

EDITORIAL: Homelessness and Overcrowding

by Karel Eringa

Overcrowding is a hidden form of homelessness, which results from having insufficient rooms to adequately house the number of people residing in the dwelling. A household is considered overcrowded if its bedroom requirement exceeds the number of bedrooms available. In estimating the number of bedrooms required account is usually taken of the number of residents, their ages and family relationships.¹

As one of the articles in this newsletter shows, overcrowding has a severely detrimental impact on health. Overcrowding disrupts sleep patterns and contributes to tension and domestic violence. For young people, overcrowding also affects their life chances, as it often inhibits their opportunities to study and therefore their education potential and future employment prospects.

It should be noted that in some cases overcrowding can result from people preferring to live close to their relatives. However, as the Kimberley Region Aboriginal Health Plan states: "While it is true many people like to live reasonably close to their extended family, very few people live by choice with eight or ten people in a two bedroom house. The reality is that most people have little option and have never had the option."²

Overcrowding has been a consistent theme in all of Shelter WA's regional housing forums, which it has conducted annually

since 1997.³ The extent and nature of overcrowding varies between regions. For instance, in Busselton and Margaret River overcrowding is particularly prevalent among young people living in one and two bedroom units. In Kalgoorlie and Broome, on the other hand, overcrowding occurs mainly among large Indigenous families living in three and four bedroom houses.

However, a recent Shelter WA forum entitled *Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA Forum*⁴ identified two themes with regard to overcrowding. Firstly, overcrowding is around nine times more prevalent among Indigenous people than it is among non-Indigenous people. Secondly, the rate of overcrowding tends to increase with distance from Perth.

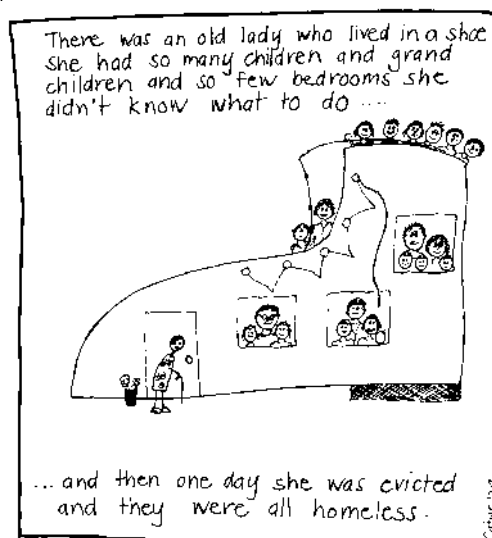
For instance, in the Perth ATSI region, 11% of all Indigenous households live in overcrowded

conditions, compared to 2% of non-Indigenous households. This increases to 18% (Indigenous) and 4% (non-Indigenous) in Geraldton, 20% / 5% in South Hedland and 31% / 12% in Broome. Finally, in the Warburton and Kununarra ATSI regions there are large differences between overcrowding rates among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, with Warburton registering a 50% of Indigenous households but only 2% for non-Indigenous households as living in overcrowded conditions.

The 2003 forum concluded that overcoming such a high "level of housing inequality requires a very significant increase in the provision of appropriate and affordable housing for Indigenous people across Western Australia. While the benefits in terms of improved health, education and employment outcomes would be great, this would

not be a cheap solution. For instance, recent research conducted by Shelter WA suggests that in the Shire of Broome alone there was a shortage of more than 350 units of affordable housing. Providing this quantity of housing would cost over \$85 million immediately and then \$5 million annually."⁵

This newsletter contains an article on the impact of overcrowding on Indigenous people. It also contains notes of the presentation made by Paul Pendergast at the *Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA Forum*, a brief



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The Impact of Overcrowding on Indigenous People

by Paul Pendergast

It is no secret that many Indigenous people live in overcrowded conditions and that overcrowding limits the future prospects of Indigenous children for good health, education and employment. Over the past quarter of a century, the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments have conducted major inquiries into Indigenous housing conditions, deaths in custody and child protection. These inquiries have all heard about the impact of housing shortages, inappropriate design and overcrowding. But recent housing data shows that government efforts to resolve Indigenous housing disadvantage have been inadequate.

