

EDITORIAL: The New Living Program

by Karel Eringa

On 15 June 2000 Shelter WA held a conference on the redevelopment of public housing in Western Australia, which the State Housing Authority pursues under the banner of 'New Living'. Entitled Creative Approaches to Urban Renewal, the general feeling at the conference was that urban renewal could have a number of benefits to public housing tenants as well as other residents in the area. In particular, the conference pointed to the health, social and economic benefits of an improved physical environment and social mix.

However, the conference warned that simply upgrading dwellings and replacing public tenants with home purchasers would not in itself produce the intended changes. Instead, urban renewal should integrate physical renewal with strategies to ensure economic and social progress. In addition, the conference warned that unless an effective community consultation process is implemented, there is a risk that urban renewal could result in the displacement and disenfranchisement of the most vulnerable tenants of public housing, as well as a loss of social networks.

Three years on, and the New Living Program has resulted in extensive changes to a range of

suburbs with a high level of disadvantage. In the metropolitan area, New Living has affected areas including Balga / Westminster (the "New North"), Coolbellup, Kwinana (the "New Kwinana") and Midland / Midvale ("Eastern Horizons"). While the peak of the urban renewal activity in the metropolitan area has now passed, New Living is picking up pace in regional centres, including Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Carnarvon, South Hedland and Albany.

The articles contained in this newsletter include views on New Living that are almost diametrically opposed to each other. On the one hand, the Department of Housing and Works argues that New Living has been an overwhelming success. In particular, the Department points at the improved physical quality of both dwellings and infrastructure and changes to the social mix. As a result, tenants who remained in public housing throughout the renewal process are generally very pleased with these improvements.

However, the Tenants Advice Service argues that while New Living may have benefited some sitting tenants, for others it has meant the break up of communities, destruction of social networks and physical displacement. TAS argues that, at least in some cases, the result has been displacement, a loss

of social capital and homelessness.

Shelter WA agrees with the Department of Housing and Works that New Living has produced some very positive results. It has cleared a maintenance backlog that other State Housing Authorities have ignored for too long, leaving States such as New South Wales and South Australia with little option but to sell off large proportions of public housing stock in order to finance the maintenance on the remainder.

In addition, New Living has created a social mix of home purchasers, private renters and public housing tenants in areas that had previously been dominated by public housing. While a concentration of public housing is not necessarily bad in itself, it can lead to stigmatisation and, in the longer term, an area not receiving its fair share of services such as public transport and recreation facilities.

At the same time, Shelter WA also agrees with the Tenants Advice Service that New Living could have been implemented better. In particular, Shelter WA believes that some evidence is emerging that there has been a lack of effective consultation with

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The Effects of New Living on Indigenous wellbeing

by Roz Walker, John Ballard,
Cheryle Taylor and Jean Hillier

The Effects of New Living on Indigenous wellbeing: a case study on urban renewal reveals preliminary findings from a research project conducted by Curtin Indigenous Research Centre and funded by the Australian Housing Urban Research Institute on the impacts of urban renewal on Indigenous people. This project investigates six urban renewal sites in WA - three in rural/regional areas and three through diverse areas of urban Perth. The sites were chosen for both their location and high numbers of Indigenous people in the New Living areas. The project explores how the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) urban renewal program, New Living, impacts upon Indigenous individuals, family and community wellbeing, with an emphasis of looking at best practice models. The project focuses on Indigenous wellbeing in a holistic way by investigating how New Living contributes to or detracts from Indigenous social, cultural, physical, community, economic, social/political wellbeing.

Interviews to date with both urban renewal professionals and social housing tenants that live in as well as those that have moved out of the New Living areas have confirmed that urban renewal in depressed/disadvantaged areas has the potential to contribute positively or further diminish Indigenous wellbeing. Factors such as high level of choice in area of location, first option on home purchase in the area and the ability to move into a refurbished home in the same area are identified as positive attempts by DHW to minimise likely negative impacts of New Living. New Living areas tend to increase in value so general wealth creation for those who get in on the ground floor, while those that are unable to benefit can be economically exiled from these areas. While there are a raft of housing purchase program options available tenants may be ineligible to participate in purchase schemes.

