on the Working Parties findings and make recommendations to address the above to HOSC and DHW Executive.

The Working Party has developed a Discussion Paper, which gives an overview of under occupancy in Homeswest dwellings, as well as a number of consultation questions. The Discussion Paper reveals some large regional variations in the rate of under occupancy. Its findings include:

- Under occupancy is an issue that effects the entire Western Australian housing system, as nearly half of all dwellings are currently under occupied. This increases to over half of all four bedroom dwellings and two thirds of five plus bedroom dwellings.
- While Homeswest performs much better than the Western Australian housing system in general, nevertheless around one third of its large family houses are under occupied.
- Within Homeswest, the highest rate occurs in the Mirrabooka Region followed by the Fremantle and Cannington Regions.
- Outside the Perth Metropolitan area, under occupancy in Homeswest tends to decline with remoteness; the highest rate is in Albany Region and the lowest in Broome Region.
- Kununurra has the lowest rate of under occupancy and is also the only region with a higher rate of overcrowding than under occupancy.

With regard to waiting lists, the Discussion Paper finds that families requiring 4 bedrooms plus dwellings account for 5.7% of applicants on the Homeswest waiting list. Two thirds of the State's demand is located in the Perth Metro and about half of this is in the Mirrabooka Region. Outside the Perth metropolitan area, Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome all have significant waiting lists for large families.

In Perth, Mirrabooka has the highest need for large family housing in terms of its applicants to stock ratio, applicants to occupations ratio and wait times, including the North Central Zone, with a 7½ year wait. Fremantle has the second highest applicant to occupation ratio and has the zone with the third longest wait time. Cannington has the second highest applicant to stock ratio and four zones in the top ten for long wait times.

In the non-Metropolitan Regions, South Hedland, Broome, Bunbury and Albany have high applicant to occupation ratios. In terms of applicants to stock, the Bunbury, Broome, South Hedland and Geraldton Regions all have high ratios. While, the Kununurra Zone in the Kimberley has a wait time at the top end of long waiting times.

The Discussion Paper will be used as the basis for two community consultation sessions, to be held as follows:

**Wednesday 13 April**, 9.30-11.30  
Claisebrook Lotteries House  
33 Moore Street  
EAST PERTH

**Tuesday 19 April**, 1.00-2.30PM  
ASWA (Agencies for South West Accommodation)  
40 Charles Street  
BUNBURY

To RSVP for either of these forums, or for more information, please contact Paul Pendergast at Shelter WA (paul@shelterwa.org.au / 08 9325 6660). The Discussion Paper on Homeswest Under Occupancy can be downloaded for free at [www.shelterwa.org.au/housing\\_news.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/housing_news.htm)

# Housing and the State Election

by Karel Eringa

Since the 2001 State Election, the central theme for housing in Western Australia has been a severe decline in the affordability of home ownership. For instance, in June 2001 a family earning at the top of the second income quintile (currently just under \$48,000) had a choice of 49 Perth suburbs in which it could afford to buy a median priced home. By June 2004, rising house prices and interest rates had reduced the choice to just 9 suburbs: Armadale, Brookdale, Calista, Koongamia, Medina, Parmelia, Swan View, Wattleup and Westfield.

Declining access to home ownership has had repercussions in private rental and social housing. The Commonwealth Rent Assistance program has been inadequate, leaving roughly one third of recipients in housing stress. Despite receiving State Government funding for the first time in this term, consecutive cuts to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and increased targeting to those most in needs have resulted in social housing falling from more than 6% of total housing stock a decade ago to less than 5% now.

The direct outcome of a lack of appropriate and affordable housing stock has been a sustained high rate of homelessness and overcrowding, particularly among Indigenous people. It is of extreme concern that more than half of homeless people in Western Australia are children and young people.

On Tuesday 18 January 2005, Shelter WA and WACOSS jointly organised a Pre Election Housing Forum to give the various political

parties a chance to respond to these issues. The forum highlighted that all of the parties agreed on a number of issues. Most significantly, all parties were concerned about the decline in the affordability of home ownership and commented that there was a need to promote access to affordable housing in general. The main differences between the various parties lay in the emphasis placed on fostering affordable housing, particularly for people on lower incomes.