Twenty three years have past since Elliott Johnston QC reported the findings of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. He found that inadequate housing was one of the main underlying causes of Aboriginal people coming into contact with the justice system. The chapter on housing, "...commences by pointing out the relationships that exist between poor and inappropriate housing, poor health, and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody. A central theme of the chapter is that Aboriginal people have lost control over the location, design and functions of their living spaces, with serious adverse consequences."

The Report is explicit when it comes to describing the impact on family members of housing shortages and states that:

"Grossly overcrowded housing—particularly when associated with excessive drinking—creates a context for domestic violence. Women and children are primarily the subjects of this violence, and men are arrested. Other consequences that may follow include children being unable to sleep or eat properly. This situation in turn contributes to child malnutrition and high truancy rates..."

Johnston also points out that at the Commonwealth Government had been made aware of the inadequate housing conditions faced by Indigenous people six years prior to the Royal Commission and states that, "...the appalling conditions in which

many Aboriginal people live have long been a concern to government. The problems confronting Aboriginal communities in their quest for adequate housing were summarised in a report commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction in 1985". They included:

- insufficient consultation leading to misunderstanding and limited involvement of tenants and local Aboriginal communities in providing housing;
- lack of access to private rental because of low incomes and discrimination;
- the stress placed on tenancies associated with providing accommodation for visitors and kin,
- insufficient housing stock in areas preferred by Aboriginal people;
- housing programs have been subject to a large component of bureaucratic control because funds have generally been provided from outside;
- enormous variety of housing schemes and agencies, denying Aboriginal people knowledge of relevant procedures; and,
- the expectations and needs of various urban, rural and remote Aboriginal communities are diverse and rapidly changing¹

The Gordon Inquiry into *Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, in its supporting evidence recognised poor housing and overcrowding as major contributing factors to child abuse and that overcrowding exacerbate health problems, property damage that could lead to eviction, and provide conditions conducive to family violence. The Inquiry also noted that to change family violence accommodation issues have to be addressed and overcrowding avoided.²

However, the Inquiry's housing recommendations fell far short of the type of commitment needed to address overcrowding. Gordon favoured the housing options of private rental and home ownership³, which are virtually impossible dreams

to achieve without an adequate housing base and stable income. To date, it seems the only housing to come from the Inquiry will be to house Government employees in remote communities, including new homes in Kimberley and Western Desert towns earmarked for additional employees from the WA Police Service and Department for Community Development.

Ironically, this housing will be constructed in some of the towns with the worst rates of overcrowding for Indigenous people in Western Australia. A total of 13 homes are under construction: three at Kalumburu, seven at Warburton and three at Balgo and will be used to house employees of the WA Police Service and Department for Community Development.⁴

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that Nationally, "using the *Canadian National Occupancy Standard definition of overcrowding, 15% of households with Indigenous person(s) were considered overcrowded (i.e. requiring at least one extra bedroom), compared to 4% of Other households. In households with Indigenous person(s), overcrowding increased with remoteness. In Major Cities, about 11% of all households with Indigenous person(s) require at least one extra bedroom, compared with 42% of households with Indigenous person(s) in Very Remote areas of Australia. In Other households, overcrowding varied only slightly with the level of remoteness, fluctuating between 3% to 4%".⁵⁶*

Research by Shelter WA shows that WA follows the National trend, with overcrowding increasing with remoteness from Perth and that Indigenous people face much higher rates of overcrowding than non-Indigenous. For instance, ABS data indicated that in Perth, 11% of all Indigenous households lived in overcrowded conditions, compared to 2% of non-Indigenous households. This increased to 18% (Indigenous) and 4% (non-Indigenous) in Geraldton, 20% / 5% in South Hedland, and 31% / 12% in Broome. Finally, in Warburton, overcrowding stood at 50% for Indigenous households and 2% for non-Indigenous households.