There are high levels of anxiety and uncertainty for tenants in areas tagged for New Living about when their house may be affected which may undo some of the intended social benefits. More information about options and more informed planning are themes emerging in all areas among all stakeholders.

While our preliminary findings suggest that there are a range of factors in New Living areas which impact on non-shelter outcomes and wellbeing it is often only one program among many and may only be confirmed to a contributing factor rather than a definitive causal connection to community wellbeing. In particular links to specific aspects of wellbeing are as follows:

Social Wellbeing

- Existing mixed tenure and social mix policies can contribute to high numbers of complaints about 'anti-social behaviour' from other local residents. (confirming the need for further research and analysis of DHW policies and practices regarding social mix issues)
- Individual DHW workers at the 'coal face' can have a significant impact on Indigenous families (positive or negative) in the process of relocation (confirming the importance of individual attributes and the need for cross-cultural training to ensure workers have understanding and respect for Indigenous issues, values, needs and aspirations)
- Although the majority of urban renewal areas report a decrease in crime statistics, two interviews have identified an increase in experience of 'house break-ins' due to new people coming in not having a sense of community'. (Further research and analysis will take place to verify this information and any possible implications.)

Cultural Wellbeing

- Perceptions of what constitutes 'anti-social behaviour' differs between Indigenous social housing tenants, other local residents and some DHW workers.

Physical Wellbeing

- Relocation of Indigenous families can cause undue stress and grief upon Indigenous families. This is due to a lack of control that some tenants felt over the relocation process as they did not want to move from the area and had very little choice of locations they could move to.
- Home improvements for tenants staying in a New Living area can have positive impacts upon their health.

Community Involvement and Wellbeing

- Urban renewal has the potential to diminish/destabilise or enhance/harness existing informal social capital amongst Indigenous people within the areas (the ability to identify the specific factors which impact contribute to both. For example instances where the local shire are working with DHW and any local groups to involve the local community in all phases of development and maintaining regular activities there is high degree of community ownership, absence of crimes such as vandalism and harassment. (further research is being carried to document best practice in this area)

Economic Wellbeing

- The relocation of tenants away from areas that have good public transport with easy access to a major centre can prevent access to employment and significantly increase travel expenses to obtain basic services.

Social/Political Wellbeing

- There is a perception by Indigenous social housing tenants and community workers that Indigenous people are being pushed out of New Living areas.
- Positive partnerships between state and local governments in urban renewal value adds to the sustainability of the projects through both local government knowledge of the area and additional resources.

Further research is currently taking place in the six sites with both Indigenous homeswest tenants and redevelopment professionals as well as a statistical analysis of ABS data to further investigate the above points and to highlight any further issues that may be relevant to Indigenous wellbeing. A detailed Positioning Paper - literature review is available at www.ahuri.edu.au and the Final Paper will be available at the same web address by the end of 2003.

Prepared by John Ballard. John is also Shelter WA's Chairperson.

Editorial: The New Living Program (cont'd)

the affected communities. That is not to say that there has been no, or even insufficient, consultation. Rather, Shelter WA believes that the consultation that did take place was by and large not sufficiently effective.

The 2000 Conference pointed out that for community consultations to be effective, prospective community representatives should receive adequate training in representing their community. Shelter WA believes that the Department has not done enough to ensure that all affected tenants had an effective voice in the urban renewal process. For instance, an article by Shelter WA elsewhere in this newsletter finds some evidence that a relatively large number of Indigenous people have been relocated as a result of the New Living program.

A different point made in the same article is that, while some of the Department's claims regarding reduced crime rates and improved social outcomes can be disputed, its claim that property values in New Living suburbs have increased

cannot. In this sense, homebuyers have 'voted with their feet', in favour of the process.

However, a recent paper by Shelter WA, *The State of Affordable Housing in WA 2003*, highlights that this is a double edged sword, as housing in suburbs such as Balga, Coolbellup, Midland and Westminster has become unaffordable to lower middle income purchasers. In this way, whilst benefiting existing home owners, New Living has contributed to the State's emerging affordable housing crisis.

On the whole, it is clear that New Living has produced great improvements for many people in some very disadvantaged areas. However, the program has been implemented with insufficient apparent reference to public housing areas as diverse places with a sense of community. In particular, New Living is based on some assumptions regarding physical renewal and social mix that have been insufficiently researched.