Each of the parties mentioned social housing as an issue, but again each position has a very different emphasis. The WA Greens proposed to increase the supply of "appropriate social housing" in WA. The ALP made no promise to increase supply, but intended to maintain public housing and to place greater emphasis on community housing as an option. Family First promised to "support the ongoing and improved availability of public housing", while the Liberal

Party's policy focused on the Right to Buy scheme for long term Homeswest tenants, and the New Living Program of urban renewal.

Finally, there were some unique policies in each platform. For instance, the Liberal Party intended to encourage more private investment in the provision of housing for the aged, while the WA Greens promoted community dialogue and input into increasing the supply of affordable housing. The ALP wanted to use consumer protection policies as an aid to protecting access to housing.

The Final Report presented ratings, which by and large indicated that there is significant scope for improvement, particularly for the Government and Opposition. A shortcoming across all parties, with the exception of the WA Greens, was the lack of specific targets and funding commitments to back up the good intentions expressed in the platforms.

The final report on the 2005 Pre Election Housing Forum is available free of charge from [www.shelterwa.org.au/publications.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications.htm).

For instance, while the Liberal Party stressed that "a joint State/Federal home ownership proposal ... would enable private homes to be purchased through a partnership agreement", the ALP spoke more generally of protection for all housing consumers and a range of initiatives for low and middle-income home purchasers.

Both the ALP and the WA Greens required new housing developments to include a percentage of blocks for affordable homes as a general principle. However, only the Greens specified this requirement, at 10%.

<p><b>AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:</b></p> <p>The ALP has demonstrated that it recognises that housing is an important policy issue through its actions in its current term in Government. However, its policy platform is not sufficiently far reaching and does not make the specific financial commitments necessary to address the problems of housing affordability and homelessness.</p> <p>Rating: Three out of five. </p>
<p><b>LIBERAL / NATIONAL COALITION:</b></p> <p>While acknowledging housing as an important issue in word, Coalition policies contain little policy initiative and make no specific financial commitments to improving access housing for low-income consumers.</p> <p>Rating: One and a half out of five. </p>
<p><b>AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS:</b></p> <p>The Australian Democrats offer some very positive housing policy in a number of areas. However, the appropriate level of detail is lacking in other areas.</p> <p>Rating: Two and a half out of five. </p>
<p><b>GREENS (WA):</b></p> <p>The WA Greens offer detailed and well thought out policy in response to the need for fair and equitable access to housing for all Western Australians.</p> <p>Rating: Five out of five. </p>
<p><b>FAMILY FIRST PARTY</b></p> <p>While Family First policy is lacking in detail, it does make several commitments to improved access to housing.</p> <p>Rating: One and a half out of five. </p>

# South Australia Housing Plan

by Corinne Mercer

Since 2001 research with key stakeholders and community consultations by the Department of Housing and Works have taken place to develop a formative strategy for housing in WA. As *Housing Strategy WA* has not yet been finalised, it is of interest to have a look at the South Australian experience.

The SA Government started developing its housing strategy in 2002, and released its *Housing Plan for South Australia* earlier this month. While here in Western Australia the housing scene differs in some respects, the plan reflects similar key elements and possible avenues for innovation for a future housing plan.

The program of action is focussed around South Australians "living where they choose in homes they can afford". The plan now and over the next five to ten years is to:

- Make affordable housing available to more people;
- Provide quality housing for those in greatest need in the community; and
- Renew and reinvigorate neighbourhoods

The most positive aspect of the plan is an additional \$52 million investment in housing by the State Government. While this is the biggest

injection into housing funding in years, it is not enough to adequately meet the needs of 40,000 households currently in housing stress. Shelter SA projects that public housing stock numbers will fall at a slower rate, although these will be off-set by the development of other affordable housing.

Other than this, the plan includes doing things differently, rethinking roles and relationships and establishing new partnerships between housing and planning authorities and the private sector. As well as new joint ventures between the State Government, not-for-profit organisations, the private sector and local governments to deliver affordable housing, they are to launch a new loan scheme for social housing tenants to improve their capacity to purchase homes of their own. Private developers will be part of all significant new housing developments to ensure affordable housing, with targets of 10% affordable and 5% high need housing.