INVITATION

to Shelter WA's Annual General Meeting 2003/2004

Claisebrook Lotteries House
33 Moore Street, East Perth, WA, 6004
Phone: (08) 9325 6660 Fax: (08) 9325
8113
Email: shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au
Website: www.shelterwa.org.au

You are invited to attend Shelter WA's

Annual General Meeting

which will be held on
Wednesday 27th October 2003, from 2.30 – 4.30 pm
at Derbarl Yerrigan Conference Room
156 Wittenoom St
East Perth

The meeting will be held following an address by

Associate Professor Jim Ife

Associate Professor Jim Ife is a Lecturer in Social Policy at the Curtin University.

Afternoon tea will be provided

Please RSVP by Monday 25 October 2004 for catering
purposes

Please remember to renew your membership before the meeting.
You must be a financial member to nominate for the Management Committee
and to vote.

The Impact of Overcrowding on Indigenous People (Cont'd)

In Kununurra a similar proportion (48%) of Indigenous households lived in overcrowded conditions, compared to 8% of non-Indigenous households.

At this point it seems necessary to state the obvious; that to address overcrowding requires the construction of more housing. This would require a significant increase in appropriate and affordable housing for Indigenous people across Western Australia. However, while the benefits in terms of improved health,

education, child safety and employment outcomes might be great, this would not be a cheap solution.

Research by Shelter WA demonstrates that just to fix the overcrowding problem in the Shire of Broome, which is not at the top of the range for overcrowding, would require the construction of more than 350 units of affordable housing. Providing this quantity of housing would cost over \$85 million immediately and then \$5 million annually.

Footnotes

- ¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody *National Report Volume 2* Commissioner Elliott Johnston, QC Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- ² Sue Gordon, Kay Hallahan and Darrell Henry, *Putting the Picture Together: Inquiry into Responses by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, July 2002, Perth.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Government Employees Housing Authority: News, Issue 10, April 2004.
- ⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4704.0 *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, August 2003

Homeless: In the City?

A brief overview of Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia, by Paul Pendergast

The Department for Community Development recently released *Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia*. The report, written by Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, reveals that on Census night 2001, there were 99,900 homeless people in Australia and 11.7% (11,697) lived in Western Australia.

The Report uses the cultural definition of homelessness to measure the extent and nature of homeless in Western Australia. This definition describes three levels of homelessness and includes:

Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation;

Secondary homelessness: people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another; and,

Tertiary homelessness: People who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis.¹

Homelessness by region

Shelter WA, through our regional housing forums has highlighted that while Perth has a very significant population of homeless people, homelessness is also a major issue outside the metropolitan area. Chamberlain and MacKenzie's latest analysis of the 2001 Census adds weight to these concerns. Table 1 below demonstrates that about two thirds of homeless people in Western Australia live in rural and remote areas.

Perth: On Census night 2001 the Perth metropolitan area had 5,637 homeless people, a rate of 42 homeless people per 10,000 of the population. But contrary to popular images of homelessness only a fifth of Perth's homeless were located in the Central City area (1,262). The largest number of homeless (1,349) was located in the Fremantle / Rockingham area, with 1,112 were in the south east (Victoria Park to Armadale) and 1,082 in the north metropolitan area.

South West: Participants at Shelter WA's recent Busselton and Margaret River housing forums expressed their belief that there was a hidden

homelessness problem in the South West.² The Report confirms that at a rate of 52 per 10,000 of population, the South West has a higher proportional rate of homelessness than the Perth metropolitan area.

South Eastern: Shelter WA's preliminary investigations into housing issues affecting low-income housing consumers in Kalgoorlie have revealed widespread concern over the extent of Indigenous homelessness in the area.³ The Report confirms a homelessness rate of 88 per 10,000 of population and 116 per 10,000 for the region.

The Report also confirms a distinctive pattern identified by Shelter WA at the recent Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA Forum, namely that the rate of homelessness increases with remoteness from Perth.⁴

Central: Overall the region has a rate of 221 per 10,000 or five times the rate for Perth, increasing dramatically to 527 in Gasgoyne and 590 in

Carnegie.

