

EDITORIAL: THE DARK SIDE OF WA'S HOUSING BOOM

by Karel Eringa

For some time now, Shelter WA has identified affordability for home purchasers as the key issue in housing. While house prices are falling or have levelled out in other parts of Australia, in Western Australia the situation with regard to affordability is continuing to get worse.

Decreasing affordability is partly due to the quarter percent interest rate rise in March 2005. However, the bulk of the decline is caused by increasing house prices. In Perth, the median house prices have grown by 16.5% over the year to June, and have now exceeded the \$300,000 mark. In regional WA, house prices generally caught up with Perth, with an average increase across the state of 19.1%. Some regional centres experienced extreme growth rates, including Albany (34.2%), Augusta / Margaret River (32.3%), Bunbury (39.8%), Geraldton (40.3%) and Port Hedland (50.1%). However, price growth in some other centres was more measured, for instance Broome (4.9%), Kalgoorlie-Boulder (2.4%) and Mandurah (21.3%).

At the same time Perth's median rent has finally started to catch up with house price growth. During 2004/05, median rents in Perth jumped 15.2%, from \$164 to \$189 per week. The immediate cause of higher rents is the continued decline in vacancy rates, down

from 3.3% in June 2004 to a very tight 2.5% in June 2005. Vacancy rates appear to be particularly low at the bottom end of the market.

In turn, the low vacancy rate was caused by two factors. The first of these is that the State is now experiencing positive net migration, after a period of net outmigration. The second factor is that house prices have now put home ownership beyond the reach of households earning \$50,000 per year in all but 36 Perth suburbs, down from 53 in 2004. This has caused increased demand for private rental housing, from families who would otherwise have made the transition to home ownership.

At the time of writing, there is no reason to assume that any of the structural factors behind the recent increases in rents will change any time soon. If economic growth continues, as forecast, at its current high levels, house prices will continue to increase, vacancy rates will remain low and rents will continue to rise. Moreover, at 3.25% Perth's median rental return is at record lows, suggesting there is ample potential for rent increases.

At the same time, social housing has continued its slow decline. For the first time in five years, total stock numbers have fallen, from 39,344 to 39,139. Within the social housing sector there has been some divergence. The number of

Homeswest dwellings fell from 35,006 to 34,870 over the year, while a continued emphasis on community housing saw this sector grow from 3,027 to 3,107 dwellings. Indigenous remote housing also increased, from 1,182 to 1,223 properties. This pattern reflects a longer term trend: since 1997, mainstream public housing has declined by 3.8%, while community housing has increased by 61% and Indigenous remote housing by 47%.

As population and household numbers have grown, social housing now comprises 5.1% of all occupied housing stock in WA, down from 5.3% last year and 6.1% in 1997. The Homeswest waiting list is roughly the same as it was 10 years ago, with 13,125 waiting to be housed. Most importantly, however, the number of families provided with Homeswest housing was at its lowest level since Shelter WA began monitoring this statistic in 1982. Over the last year, 4,071 new tenancies were created, compared to an annual average of 5,074 over 1997-2004 and 7,046 over the 1992-96 period. This is also reflected in the average wait time, which has increased from 56 weeks in 1997 to 73 weeks in 2005.

This is not necessarily due to bad management. In fact, improved debt collection practices have produced a decline in the proportion of

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Homeswest Good Neighbour Policy

by Paul Pendergast

In March this year the Minister for Housing and Works announced that Homeswest will introduce a Good Neighbour Policy. Following this announcement, the Minister referred the policy to the Homeswest Operational Standing Committee (HOSC) for its involvement in developing the subsequent policy detail.

The April meeting of the HOSC agreed to establish a Working Party to address the concerns of the Committee with regard to the proposed Homeswest Good Neighbour Policy (GNP).

The working party was convened by Shelter WA. Its membership included representatives from the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, Department of Community Development, Jacaranda Community Centre and the Tenants Advice Service.

The GNP Working Party was established to address the concerns expressed by the HOSC membership and to recommend changes to address these concerns. The HOSC's concerns included:

Introduction of Fixed Term

Tenancies: While the HOSC is aware that Homeswest has used fixed term tenancies on an ad hoc basis for some time now, the draft policy proposed the formal introduction of fixed term leases in public housing for those "tenants

with a history of anti social behaviour" and thereby creating two classes of tenant, those with security of tenure and those with limited tenure.