The SA government will seek a partnership with the Commonwealth Government directed at expanding the stock of affordable housing. There has been a long term decline in Commonwealth funding for public

housing over the last decade, with a focus on interest rates and rent assistance as its contribution to housing affordability. The state sees the need to have a working partnership with the Commonwealth as vital to produce real affordable housing outcomes.

Building on its strength in housing policy and delivery, and in recognition of the benefits of using land supply, planning policies and urban renewal that is well designed, South Australia's housing plan for the future will be the foundation for a shift of funds from the sale of housing stock to social housing tenants, through a shared equity scheme, to the provision of affordable and high need housing. The plan also recognises that the right mix of accommodation and support must be brokered, particularly for those people at risk of becoming homeless and those in greatest need. Many other objectives target the needs of Aboriginal South Australians, the desire for strong management and service coordination, and for development of a new Commonwealth State Housing Agreement at a national level.

The Housing Plan for South Australia report can be accessed at [www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au/housingplan](http://www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au/housingplan).

# Housing and Network City

by Karel Eringa

*Network City* is the Western Australian Government's "community planning strategy for Perth and Peel". *Network City* came out of the *Dialogue with the City* process, and outlines the key directions for urban growth in the metropolitan area over the next 30 years.

Shelter WA has been an active participant in the *Dialogue with the City* process, and has produced a submission to *Network City*. In its submission, Shelter WA supports the general direction of the *Network City* document. In particular, the submission argues that *Network City* accurately identifies a number of key themes for planning for urban growth. These themes include:

- increasing community resistance

- against urban sprawl due to its environmental and social impact,
- increasing cost to Government of developing physical and social infrastructure for new developments on the urban fringe,
- the need for higher density development if the metropolitan area is to house an additional 760,000 people and 370,000 homes by 2031, and
- a trend towards population growth on the urban fringe with job growth concentrated around the CBD, resulting in increased travel associated with work.

Housing is central to many of the key themes. One example is the recent large increases in housing prices has reduced affordability in middle

and central parts of the city, exacerbating the push towards the outer suburbs and increasing pressure for greenfields development. Another example is that the dominant 'four-by-two' house with a big backyard is becoming unsuitable for an increasing proportion of households. Despite the obvious demographic necessity, however, the momentum continues to be towards increasing dwelling sizes on smaller blocks, exacerbating Perth's mismatch between housing stock and household requirements.

Shelter WA therefore strongly agrees with the underlying principles of *Network City*, including particularly the need to enhance the efficiency of urban land use and infrastructure. In addition, Shelter WA commends the

# Hedland Housing Analysis

by Karel Eringa

Each year, Shelter WA holds community housing forums in a particular area of Western Australia. The aims of these regional forums are to:

- identify and prioritise housing issues for the region in a regional housing analysis,
- develop strategies to respond to issues, and
- establish ongoing links between Shelter WA and local community organisations and their workers, government departments and local government.

In previous years, Shelter WA has conducted regional housing analyses in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Busselton, Margaret River, Midland, Broome, Derby, Albany, Geraldton and Bunbury. This year, Shelter WA will focus on Port and South Hedland.

In order to kick off the process, Shelter WA's Executive Officer, Karel Eringa, visited Hedland from Monday 21 until Thursday 24 February. Karel met with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Aboriginal housing and support providers such as Pilbara Meta Maya, the Bloodwood Tree Aboriginal Corporation and the Port Hedland Regional Aboriginal Corporation;

- Local and State government representatives, including the Department of Housing and Works, the Mayor, the Town Planner, and other Town of Port Hedland staff members;
- Community groups including the Youth Involvement Council and the Pilbara Community Legal Service;
- BHP's Housing Office and the Pilbara Development Commission; and
- A number of tenants and individuals with an interest in housing issues.