Pilbara: Has a rate of 169 or four times the rate for Perth.

Kimberley: The Kimberley is not only WA's most northern region but it also has its highest homelessness rate at 555 per 10,000 or thirteen times the rate for Perth.

Indigenous Homelessness

There are some apparent differences in the distribution of non-Indigenous and Indigenous homeless people, as demonstrated in Figure 1 below. About half of homeless non-Indigenous live in Perth (5,194) while the other half are located in smaller concentrations ranging from 15% (1,555) in the Kimberley to 5% (497) in the South Eastern.

With regard to Indigenous homeless people, on the other hand, just over a third are located in Perth (443), with two thirds located in regional areas. 17% (180) are located in the Central region (which includes Kalgoorlie) and 17% (178) are in the Kimberley.

Perth						
	Central	East	North	Sth West	Sth East	Total
Number	1,262	832	1,082	1,349	1,112	5,637
Rate	109	36	27	48	36	42
South West						
	Mandurah	Bunbury	Preston	Vasse	Blackwood	Total
Number	243	218	174	204	119	958
Rate	43	46	54	65	72	52
Great Southern and Midlands						
	Lower Gt Sth	Upper Gt Sth	Midlands			
Number	299	106	394			
Rate	59	59	77			
South Eastern						
	Kalgoorlie/ Boulder	Lefroy	Johnston			
Number	248	213	152			
Rate	88	228	99			
Central						
	Geraldton	Gasgoyne	Carnegie	Greenough River		
Number	262	521	248	255		
Rate	88	527	590	180		
Pilbara						
	De Grey	Fortesque				
Number	275	362				
Rate	156	180				
Kimberley						
	Halls Creek	East Kimberley	Broome	Derby-West Kimberley		
Number	74	549	873	237		
Rate	203	772	689	304		

Source: Chris Chamberlain, David Mackenzie, Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia, Mebourne, 2004

Government Responses

The Report also reveals some serious structural problems with Western Australia's main program aimed at addressing homelessness the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). These include:

Limited supply: The SAAP is only scratching the surface of our homelessness problem. Figure 1 reveals that 58% of homeless people are staying with friends and relatives on a temporary basis, 19% in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, 15% in boarding houses and finally, 8% in SAAP services.

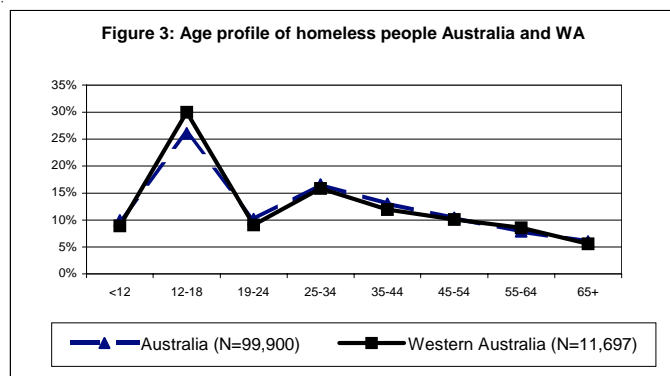
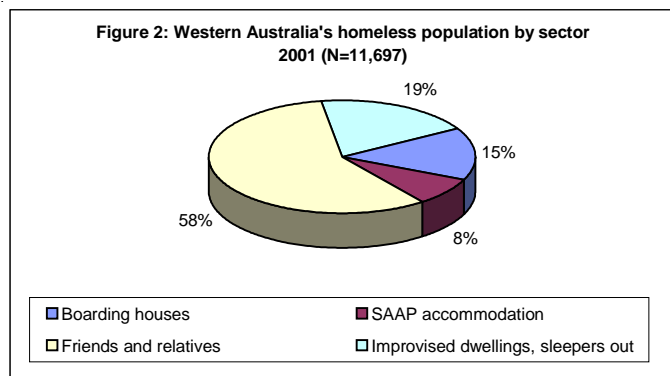
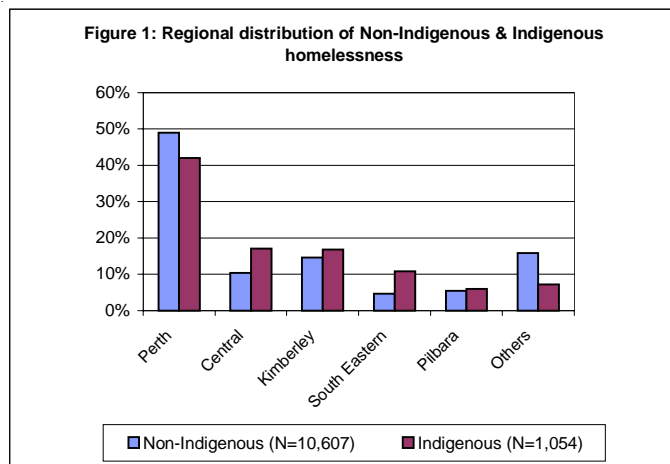
Geographic mismatch: Early intervention is an affective way of short-circuiting homelessness, ensuring that temporary episodes aren't allowed to develop into chronic homelessness. The correct location of homelessness services is critical to affective early intervention, as highlighted by the authors:

"There were 945 people accommodated in SAAP in WA [on Census night 2001], and one-third (33 per cent) were in Central Perth. Yet most people become homeless in outer suburbs, regional centers and country towns. The provision of early intervention services in these areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city".

Length of homelessness: The shorter the period of time people experience homelessness the more effective the invention will be. The Report's finding that two thirds of SAAP clients remain homeless for more than six months (exceeding the chronic homelessness threshold) is therefore alarming. Rather than take resources away from the most disadvantaged, the authors stress the need for additional resources and that these should be directed toward early intervention.

Age Profile

Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of Chamberlain and MacKenzie's findings is the age of the people experiencing homelessness. Figure 3 below provides an age comparison between the homeless in Western Australia and Australia. Children account for over a third of the homeless, with 9% (1,040) aged under 12 years and 30% (3,508) are between 12 and 18 years and finally 48% (5,610) are under 25 years. This confirms the findings of Shelter WA's series of surveys on homelessness.



Conclusion

Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia shows that a significant proportion of the state's population is denied the basic human right of housing. The SAAP is currently being redesigned to make it responsive to the needs of the homeless population, and clearly it needs to increase its focus on early intervention and to address the geographic inequities of the program. However, SAAP alone cannot resolve homelessness. Significant investment in social housing is also required, so that the people experiencing homelessness can establish themselves in independent housing before crossing the line into chronic homelessness.

Counting the Homeless 2001: Western Australia is available at: www.countingthehomeless.com.au/

Footnotes

1 Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 2041.0 Occasional Paper: Census Of Population & Housing – Counting The Homeless 1999.

2 Shelter WA, *But where will the cleaner live? Final Report on the Busselton and Margaret River Housing Forums*, Paul Pendergast, Samantha Lambert and Karel Eringa, January 2004

3 Shelter WA, *Kalgoorlie-Boulder Housing Forum, Tuesday 3 August 2004: Discussion Paper*, Prepared by Karel Eringa, 21 July 2004

4 Shelter WA, *Community Forum: Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA*, October 2003

Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA

In September 2003 Shelter WA conducted a forum on Indigenous housing in regional areas. The forum found that overcrowding was one of the most pressing problems that needed to be addressed. The presentation by Shelter WA Research and Policy Manager, Paul Pendergast, is reproduced below.

Paul said that Shelter WA is the State's peak housing consumer body, and presents a voice for low income and otherwise disadvantaged housing consumers. He said that Shelter WA agreed with the Minister that Indigenous people in regional areas were particularly disadvantaged with regard to housing.

Paul said that his presentation would draw upon information gathered as part of forums, surveys and projects, which Shelter WA conducts regularly in regional areas. In recent times, these have included projects in Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Busselton, Derby, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Margaret River and Midland.