Good Neighbour Agreement: While the proposed policy is called the Good Neighbour Policy, the HOSC is concerned that the Policy takes the approach that all tenants will be subject to special conditions in addition to those required under their Residential Tenancy Agreement and "will require all tenants to sign a good neighbour contract with the Department, formalising their commitment to abide by the terms of their Tenancy Agreement".

Mediation: The HOSC acknowledges the important role mediation services play in extending the life of "tenancies at risk". However, the Good Neighbour Policy is likely to increase demand for these services and there are only three listed and all are located in the South West of the State. If this Policy is implemented, funding to these services will need to be increased in order to ensure sufficient capacity throughout WA.

Legal Issues: For instance, the requirement to "seek the views of a neighbour not involved" could be read as implying that information about a tenancy is going to go to other people in the street. This may well breach privacy legislation.

Practical Application: The draft Good Neighbour Policy begins to provide some direction to Accommodation Managers on how to deal with complaints coming under the Policy but it provides no detail on how this will translate into Homeswest Operational Policy. For instance, Accommodation Managers may have difficulty implementing this policy consistently when subjective terminology such as "drunken", "uncontrollable", "foul", etc is used.

The working party's final report made nine recommendations, suggesting changes to both the language and the substance of the Good Neighbour Operational Policy and the associated Acceptable Behaviour Agreement. In addition, the working party recommended that households with a history of anti-social behaviour should be required to receive tenancy support rather than put onto fixed term tenancies, and that the DHW negotiate Memorandums of Understanding with a number of mediation services as well as the WA Police and Local Government Authorities. Finally, the working party recommended that the DHW include information on how to maintain a successful tenancy in a pamphlet.

The final report of the Good Neighbour working party was released in August 2005 and is available from www.shelterwa.org.au.

Shelter WA Homelessness Survey #6

by Karel Eringa

In March 2005, Shelter WA conducted a follow up survey to its *No Place Like Home* report on homelessness in Western Australia. The report on Survey 6 was released in August 2005, and by and large confirmed the findings reported in *No Place Like Home*. In particular, the survey found that young people and Indigenous people continued to be represented disproportionately among the homeless people of WA. Affordability issues continued to feature prominently as a barrier to homeless households accessing rental housing.

However, Survey 6 also identified some new developments. In

particular, the survey identified a significant decrease in the proportion of households that required both housing and support, reducing from over two thirds in Survey 5 to less than one third in Survey 6. There was a corresponding increase in housing only requests, up from 1 in 4 in Survey 5 to greater than 1 in every 2 households in Survey 6.

In addition, in the previous five surveys around two thirds of households fell in the category 'secondary homeless' [people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another]. In Survey 6, there was a disturbing divergence from this trend with nearly

half of the respondents registering as 'primary homeless' [people without conventional accommodation].

These developments may be partly explained by the relatively small size of the sample. However, the findings do cast doubt on the effectiveness of current strategies to make real inroads into homelessness. Significant increases in Government funding for both affordable accommodation and support would be required to achieve this.

The report is available at www.shelterwa.org.au/publications.htm.

WA's State Housing Strategy

by Karel Eringa

"In July 2000, the Office of Housing Policy began some background research in preparation for the development of a housing strategy for Western Australia, in order to provide a robust framework for the advice it provides to Government. The thinking behind the work was that in order to fulfil its role of advising the Minister for Housing and Works and the Department of Housing and Works, on broader housing issues, it needed to take a holistic approach to the housing sector and the relationships between the various segments. On taking government in February, 2001, the Labor administration moved to consider the applicability of the work done so far, to their pre-election promise to undertake a housing strategy."¹

The Minister for Housing and Works, Fran Logan, launched the Discussion Draft of *Housing Strategy WA* on 14 September. Shelter WA's Executive Officer, Karel Eringa, responded as follows:

When I first started at Shelter WA my Chairperson told me that most West Australians live in a house that suits all of their needs. However, the system failed the people at the 'bottom of the barrel' in three areas.

The first area is affordability, which refers to people being unable to pay their mortgage or rent

The second area is appropriateness, which refers to physical standards, size, location and sustainable design

The third area is security of tenure, which refers to people staying in boarding houses or private rental having limited control over their length of stay in their house.

Shelter WA has been calling for a State Housing Strategy to resolve the systemic problems in these three areas. An integrated approach, rather than a series of uncoordinated initiatives, is needed because the three areas are intimately connected to each other.