The consultations revealed a number of key housing issues, most notably a severe shortage of housing stock that is affordable to people earning low to middle incomes. This shortage affects people who earn too much to be eligible for Homeswest housing, but who earn too little to be able to afford to purchase or rent a house in the private market, where rents start at around \$250 per week. As a result, Hedland is having difficulties attracting key workers, such as dentists, doctors, opticians, shopkeepers and maintenance contractors, to live in the area. Other issues that were identified included:

- generally low standards of maintenance / upkeep, which appears to be partly due to a shortage of tradespeople and generally high prices making

maintenance very expensive,

- anti social problems in pockets of South Hedland that have high concentrations of low income tenants and are built using the Radburn design,
- a lack of support for disadvantaged tenants, particularly a shortage of funds to support Aboriginal people into housing,
- high turnover of staff in Homeswest, making it difficult for clients to build a relationship with individual officers,

Karel is currently developing some of the issues raised during the initial consultations into a discussion paper on housing in Hedland. This discussion paper will form the basis for a Community Forum on Housing in Hedland, to be held in July of this year. Further details on the forum and the discussion paper will be released via our website ([www.shelterwa.org.au](http://www.shelterwa.org.au)), this newsletter, as well as our free fortnightly email list (go to [www.shelterwa.org.au/subscribe.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/subscribe.htm) to subscribe). For more information or to register your interest in the forum or the discussion paper, please contact Karel Eringa on 08 9325 6660 or [karel@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:karel@shelterwa.org.au).

To discuss your ideas about housing issues in the Hedland area, please contact Karel Eringa by email ([karel@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:karel@shelterwa.org.au)) or phone (08 9325 6660).

## Housing and *Network City* (cont'd)

WA Planning Commission on, for the first time, including the provision of affordable housing as one of the eight headline statements in an urban planning strategy.

Whilst Shelter WA is supportive of the general direction of *Network City*, it has identified several areas of concern. Many of these concerns stem from the fact that *Network City* appears to have some difficulty reconciling the relatively narrow scope of planning levers with the broad key objectives of the strategy. The result is a tendency in *Network City* to recommend non-binding actions such as the development of

handbooks, registers, demonstration projects and advice, instead of binding incentives or regulation.

This choice is illustrated on page 42 of *Network City*, where it recognises that there "are limitations on the extent to which a fundamentally land use and development-based planning system can be used to redress social inequities." The paper then goes on to state a view of the planning system as a factor that "should not exacerbate existing differences" rather than actively seek to provide structural solutions to such inequities.

To the extent that *Network City* reflects the political realities of the day, opting for non-binding actions may be viewed as a pragmatic way of avoiding 'rocking the boat'. However, *Network City* is first and foremost a planning document whose aim is to guide decision making on urban planning over the coming decades. It would be naïve to expect that the strategy would be able to address the problems it so clearly defines unless it formulates some binding solutions.

Go to [www.shelterwa.org.au/housing\\_news.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/housing_news.htm) to download Shelter WA's submission.

## News In Brief

### New Housing Minister

The Gallop Government has appointed Francis (Fran) Logan MLA as the new Minister for Housing and Works. Mr Logan takes over the portfolio from Nick Griffiths, and has also been appointed as Minister for Heritage and Minister Assisting in Planning and Infrastructure.

Fran Logan was elected as the State Member for Cockburn in 2001. Prior to this he worked for the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union from 1986 as the local organiser for the Cockburn and Kwinana regions. He has also worked in the Pilbara and for engineering companies as a fitter on mining equipment. As well as his trade qualification, Mr Logan has an honours degree from Sydney University.

The new Minister comes to the portfolio at a time when there are a number of challenges and opportunities. In the immediate future, he will need to find a new Director General to head the Department of Housing and Works. In the medium term, important policy decisions need to be made in order to finalise the State Housing Strategy and restructure the delivery of housing to Indigenous people in a world without ATSIC. Finally, Mr Logan will need to think strategically on how Western Australia can best position itself for the end of the current Commonwealth State Housing Agreement in 2008.

Shelter WA wishes Fran Logan well in addressing these challenges.

### Lotterywest Grant

Earlier this year, Shelter WA received a grant of \$10,790 from Lotterywest to update its IT equipment. The grant has allowed us to purchase a laptop computer and data projector, upgrade its old desktop computers, and update key operating, virus protection and word processing software. The new equipment has made a big difference to Shelter WA's daily operations.