He then gave an overview of the tenure of Indigenous households living in regional areas of Western Australia (Figure 1). In particular, he stressed the high proportion of Indigenous people who were dependent on rental housing, which was over 50% in Perth and generally increased with remoteness to more than 80% in Kununurra and Derby. However, non-Indigenous households were generally less than half as likely as Indigenous people to reside in rental housing in any given area (Figure 2).

More detailed figures showed that 46% of Indigenous renters in Western Australia live in public housing (Homeswest), and a further 22% were in community housing, including self-managed Indigenous communities. Again, the corresponding figures were much lower for the general population, with less than 20% of all renters living in

public housing and less than 2% in community housing.

Paul stated that Shelter WA's research consistently identified overcrowding as the most significant way in which housing disadvantage amongst Indigenous people expressed itself in regional Western Australia, with 20% of Indigenous households in WA living in overcrowded conditions. Again, the evidence suggested that the level of overcrowding among Indigenous people increased with distance from Perth.

For instance, ABS data (Figure 3) indicated that in Perth, 11% of all Indigenous households lived in overcrowded conditions, compared to 2% of non-Indigenous households. This increased to 18% (Indigenous) and 4% (non-Indigenous) in Geraldton, 20% / 5% in South Hedland, and 31% / 12% in Broome. Finally, in Warburton, overcrowding stood at 50% for Indigenous households and 2% for non-Indigenous households. In Kununurra a similar proportion (48%) of Indigenous households

lived in overcrowded conditions, compared to 8% of non-Indigenous households.

Paul's presentation concluded with an overview of the type of measures that would be required to adequately address Indigenous housing needs in the State. First and foremost, this would require a significant increase in appropriate and affordable housing for Indigenous people across Western Australia. However, he warned that while the benefits in terms of improved health, education and employment outcomes might be great, this would not be a cheap solution. For instance, recent research conducted by Shelter WA suggested that in the Shire of Broome alone there was a shortage of more than 350 units of affordable housing. Providing this quantity of housing would cost over \$85 million immediately and then \$5 million annually.

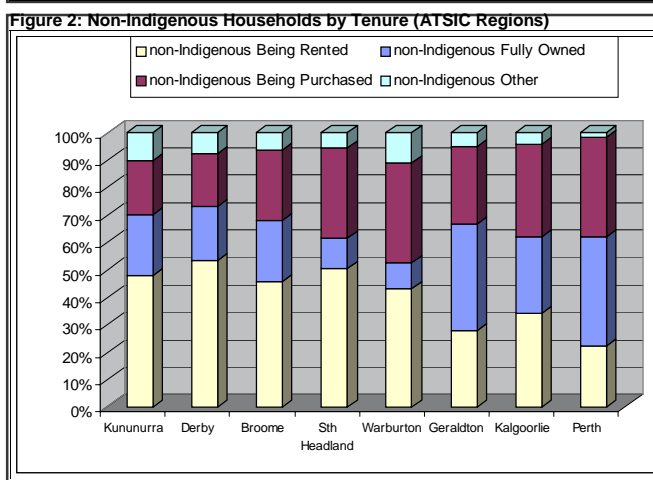
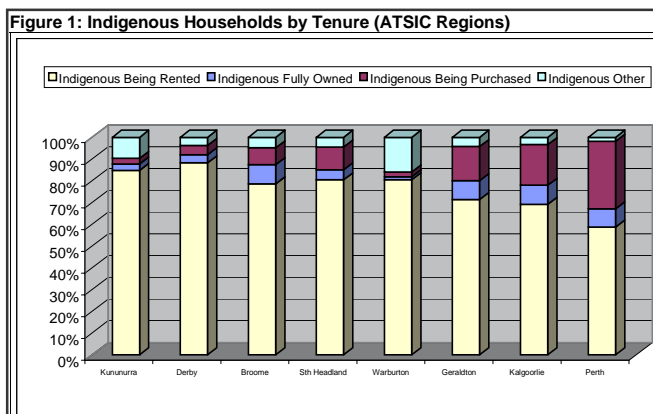