Even at a basic level there are a number of apparent contradictions. For instance:

- Building a cheaper house might improve affordability, but it may not suit the family's needs if it does not have enough bedrooms. It may also increase the family's heating and cooling costs if it is not built to sustainable principles.
- Similarly, you can buy a cheaper house if you compromise on its location, but this may result in higher transport costs, less access to work, education etc.

On the other hand, certain measures may improve outcomes in more than one area. For example, a smaller size house may be both more appropriate and more affordable to an aging couple.

On a broader economic and social level, some of the interconnections are less immediately obvious. One example is that better located public housing stock could provide people with better access to employment opportunities. This could be the opportunity some people need to access employment and home ownership, resulting in a number of economic and social benefits

A second example is that a number of our regional centres suffer from an exacerbated economic cycle as they have only two industries, mining and construction. Both these industries often peak at the same time. Building Government employee housing during the bottom of the cycle, rather than leasing it at the top of the cycle, could dampen the fluctuations.

In view of these complexities and the potential cost of getting it wrong, it is surprising that, until now, our housing system has been managed in an ad hoc way, without much

strategic vision or direction. For instance, at the Commonwealth level, there is no National Housing Strategy, no Housing Minister and no Department for Housing although both exist at the State level.

Taxes, incentives, subsidies and grants related to housing live in a plethora of Commonwealth and State Government Departments. Some Local Governments view it as

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Department of
Housing and Works
Government of Western Australia

For Public Comment Housing Strategy WA Discussion Draft

On behalf of the WA Government, I would like to invite members of the housing sector and the community to provide input into the Housing Strategy WA Discussion Draft.

Housing Strategy WA has just been released for public consultation. It is an innovative and visionary document that outlines key strategies that will help create a more secure housing future for all of us.

The discussion draft outlines a series of strategies for Government to ensure a diverse range of housing is available now and into the future. It focuses on the principles of affordability, sustainability and equity.

Western Australians currently enjoy a high level of housing affordability, with almost 70 per cent owning or buying their home. To ensure the future is just as bright we need to plan a better housing system today, for tomorrow.

The State Government can't create a better housing system alone. We will continue to work in partnership with the building industry and the community to deliver a quality housing system.

I encourage all members of the community to read this discussion draft – and provide feedback.

By working together, we can deliver a more responsive and sustainable housing system that meets the changing needs and aspirations of all Western Australian communities.

The Housing Strategy WA Discussion Draft is available at www.dhw.wa.gov.au/housingstrategywa or at Department of Housing and Works offices throughout the State. For further information or to request copies, please call (08) 9222 4960.

Hon Francis Logan MLA
Minister for Housing and Works

Boarders & Lodgers Project

by Jim Anthony

Introduction

As reported in the previous edition of this newsletter, Shelter WA carried out a survey of boarders and managers involved in the boarding house system in Metropolitan Perth. The main aim of the project was to gain an understanding of the first hand experiences of tenants and managers involved on a daily basis in WA's non-regulated boarding housing system. The following discussion provides an Interim report of some of the survey's key findings.

Housing History of Survey Respondents

To gain an insight into the experiences of the tenants involved in a self-regulating housing system, an understanding of the housing history of boarders and lodgers was essential. The survey found that:

- the majority of those interviewed, approximately two thirds, have lived in boarding houses for more than 12 months;
- the length of overall stay for these residents ranged from just over 1 year to a maximum of 20 years; and
- nearly 1 in 3 of the survey respondents has lived in boarding housing accommodation for 15 to 20 years.

There was also some variation in regards to the 'normal length' of stay in boarding housing accommodation. The 'normal' duration of stay for just under half of the respondents [42%] was 3 months. Some respondents experienced significant levels of housing instability, for example using between two and seven different accommodation types within a three month period, indicating a high prevalence of housing transience over short-term periods.

In addition, personal and social issues related to mental health, drug use, alcoholism and financial pressures all appeared to contribute to poor housing options for some boarders and lodgers. This is discussed next.

Why Use Boarding House Accommodation?