In this context, it is worth repeating two warnings that Shelter WA issued in a paper written in October 2000. The first warning issued in the paper was that the social mix approach "has been challenged as doing little to address the immediate needs of public housing tenants. Its focus on dispersing tenants and fragmenting communities has attracted criticisms of assimilation and social engineering." The paper's second warning was that simple physical renewal does not necessarily recognise the history, diversity, knowledge and needs of local communities. "While planning forms part of the picture of any community, there is no simple relationship between how a community is planned physically and how it evolves."

In conclusion, Shelter WA believes that there has been insufficient research to judge whether the program's benefits outweigh the problems identified above. Without such research, it will not be possible to improve on the Program's implementation as it moves into regional WA.

Paper: New Living - Urban Renewal in Public Housing

by Karel Eringa

Shelter WA has just released Occasional Paper 2003-3. This paper examines the impact of the New Living program on ten suburbs across the metropolitan area. The paper's findings include:

- The public housing presence in the New Living areas fell from 32.1% to 16.6% between 1996 and 2002.
- Home ownership increased from 58.7% to 64.2% between 1996 and 2001.
- House price growth in the New Living areas increased from 1.0% per year over 1989-1998 to 12.4% over 1998-2003.
- Mortgage payments increased by 21.9% during 1996-2001 in the New Living areas, compared to a 3.8% fall for Perth as a whole.
- Rents in the New Living areas more than doubled between 1996 and 2003.

- The number of Indigenous people in the New Living areas fell by 19.3% over the same period.
- In 1996, the suburbs in the study were home to 15.4% of Perth's Indigenous people; by 2001 this had fallen to 10.7%.

Overall, the paper finds that New Living has produced some very positive results. It has cleared a maintenance backlog and has substantially improved living conditions and revitalised a range of suburbs across the metropolitan area. There is evidence that New Living has reduced the proportion of public housing, has increased house prices faster than the Perth average and has increased the rate of home ownership.

At the same time, however, New Living has reduced affordability for both purchasers and renters, and has reduced the amount of rental stock. Perhaps most controversially, it has substantially reduced the

proportion of Indigenous people in all ten suburbs and the total number of Indigenous people in all but one suburb.

On balance, it remains unclear to what extent New Living has benefited all people involved, and to what extent the State Housing Authority has found a balance between its own asset management agenda and the social and economic needs of the affected communities. In this respect, the falling proportion of Indigenous people across the New Living areas is of concern. However, claims by some community advocates that Indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups have been severely disadvantaged by New Living remain unanswered.

The paper, entitled *New Living - Urban Renewal in Public Housing in Perth*, can be downloaded from www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news).

Landstart New Living

by the Department of Housing and Works

OVERVIEW

The New Living Program is the largest urban renewal initiative to take place in Western Australia and is managed by the Department of Housing of Housing & Works' Landstart Division.

The Department acknowledges that mistakes have been made in the design and planning of public housing in the past. As a result, New Living aims to redevelop older public housing estates to create more attractive living environments, to reduce the Department's rental presence and to encourage home ownership. "New Living" projects are of varying size and complexity but generally involve:

- The refurbishment of Department dwellings for both sale and retention.
- The beautification and enhancement of infrastructure in the area (streetscape improvements, upgrading of parks and provision of entry statements etc) in partnership with Local Authorities.
- The communities developing the projects through input, participation, involvement and promotion.
- Some projects also have a land development component for the creation of new lots for sale to the public.
- The reduction in Department's presence is achieved by selling dwellings after they have been refurbished. This program provides affordable housing to the market. Individuals also have access to various home loan products such as the Rental Sales and Goodstart schemes, which provide attractive financial packages to help people into home ownership.

Typical refurbishment of dwellings involves interior and exterior painting, fencing, landscaping, roof restoration, kitchen and bathroom improvements, floor coverings and carports.

Tenants can choose to purchase their renovated homes, continue renting or relocate to another area

of their choice. The entire neighbourhood gains as property values rise and often blighted areas are transformed. It should be noted that participation is voluntary.

HOW DID THE PROGRAM COME ABOUT?