Figure 1: Overcrowding in Western Australia, 2001

ATSIC Region	Indigenous			non-Indigenous			All Households		
	Overcrowded	Total	%	Overcrowded	Total	%	Overcrowded	Total	%
Perth	591	5628	11%	9237	485987	2%	9828	491615	2%
Geraldton	259	1407	18%	665	16996	4%	924	18403	5%
Kalgoorlie	154	811	19%	558	14302	4%	712	15113	5%
Derby	346	879	39%	61	770	8%	407	1649	25%
South Hedland	231	1144	20%	394	8356	5%	625	9500	7%
Narrogin	258	1905	14%	2364	82019	3%	2622	83924	3%
Warburton	228	454	50%	30	1271	2%	258	1725	15%
Kununurra	381	801	48%	164	1315	12%	545	2116	26%
Broome	272	881	31%	297	2561	12%	569	3442	17%
Total WA	2720	13910	20%	13770	613577	2%	16490	627487	3%

News in Brief

Australia Violates International Human Right to Housing

A project investigating the human right to housing has found that Australia is in breach of its international housing rights obligations. The 'Housing is a Human Right Project' examined the human right to housing in Australia in an international law context and released its findings yesterday in a report entitled 'The Human Right to Housing in Australia'.

The report's main conclusion is that while Australia has ratified most of the relevant international treaties, it "lags behind much of the rest of the world in many facets of its implementation of these housing rights obligations." In examining Australia's record, it concludes that "Australia's implementation of its housing rights obligations has been marked by an aversion to the language of rights, inadequate funding, and above all a failure to rectify the widespread and worsening violations of the right to adequate housing. There can be little doubt that Australia is in violation of its international housing rights obligations".

The project will now develop a Charter of Housing Rights for Victoria and finally hear and compile testimonies from people whose housing rights have been violated at a Housing Rights Tribunal, to be held in early 2005.

The report is available at www.shelterwa.org.au.

Election Housing Policy Analysis

National Shelter has released its Federal Election 2004 Housing Policy Analysis. The Analysis consists of three parts. Part 1 summarises the housing related policies of both major and five minor parties as of 1 September 2004. Part 2 contains National Shelter's analysis of the parties' policies. The third part is yet to be released, and will detail the responses of the various parties to a questionnaire.

The Analysis finds that the "parties' approaches were not dissimilar in some aspects. For example, the ALP, Democrats and Greens probably all agreed on the need for better environmental design of housing. However there were some major differences –for example, between some of the minor parties (the Greens and Democrats and the major parties (the ALP and Coalition) on the tax treatment of housing investment. Some housing policies were much more comprehensive than others, and some were non-existent or consisted of a single paragraph in the midst of another policy."

With regard to the two major parties, the Analysis states that "the ALP's policies are far more detailed and far closer to National Shelter's policy than the Liberal/National Coalition's policies which are outdated (2001) and minimal. However the Coalition may release new policies closer to

the election date." However, there "is insufficient long term commitment to public housing and the CSHA" and no mention of tax arrangements in the ALP housing policy.

The analysis is available from www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news).

Housing Summit Call for Action

As reported in the previous issue of this newsletter, a National Housing Summit was held in Canberra in late June. The Summit issued a Call for Action, expressing "the joint views of our organisations, which came together in an unprecedented coalition to address what we see as an unprecedented problem. It is based on the experience and expertise of our many member organisations and of other groups that were represented at the Summit."

The Call for Action contains 10 key objectives for improving housing affordability in Australia, as well as 6 priorities for action:

- A new Ministry and Ministerial Council
- A National Housing Plan
- A National Affordable Housing Agreement
- Increased Investment in Public Housing
- A National Tax Reform Package
- A National Strategy for Land and Infrastructure Planning

The Call for Action is available from www.housingsummit.org.au

Editorial (Cont'd)

overview of the recently released report, *Counting the Homeless 2001 - Western Australia*, and a Shelter WA article on homelessness published recently in *Parity* magazine.

Footnotes

¹ While there is no universally accepted measure for overcrowding, this report refers to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which is also used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The CNOS is detailed below.

² Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council, *Kimberley Regional Aboriginal Health Plan*, 1999, p.16.