Boarders and lodgers represent some of the most multi-disadvantaged citizens in the community and have

limited resources with which to choose their housing arrangements. The survey aimed to find out what are the main reasons why the participants use boarding house accommodation. The most commonly cited reasons were:

- financial convenience, which was cited by fifteen out of the nineteen participants [79%] as the main reason for using boarding housing accommodation. Many tenants referred to the financial convenience of boarding house accommodation in the context of not having to pay up-front costs, such as bonds. Boarding Houses' provision of furnishings and in some cases meals were also seen as affordability advantages by some of the residents; and
- drug addiction, alcoholism and mental health problems, which was cited by one in four boarders. Interestingly, tenants with mental health issues were located in a range of different accommodation types and were not confined to psychiatric hostels.

The use of unstable and insecure accommodation, aside from boarding houses, for example, sleeping rough, appeared to be the only options for many of the respondents. Staying for short periods in hostels and moving from secondary homelessness to primary homelessness and back again, was a distinctive feature of the survey group. Nearly one in two respondents [42 %] had lived in a least one of these situations.

In summary, the majority of the tenants used boarding houses due to financial convenience. Housing instability associated with personal issues such as mental illness is also contributing to a significant proportion of the survey respondents utilising marginal accommodation.

Boarding House Legislation in Australia

The research analysed and compared several aspects of minimum boarding house standards used in Australia. This enabled a comparative evaluation of non-regulated and regulated systems; an understanding of tenant's rights within existing legislation; and an insight into the structure of existing Acts. The research found that the States and Northern Territory

government apply differing degrees of standards and have developed different frameworks for their respective boarding house legislation.

For example, the Northern Territory legislated for a set of 'minimum rights' for boarders, within its existing RTA, however, those rights are not explicitly stated and appear to be open to interpretation. The NSW government has proposed a separate Act, which still awaits implementation; the Queensland parliament has already implemented a separate Act to its RTA, whereas Victoria incorporated its *Rooming House Act* within its RTA and thus boarders are given a range of rights under the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

There are some apparent advantages in relation to how a new Act is structured. For example, ease of interpretation, if the Act is a separate document. This does not appear to be a critical issue from the perspective of developing and implementing minimum standards. What appears to be important however, are that only those provisions of the main legislation which are clearly unsuitable for boarding houses should be varied.

The Final Report

The boarders and lodgers report is due for completion by the end of September. Some of the additional issues that will be covered in the final report shall compare and highlight the:

- advantages and disadvantages of a regulated and non-regulated system;
- submit and evaluate tenants and managers views about their experiences in relation to their day to day involvement in the current unregulated system; and
- views from boarders and managers in relation to the potential benefits and impacts of implementing some form of boarding house legislation in Western Australia.

The completed report will also include some policy recommendations and shall be presented to the Department and Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection.

National Housing Conference Subsidies

by Karel Eringa

Lotterywest has generously made funding of \$15,000 available to enable Shelter WA to offer Western Australian community organisations financial assistance towards the cost of attending the National Housing Conference. The Conference will be held in Perth from 26-28 October 2005; further information about the Conference, including a draft program, is available at www.dhw.wa.gov.au/NHC/.

Subsidies are up to \$250 for applicants in the Perth metropolitan area, \$500 for regional applicants and \$750 for applicants from remote

areas. The subsidies are intended to boost the community sector's involvement at the Conference. They are particularly designed to encourage participation from community organisations that either face high travel costs or that have limited resources. Organisations may apply for a subsidy for any person linked to the organisation, including for instance:

- staff
- management committee / board members
- volunteers

If you are interested in applying for the subsidy, please download the application form at www.shelterwa.org.au/housing_news.htm. Applications close 4.30pm on Wednesday 12 October. Successful applicants will be notified prior to the Conference. However, unless agreed otherwise, subsidies will be paid after the Conference.

The Dark Side of the Housing Boom (Cont'd)

Homeswest tenants who are in arrears. This proportion has fallen from 15.2% in 1995 to 8.5% in 2005. Average arrears also fell over this period, from \$17.24 to \$15.49.

There is increasing evidence that the lack of an adequate supply of affordable and appropriate housing across all tenures has produced increased pressure on some of the most vulnerable groups in society. As more and more relatively well-off families are either delaying or giving up altogether on purchasing their own house, they reside for extended periods of time in private rental.

Falling vacancy rates and increasing rents mean that people who are less well off can no longer rely on the private sector for appropriate housing that they can afford. The outcome is

increased pressure on the social housing sector, reflected in increased waiting lists and longer waiting times.