The New Living Program was conceived out of a need to undertake major redevelopment and refurbishment of Department's estates. The majority of these estates were designed and constructed in the 1960's and 1970's. In some instances the estates were developed with high densities to satisfy a specific need at the time. Whilst the initial thinking was that these areas would create an attractive living environment, the social reality has been quite different. As a result of high concentrations of public housing, some estates suffered from high vacancy levels, lack of privacy, crime, vandalism, poor property values, restricted capital growth, low demand and social stigma.

Rather than continuing to live with this legacy of 30-year-old planning mistakes, the Department initiated "Estate Improvement" projects in Kwinana and Lockridge in May 1995. Given the success of these 2 projects the program was expanded in June 1998 to include the New North, Karawara and Armadale/Kelmscott. At that time the Estates Improvement Program was also re-named the "New Living" program. In March 1999, further projects were instigated in Coolbellup, Langford and Midland/Midvale (Eastern Horizons). The New Living program continues to gather momentum and generally has bipartisan support.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the New Living Program include to:

- Reduce the public housing presence in the estate to approximately 12% over time.
- Reduce the social stigma attached to the areas.
- Provide a balanced social mix.

- Enhance community infrastructure including the appearance of streetscapes and parks in partnership with Local Authorities.
- Encourage home ownership and attract new people to the community.
- Increase property values.
- Encourage a sense of added security for tenants, existing and new home owners.
- Upgrade public housing stock.

CURRENT PROJECTS

There are now 7 separate New Living projects underway in metropolitan Perth and a further 8 in country areas.

The 7 metropolitan projects (covering 17 suburbs) include:

- Kwinana (Medina, Parmelia, Calista and Orelia)
- The "New North" (Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola and Westminster)
- Coolbellup
- Karawara
- Langford
- Armadale/Kelmscott
- Eastern Horizons (Midland, Midvale, Swan View and Koongamia).

There are also 8 country projects. These projects include:

- Spencer Park / Mt Lockyer (Albany)
- Carey Park and Withers (Bunbury)
- Collie
- Nulsen (Esperance)
- South Kalgoorlie
- Rangeway, Spalding, Utakarra, Waggrakine (Geraldton)
- South Carnarvon, Brockman and Morgantown (Carnarvon)
- South Hedland.

THE IMPACT OF NEW LIVING

The impact of the New Living program on the communities involved include :

- Improved infrastructure and amenities in suburbs where high concentrations of public housing once predominated.

Continued on back page

Homeswest Page

The Department recently reviewed its policy in relation to the sub-letting of Homeswest properties. The Department recognises there are times when legal tenant/s have a legitimate reason for sub-letting their tenancy and this is carried out with approval of Homeswest and in line with policy. Where tenants illegally sub-let their property without the approval of Homeswest then action will be taken as per policy.

Policy changes to Tenancy Management and Rent to Income policies in relation to sub-letting are as follows:

Tenancy Management policy

16. Where a property is found to be sublet without Homeswest's knowledge or permission it would be considered as illegally occupied. Homeswest will cancel the rental subsidy and back date the rent and charge the legal tenant/s Market Rent for the period of the illegal sublet of the property.

16.1 All efforts to contact the legal tenant/s will be made. Including making contact with the next of kin and/or friend/s as provided by the tenant/s at sign up.

- If the legal tenant can not be contacted or does not return to the property it will be treated as illegally occupied and relevant action will be taken to remove the illegal occupant.
- The legal tenant is responsible for any damage to the property, rent arrears and water consumption charges including legal costs to recover the property.
- Wherever possible confirmation in writing should be obtained from the illegal tenant on the circumstances of the illegal sublet and information on the whereabouts of the legal tenant/s.
- In all cases procedural fairness is to apply.

Rent to Income policy

18. Homeswest reserves the right to backdate rental payments, where a tenant's household income increased by a minimum of \$10 per week for a three month period or more and the tenant did not advise Homeswest.

18.1 Rent will be backdated to the date that the household income increased by \$10 per week or more. Discretion may be exercised by regional management, where it is considered that the tenant did not understand the requirement, or on compassionate or medical grounds.

Example: Tenant with an intellectual disability.