### Homelessness increases, but no funding agreement

According to a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare today, some 152,900 people received accommodation or other support services for the homeless in 2003-04 through the government-funded Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). This figure included 100,200 adults or unaccompanied children, and 52,700 children accompanying their parent or guardian.

The report, Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2003-04, cited domestic violence as the main reason clients gave for seeking agency support, with this reason given in 20% of cases overall. It also showed that the number of SAAP clients (excluding accompanying children) has risen from 83,200 in 1996-97 to 100,200 in 2003-04.

The report found that Western Australia recorded:

- the joint lowest percentage of support periods to unaccompanied males (31%),
- the joint highest proportion of support periods for females with children (93%),
- the joint highest average number of accompanying child support periods per support period (2.1).
- the lowest average length of support (31 days), compared to 79 days in the ACT and an Australia wide average of 44 days.

This news comes just days after the funding negotiations for the SAAP V agreement have ended in an impasse. State and territory community services ministers and the Federal Community Services Minister, Senator Kay Patterson, failed to reach agreement about their levels of contribution to the new SAAP agreement during meeting held on Friday 11 March.

In a media release Minister Patterson said she was disappointed the states and territories had not agreed to increase their share of SAAP funding from 40% to 50% "despite an offer of increased base funding". State and territory ministers are continuing to argue that they already put in the additional money for homelessness beyond SAAP, such as through state homelessness strategies. The Federal Minister has reassured the sector that all Ministers have agreed to "make every effort" to resolve the issue by 1 July 2005, when the current SAAP agreement expires.

### Shelter WA Information Sheet #25: Tenant Support Services

Shelter WA's latest information sheet highlights some of the services that support tenants in Western Australia. The information sheet includes services for tenants in public housing, such as the Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA), and the Aboriginal Tenants Support Scheme (ATSS). It also covers programs that cater for private sector tenants, such as the Private Rental Support and Advocacy Program (PRSAP).

Finally, the information sheet provides details on a number of service providers, including Anglicare WA, Ruah Tenancy Support, and Wesley HomeLink. Where appropriate, contact details for these services have been included. The information sheet can be downloaded free of charge at [www.shelterwa.org.au/info\\_sheets.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/info_sheets.htm)

# News In Brief (cont'd)

## Homelessness Survey

Shelter WA is currently conducting a follow-up survey on homelessness in Western Australia. The survey is part of a project that aims to monitor changes in the composition of homeless households in WA over time, and to measure the impact of the Government's response to the 2002 Report of the State Homelessness Taskforce. In addition, Shelter WA will use the research to continue to develop its knowledge of homelessness, inform its policy development work and provide a resource to agencies concerned about homelessness in WA.

Shelter WA previously conducted surveys in June 2001, March 2002, September 2002, March 2003 and March 2004. The full report on those surveys is available at [www.shelterwa.org.au/publications.htm](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications.htm); key findings included:

- Children aged 14 years and below have represented around one third of homeless people in all five surveys conducted since 2001.
- Over half of the Indigenous households were single parents with children;
- Nearly 80% of non-Indigenous households were single persons.
- Households that stayed with friends or relatives on a temporary basis were predominately Indigenous, whilst households that stayed alone were mainly non-Indigenous.
- Low income is a principal feature of the homeless population, with around 90% on incomes less than \$400 per week.

## National Housing Conference

Shelter WA is part of the steering group for the National Housing Conference. The Conference, entitled Building for Diversity, will be held at the Perth Convention Centre from 26-28 October. At this stage, it looks like there will be four themes:

1. Planning and Design for Diversity
2. Meeting Diverse Housing and Social Needs for Indigenous People
3. New Challenges for Public and Community Housing
4. Market and Policy Responses to changing Demographics

Possible speakers include:

- Adam Sampson from Shelter UK,
- Prof Brian Howe, ex Commonwealth Minister for Housing,
- Leilana Farha from Canada's National Working Group on Women and Housing, and
- Tom Carter from the University of Winnipeg.

Shelter WA has lodged a submission with LotteryWest to fund a limited number of WA housing consumers and reps from rural and remote locations to attend the conference. For more information, or if you have ideas for speakers or presentations, please contact Paul Pendergast by email ([paul@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:paul@shelterwa.org.au)) or phone (08 9325 6660).