At the human level, the more vulnerable groups end up at an increased risk of homelessness or in inadequate housing. Large refugee families, young people, Aboriginal families and people with mental health issues are amongst the first to be effectively excluded from mainstream accommodation. As a consequence, these groups will be forced to reside for longer in expensive or inappropriate types of accommodation. Many end up roofless, forced to overcrowd their friends and relatives' housing or staying for extended periods in refuges and crisis accommodation.

Put in simple terms, Western Australia's housing boom has provided a financial windfall for existing home owners and, via increased tax revenue, to the State and Commonwealth Government. However, the boom has a shadow side, causing increased housing stress for many and homelessness for the most vulnerable groups.

The announcement of the State Housing Strategy (see page 3 of this newsletter) is an important first step in recognising the extent of the housing crisis caused by the boom. However, both the State and the Commonwealth Government also need to match this recognition with commitments expressed in dollars and targets expressed in stock numbers and percentages.

WA's State Housing Strategy (Cont'd)

non-core business, others have a range of incentives aimed at improving local housing outcomes, but none are part of a coherent state wide plan aimed at meeting long term housing needs.

The good news, however, is that as of today we do have a draft housing strategy on the State level. Shelter WA has been calling for this for a number of years, and it is wonderful to finally hold the document in my hand.

This is the first time we've had a coherent vision for housing at the State level and I can't overstate the importance of this occasion. However, at this stage the strategy is not perfect. In particular, the strategy lacks commitments and targets, dollars and percentages. I would therefore encourage you to make the most of this opportunity to make your submissions and have your input to ensure that the strategy creates affordable, appropriate and secure housing for all West Australians.

(Footnotes)

¹ Office of Housing Policy, *Outcomes of the Workshop to Establish a Vision and Goals for the Strategy*, Department of Housing and Works, September 2001

Underoccupancy in Homeswest

by Paul Pendergast

When considering housing occupancy, over crowding is normally considered to be one of our most pressing housing issues but 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, not because they are doing badly in comparison to the private sector, in fact Homeswest are efficient managers, but because Homeswest's waiting list for large family housing could be substantially reduced 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) established a working party to undertake research into under occupancy, consult with the community and develop the HOSC's recommended response to DHW, contained in this report.

Two consultations were conducted, one in Perth at the invitation of Shelter WA and one in Bunbury, with the Regional Tenancy Advocates Network. The Homeswest Regional Managers for Bunbury and Mirrabooka were also interviewed as part of this process.

Membership of the Working Party included: The Department of Housing and Works; Tenants Advice Service; Department of Employment and Consumer Protection; and Shelter WA.

The Terms of Reference for this research focused on investigating the extent of under occupancy both in the broader community and within Homeswest. It uses the Canadian Occupancy National Standard (CONS) to measure the extent of under occupancy for all dwellings in Western Australia and its distribution by Region. The Report quantifies the extent of under occupancy of Homeswest housing and makes eight recommendations developed during the consultation process.

The extent of under and over occupancy in WA

Applying the CNOS to Western Australian housing system reveals that only about half of the States occupied dwellings contain the appropriate number of people for the number of bedrooms. Census 2001 data reveals that nearly half (46%) of WA's dwellings are under occupied, increasing to 55% of four bedroom and 61% of five plus bedroom dwellings. While at the opposite end of the spectrum, 4% of dwellings are over crowded, the worst effected being one bedroom dwellings (18%).¹

The level of under occupancy is not evenly distributed across the State, generally there are higher levels of under occupancy in Perth and declining levels corresponding with remoteness from Perth. Census data reveals that under occupancy by ATSI region ranges from a low of 24% of dwellings in Kununurra to a high of 48% in Perth. While at the other end of the spectrum Kununurra, Broome and Warburton all have extremely high rates of overcrowding, 30%, 21% and 18% respectively.

Homeswest data reveals significantly lower rates of under occupancy than the for the housing system as a whole. The rate of under occupancy of large family homes in Mirrabooka is 26%² equal to the Homeswest State average (26%). While Cannington is below the average (25%) and Fremantle had a rate above (29%). The non-Metro Regions follow a similar pattern to all tenures, that is, the rate of under-occupancy declines with remoteness from Perth, although at a much lower level. The rate is highest in Albany (35%) and lowest in South Hedland (19%), however, Broome is the exception with a rate of 30% which is above the Homeswest average but still well below the rate for all tenures.