³ Overcrowding was identified as a major issue in Broome, Busselton, Derby, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Margaret River, and as a minor issue in Albany, Bunbury and Midland.

⁴ Shelter WA, *Community Forum: Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA*, September 2003

⁵ Shelter WA, *Community Forum: Housing Indigenous People in Regional WA*, September 2003

Canadian National Occupancy Standard

While there is no universally accepted measure for overcrowding, this report refers to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which is also used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This standard specifies that there should be no more than two persons per bedroom, with the provisos that:

- children between 5 and 18 years of age cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom if they are of different sexes, and
- single household members 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom, as should parents or couples.

Application of the standard results in the following bedroom requirements:

single adult:	0-2 bedrooms
single adult (group):	1 bedroom per adult
couple with no children:	2 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 1 child:	2 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 2 or 3 children:	3 bedrooms
sole parent or couple with 4+ children:	4 bedrooms

State of Affordable Housing in WA

The State of Affordable Housing in WA is Shelter WA's annual overview of the extent to which West Australians are able to access affordable housing. The overview is based on a range of key housing indicators, and focuses on families in the bottom half of the income range.

The central issue for housing in WA in 2003-04 was another major decline in housing affordability for home purchasers. Two interest rate rises and house price growth of 14.4% saw the household income required to purchase a median priced Perth home rise to over \$100,000 per year. By comparison, the median household income is \$55,084 per year.

The paper's finding is that all three tiers of government have done too little to address Western Australia's housing crisis. While the WA Government has developed a number of initiatives aimed at delivering more affordable housing, their scope is insufficient to make any real difference, although they do indicate that it has taken the housing affordability crisis seriously. However, the main problem is the Commonwealth Government, which has chosen to ignore its responsibilities, trying to pass on responsibility for addressing the crisis to the states and territories.

The paper is available at www.shelterwa.org.au (publications).

Kalgoorlie Housing Forum

Shelter WA conducted a housing forum in Kalgoorlie in August. The forum was attended by some twenty people with a wide variety of backgrounds, including the Goldfields Esperance Regional Development Council, Department of Indigenous Affairs, Department of Housing and Works and a number of service providers. Five of the participants identified as Aboriginal.

A Final Report will be available in the next few weeks. However, the Forum Discussion Paper is available at www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news).

SAAP to be Renewed

Shelter WA welcomes the announcement by Commonwealth and State Community Services Ministers to maintain the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which was due to expire in June 2005. In WA, SAAP is a \$29 million per year program jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments. SAAP funds 129

services providing supported accommodation, counselling, advocacy, outreach, links to housing, health, education and employment and other services. A recent evaluation showed that homeless services can achieve positive results but are facing increasing demand for services and are hamstrung by a lack of affordable accommodation options for people leaving the services.

Despite the program, there are still 12,000 homeless people in Western Australia, a third of whom are children under the age of 14. As services have to turn away dozens of people each night because of a lack of resources, maintaining funding until 2010 is a welcome announcement, but won't be sufficient to solve WA's homelessness problem. Shelter WA believes that this can only be achieved by a substantial increase in SAAP funding, accompanied by an increase in funding for social housing. The latter would ensure that homeless people have exit points after leaving SAAP services instead of being left on a waiting list.

Greg Joyce to Retire

Greg Joyce, the Director General of the Department of Housing and Works, has announced he will be retiring on the 28th of January 2005 (his birthday). Greg joined Homeswest in 1973 and was appointed Executive Director in 1992. He is one of the most senior and respected bureaucrats in Western Australia and will be missed by those within the Department and many in the community sector.

Women and Adequate Housing

In June 2004, Shelter WA and the Tenants Advice Service jointly conducted a community consultation forum to discuss how women fare with regard to adequate housing in Perth, attended by 17 women. It was held in response to an investigation by the UNCHR into resolution 2002/49, which "recognises that women face discrimination and violations of their right to housing and land around the world and that there needs to be action at the international and national level".

The subsequent report was used to inform both National Shelter's and the National Non Government submissions to the UNCHR Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing.

The report is available from www.shelterwa.org.au (publications).

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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