18.2 Subletting - Refer to Tenancy Management Section 16.

Homeswest Appeals Mechanism

There was a recent review of the Homeswest Appeals Mechanism (HAM) by a working group including Shelter WA, Tenants Advice Service, financial counsellors, Chairperson of HAM and the Department of Housing and Works. The Department agreed to the following changes to the HAM policy:

Tier 1

5.1. Where there has been an unfavourable decision made by an officer the Regional/Branch Manager will appoint an officer to review and assess the original decision. The reviewing officer will be an officer of equal or higher level than the original decision-maker. Wherever possible the reviewer will be an officer at a higher level than the original decision-maker. Tenant liability charges incurred by customers whilst in occupation of a property will also be reviewed in the same manner.

Tier 2

6.5 The appellant will be notified of arrangements for the hearing in writing and encouraged to attend to explain his/her case, accompanied by a friend, relative, witness and/or advocate. Where the appellant nominates an advocate a minimum of 2 weeks notice of the Regional Appeals Committee hearing date will be given to the appellant and advocate.

7.5 In the case of a Regional Appeals Committee upholding a customer's appeal the officers who were involved in the unfavourable tier 1 decision will be advised in writing of the Regional Appeals Committee decision that upholds the customer's appeal.

Tier 3

11 A customer dissatisfied with the outcome from the Tier 2 Appeals Committee may appeal to the Tier 3 Public Housing Review Panel, within 60 days of receiving the unfavourable decision.

11.3 An appeal decided more than 60 days ago by an Appeals committee may be reviewed, at the discretion of the Panel. The appeal application will be submitted to the next Panel sitting for a decision by the residing chairperson.

Authority of the panel

14.4 Where the Panel upholds a customer's appeal the Appeals Coordinator will advise the Regional Appeals Committee members in writing of the upheld appeal and provide background to the Panel's decision.

15.4 Where the Panel identifies a policy or policies that have a negative consequence for customers it will advise the Department through the State Manager Rental Services. The Panel will also make recommendations for policy changes where it considers existing policy either deficient or ambiguous.

Urban Renewal - in whose interest?

by Joanne Walsh, Tenants Advice Service

Major redevelopment projects were commenced in WA from the mid 1990's in Kwinana and Lockridge.¹ Tenants Advice Service soon noted an increase in the number of public housing tenants needing assistance to deal with tenancy issues. These included:

- an inability to get Homeswest to undertake maintenance and repairs at premises earmarked for redevelopment.
- an increase in inspections and termination action related to "standards" at premises in redevelopment areas.
- difficulties with making successful applications for public housing and blow-outs in waiting times.

These issues continue to impact on tenants today. Homeswest's public justification for these urban renewal projects is that older housing estates are stigmatised and vulnerable to high crime levels. Little consideration was/is given to the existence or fostering of community spirit in redevelopment areas. Instead, the generation of millions of dollars in revenue appears to have been a principal purpose behind the exercise. The result has been less housing choice in redevelopment areas for people on low incomes.

Homeswest determination to reduce its presence in redevelopment areas to "1 in 9", meant that hundreds of families were to be affected. TAS is aware of stories of families being moved from desirable, well-serviced and established suburbs to the very outer suburbs where there are few services, social supports or employment opportunities.

After the original projects were completed Homeswest surveyed only those people who had benefited from the schemes. They were unable to trace the tenants who had been moved out of the areas because no records had been kept. TAS understands they are still not kept despite continuing community criticism. However, on the basis of inadequate evaluations,² further redevelopment schemes were commenced.

Homeswest's New Living - Tenant Relocation policy sets out provisions for Homeswest to waive up to 4 weeks rent and for Homeswest to pay:

- Relocation costs such as furniture removal and reconnection of telephone, electricity and gas
- Up to \$3,000 worth of inducements such as brick paving and ceiling fans
- Up to \$1,000 towards the cost of relocating items such as garden sheds
- Up to \$5,000 reimbursement for improvements such as a carport.

Before a tenant agrees to move under this policy they should discuss the matter with family and friends and ask themselves a few questions. For example, will they lose local support networks such as a trusted doctor? Will they gain better public transport? Will they be further from or closer to schools, shops or other services?