## National Affordable Housing Conference

Australia's first National Affordable Housing Conference is to take place at the Sydney Convention Centre from 21- 22 June 2005. This conference is not to be confused with the National Housing Conference, which will be held in Perth from 26-28 October 2005.

The theme of the National Affordable Housing Conference will be 'Making It Happen - Innovation in Policy and Practice' and leading national and international speakers will address areas including financing, development and delivery of affordable housing. Confirmed keynote speakers include Christine Whitehead, Professor of Housing, London School of Economics and Michael Stegman, Professor of Public Policy, Planning and Business, University of North Carolina.

Further details are available at [www.housing.nsw.gov.au/nahc/](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/nahc/) for further details.

## State of Australian Cities Conference

The Australian Sustainable Cities and Regions Network has announced that it will convene the 2nd State of Australian Cities conference in Brisbane. The conference will be hosted by the Urban Research Program (URP) at Griffith University. Conference registration details will soon be available. Links, information & updates will be provided at the URP's website, [www.griffith.edu.au/centre/urp](http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/urp)

The Conference will focus on the contemporary form and structure of Australian cities. The conference aims to provide a focus for new urban scholarship and will bring together the most prominent academics working in this area in Australia, together with new researchers and others - policy makers and practitioners - who are interested in the Australian city.

A call for papers has been released, with abstract due on 31 May and draft papers on 30 September. Registration of interest in presenting a Conference paper should be sent in the first instance to Professor Patrick Troy ([patrick.troy@anu.edu.au](mailto:patrick.troy@anu.edu.au)) or post to: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies Building 43, Australian National University, ACT 0200.

## News In Brief (cont'd)

### Indigenous Housing Issues Paper

The Department of Housing and Works has released a new paper on Indigenous Housing as part of the Housing Strategy WA. The paper provides a detailed overview of Indigenous housing issues in Western Australia including a rich source of data and estimates of how much funding is needed to resolve the current level of housing need. Of particular concern, it identifies a shortfall in Government funding over the next five years of at least \$150 million.

The Issues Paper begins by recognising that "Aboriginal people are severely disadvantaged in terms of their socio-economic status, health and education. Access to affordable and appropriate housing has been related to cycles of disadvantage, particularly in recent reports to the West Australian government including the Homelessness Report, and the Gordon Inquiry.

Much of the emphasis in government programs since the 1970's has been to improve housing conditions in discrete Aboriginal communities, where housing and environmental health conditions have been extremely poor. There is still much to be done in this respect, however one of the themes running through the Indigenous Housing Issues paper is the need for an examination of policies and programs in relation to urban centres and rural townships.

The Issues Paper discusses:

- background on the policy and funding context for the provision of Indigenous housing;
- socio-demographics, population pressures and the related housing policy implications;
- major housing issues in respect of discrete Aboriginal communities;
- equity issues with respect to home ownership and private rental housing;

- the challenges surrounding public rental and community housing programs; and
- issues relating to Indigenous homelessness.

The Issues Paper on Indigenous Housing as well as papers on a number of other issues are available from the Department of Housing and Works website ([www.dhw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au)).

### New AIHW Reports on the CSHA

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released three new reports on the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The reports cover the Crisis Accommodation Program, Home Purchase Assistance and Private Rent Assistance. These are the first reports under the 2003 CSHA, and report on the "summary and performance indicator data collected for reporting against the CSHA national performance indicator framework".

The reports find that "Annual state and territory government spending on assistance with home purchase and private renting through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) programs is up by 33%, even though the number of households receiving assistance has remained about the same ... Approximately 191,000 households received assistance totalling \$909 million for home purchase and private renting in 2003-04, up from \$686 million in 2002-03 for the same number of households." It should be noted, however, that these figures don't include data on public and community housing.

All three reports are available from the AIHW website at [www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm)

## Shelter WA

Shelter WA is Western Australia's peak independent housing organisation. Shelter WA is community managed and represents 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.

*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.

### Newsletter Production

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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 (details below).

While we are happy to consider any articles submitted for publication, we reserve the right to edit material in consideration of space, content and relevance.

***The views expressed  
in this newsletter do  
not necessarily reflect  
those of Shelter WA.***

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