Homeswest publicly states that they will not force any tenant to move, as a consequence some tenants have successfully negotiated positive outcomes if they are able to withstand pressures which can be brought to bear by Homeswest's project imperatives.³

Tenants and people working with tenants should be aware that:

- Unless the continuing tenancy is impeding a project stage, tenants with current breaches or an alleged "poor tenancy history" will not be relocated.
- It may be difficult for tenants to get Homeswest to carry out maintenance and repairs.
- Tenants allocated housing which is earmarked for future redevelopment may be offered a tenancy agreement with additional clauses (such as that limited maintenance will be carried out or that the tenant agrees to vacate when the project requires the premises).
- If due to circumstances, a tenant feels compelled to accept premises which do not meet their needs, they should try to negotiate to remain listed for transfer. If

promises are made by Homeswest that the allocation is a temporary measure to meet immediate needs, the tenant should insist that commitment is confirmed in writing.

TAS's records indicate that some families have been evicted rather than transferred to alternative accommodation. Redevelopment projects involve an investment from private developers, local councils and business groups. TAS is aware of cases where Homeswest tenancies in redevelopment areas have been jeopardized after senior management and others with a business interest had toured the areas discussing and promoting the virtues of urban renewal. For instance, Homeswest senior officers may subsequently issue instructions for accommodation managers to serve notice on tenants for failure to maintain "street standards".

Tenants who are experiencing difficulties can call Tenants Advice Service's Tenant's Advice Line on 9221 0088 or 1800 621 888. People working with tenants are welcome to call TAS' Community Advice Line on 9221 9499. Further information on dealing with Homeswest problems is available in TAS' Tenants Rights Manual for Homeswest Tenants available at www.taswa.org/publications.

Notes

¹ 21% of Homeswest tenants were moved out of Orelia, 13% were moved out of Calista and 31% moved out of Lockridge. Office of Policy and Planning unpublished draft Public Housing Issues Paper 2003.

² For example, the draft version of ERM Mitchell McCotter "Evaluation of Homeswest New Living Programme - Kwinana and Lockridge", July 1998 contained a number of recommendations to perform a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of New Living on the suburbs to which people had been relocated and on Aboriginal residents. These recommendations were omitted from the final report (December 1998).

³ See for example State Housing Commission v Donovan, 1998

Urban Renewal - in whose interest?

Response from the Department of Housing and Works

Dear Karel,

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to an article written by Joanne Walsh from the Tenants Advice Service titled "Urban Renewal - In Whose Interest" which will be appearing in the Shelter WA newsletter.

The article focuses on the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) New Living Program and the tenant relocation process. There appears to be a number of factual errors in the article, which I would like to clarify. The issues raised are outlined below.

Increase in the number of tenants needing assistance

The article outlines that the introduction of the New Living program has negatively impacted on the Department's ability to assist applicants.

In fact, the waiting list has remained manageable and waiting times have remained constant since the commencement of the New Living program in 1995. The waiting list has fluctuated in the last ten years however, in general it remains around the 12-13,000 applicants mark.

Waiting times for accommodation, for both wait turn and priority listed applicants, have also remained relatively constant over the last five years. The Department aims to keep waiting times to a minimum with those applicants who are homeless or with urgent circumstances being assisted first. The average waiting time for wait turn applicants housed within the last three months was 16 months. This compares to 16.5 months in 1994/95 just prior to the commencement of the New Living program and 15 months in 1997/98.

Little Consideration is given to Fostering Community Spirit

The notion that little consideration is given to fostering community spirit is simply false. Community consultation and inclusiveness are integral to DHW's approach to the New Living program. Community consultation commences in the planning phases of each project

and continues on an ongoing basis until the completion of the project. Consultative mechanisms include community information days, regular meetings of key stakeholders, regular production of newsletters, the provision of "welcoming kits" for new residents and project areas have a Sales and Information Office.

Working with the communities involved with these New Living projects has been critical to the success of the program. Such an approach ensures that residents take ownership, become involved and actively assist in developing their communities.

DHW, through its external project managers, also actively promotes community activities and events including concerts, sausage sizzles, seniors activity days, home betterment forums (landscaping, paving, painting etc), community "busy bees", school promotions, sporting club sponsorship and clean-up days. All of these strategies are directly aimed at fostering community spirit.

Generation of Revenue is the Principal Purpose

It was also stated in the article that the principal purpose of the New Living program is the generation of revenue. This assumption is totally wrong and very cynical.

The aim of the New Living program is to improve the amenity of blighted public housing estates for the betterment of the communities involved. The motivation for these projects is not financial but related to a commitment to improve areas once confronted with a myriad of social problems and where the Department had difficulty attracting tenants.

The program is largely self-funding in that the sale of some houses and land in project areas helps fund the refurbishment of other houses, the upgrading of parks and streetscapes. Most of the revenue generated from sales goes toward funding the projects. Any surplus is utilised by the Department for other important public housing programs and initiatives.

Evaluative Reports

The article also criticised the quoting of evaluative reports as evidence of the value and success of the program. The Department measures the success of the New Living program through the improvement and beautification of project areas, the declining trend in crime and the increases in property values. This is evidenced by the fact that the New Living program has won a swag of independently judged awards from respected organisations such as the Housing Industry Association (HIA), the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) and the United Nations.

Tenant Relocation

The first point to note is that tenant relocation under the New Living program is a voluntary process i.e. no tenant is forced to move. Where refurbishment of properties is to occur, the Department will transfer existing tenants to alternative accommodation in the tenant's area of choice.

Wherever possible, tenants are provided with the opportunity to purchase their existing tenancy or an alternative property. The home ownership options offered by the Department combined with the First Home Owners Grant, provide significant assistance to enable tenants to buy a home of their own.

No tenant has been evicted due to the New Living Program. Tenants are only ever evicted for breaches of the tenancy agreement and only after all efforts to save the tenancy have been exhausted.

I would agree with some of the comments offered by Joanne in relation to tenant relocation. It is important for tenants to carefully consider their future housing options and tenants are encouraged to communicate and negotiate positive outcomes for themselves with regional staff.

Yours sincerely

Julian Munrowd-Harris
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER,
NEW LIVING

Landstart New Living (Cont'd)

- Enhanced public parks, streetscapes, entries and public open space in project areas.
- Reductions in crime in most project areas.
- Improved living standards.
- Reductions in whole of government social costs.
- Reductions in the social stigma attached to the areas.
- Increased property values.

HIGHLIGHTS 2002/2003

- During 2002/2003 some 459 residential dwellings were refurbished and sold throughout the State under the program.
- In addition, 290 properties were refurbished for retention by the DHW for rental purposes.
- A further 171 vacant lots of land were sold under the New Living program throughout the State.
- The Karawara New Living project was officially finalised by the Minister in January 2003. This brought the project to a close after almost 5 years of revitalisation activity that saw the transformation of the suburb.
- The Eastern Horizons project won the Western Australia Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) award for "Excellence in Community Based Planning" and was also awarded the national PIA award for community based planning at their national conference in Adelaide.

OUTLOOK 2003/2004

- During 2003/2004 it is anticipated that new projects will commence in Bentley (Brownlie Towers precinct), Maniana (Queens Park) and Southwell (Hamilton Hill).
- The program is also to be expanded in Geraldton to include the localities of Spalding, Utakarra and Waggrakine. Similarly, the project in Carnarvon is to be expanded to include the localities of Brockman and Morgan Town.

AWARDS & INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

UDIA Awards for Excellence - Best Urban Renewal Project.

2001 - New North New Living Project

2000 - Coolbellup New Living Project

1999 - Lockridge New Living Project

1998 - Kwinana New Living Project

Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI) Awards for Excellence

"Juliet Court", a refurbished 48 dwelling apartment complex in Coolbellup was awarded the President's prize for urban design in 2000.

World Habitat Award 1999

The New Living program won the prestigious international World Habitat Award 1999. These awards were initiated in 1985 as part of the Building and Social Housing Foundation's contribution to the United Nation's International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987.

The Director of the Building and Social Foundation, Mr. Peter Elderfield from England visited Western Australia in April 2000. What impressed him about the New Living program was "the quality, location and pricing of housing which was remarkably reasonable considering the various housing options provided. The award was presented to the Department of Housing & Works in Jamaica on World Habitat Day on 2 October 2000.

1997 FIABCI Prix De' Excellence

The "New Kwinana" also won international recognition in 1997 as a finalist in the International Real Estate Federation awards.

HIA & MBA Awards

New Living projects have also won a number of Master Builders Association and Housing Industry Association Awards for Excellence.

Shelter WA

Shelter WA is the 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

Publisher Shelter WA
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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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