Data supplied by the DHW supports the point of view that under occupancy is an issue primarily effecting long term tenants that have undergone a change in housing structure. The data shows a link between the time that households in large family homes have been Homeswest tenants and the extent of under-occupation. The median length

of tenancy for under-occupying households is 8 years. Only 6% have tenancies of less than 1 year, while two thirds have been tenants for more than five years, indicating that households are allocated the correct sized dwelling when they move in but over time household members leave, most likely children and/or partners.

Homeswest Wait Times

To assist applicants with estimating how long they can expect to wait before being allocated housing, Homeswest publishes the date when the last household allocated a tenancy for the period first applied. This information is available by zone and household type. Taking the application date and calculating how many months the applicant spent on the waiting list before being allocated housing begins to reveal some very significant differences between zones and household types.

The median waiting period for all zones only varies by five months across each of the household types: 31 months for large families to 36 months for singles. However, large families are waiting as long as 90 months (7.5 years) in Mirrabooka's North Central Zone, this period is nearly three times the median for this household type. All Metro zones exceed the median wait time except for Peel (28 months). The non-Metro Zones of Southern, Bunbury, Geraldton, Broome and Kununurra, all equal or exceed the median.

The main group of households under occupying Homeswest large family homes are long term tenants whose bedroom requirements have changed over time. These are essentially good tenants that should be treated with sensitivity when negotiating for them to relocate to smaller dwellings.

The working party's final report was released in July 2005, and included eight recommendations to the amendments to the DHW Tenancy Management Policy. The report is available from www.shelterwa.org.au.

(Footnotes)

¹ The data presented in Table 1 is for all households and the results would be quite different for Indigenous households, see Shelter WA, *Indigenous Housing in Regional Areas Forum*.

² In the Discussion Paper, Mirrabooka's rate of under occupancy was significantly inflated by the presence of 115 properties being head-leased to community housing groups.

Community Consultations in Port Hedland

by Helen Doran-Wu

As mentioned in the June edition of the newsletter, a series of community forums were held in Port Hedland from the 29th to 31st of August 2005. Seven group sessions were held. They were targeted to consult with a wide variety of housing consumers. I would like to thank the Twilight Ladies, Gateway Playgroup, the Pilbara Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation and the Youth Involvement Council for allowing us to come to come and visit them. I would also like to thank the members of the public who attended the session for Homeswest Tenants and the Open Forum.

Key government stakeholders that participated in the discussion groups included Department of Housing and Works, Town of Port Hedland, Port Hedland Regional Aboriginal Corporation, Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Corporation – Aboriginal Health and Medical Service and the Disability Services Commission. The Pilbara Development Commission and the Department of Indigenous Affairs were met with separately.

The scenarios that were discussed in these forums confirmed much of

statistical analysis conducted prior to visiting Port Hedland. Key issues for the community included:

- Maintenance
- The impact of the Radburn Design on the community
- Security
- Child care
- Support for Carers
- Accommodation for Youth
- Environmentally and socially sustainable housing design
- High cost of housing – rental or purchase prices
- Impact of the mining boom bust economic cycle
- Impact of 'fly-in, fly –out' on housing and families
- Cost of living
- Difficulties in attracting essential services, including Doctors, due to a lack of affordable housing

An issue that was only highlighted through the community forums was that the main bread winner, who was a middle income worker and was not in company housing, was often working two jobs to meet the high cost of living. The result is that families are under pressure from exhaustion. Further, it was reported

that mothers returning to work to help meet costs have limited day care options. There are limited day care options as child care workers are poorly paid and cannot meet the cost of living and housing themselves. The women consulted felt that it was more cost effective for service providers to work for BHP where possible. Hence, family stress and the lack of service provision can be directly linked to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing.

Many people were able to consider solutions to the majority of the issues. However many felt that to soften the fundamental impact of the Radburn Design, the economic cycle in Port Hedland and the dependency on mining for employment, either directly or indirectly, required meaningful and co-ordinated input from BHP, the State Government and the Town of Port Hedland. It was stated that recent changes in the Council combined with State government initiatives, such as the New Living Program, boded well for the future of Port Hedland. Community members considered that any housing strategy, however, should be done in consultation with local residents.

EOC Investigation into Public Housing for Indigenous People

by Karel Eringa

Between 2002 and 2004 the Equal Opportunity Commission conducted a major investigation into public housing for Aboriginal people. The Commission released its final report, Finding A Place, in December 2004. The report identified a number of shortcomings of public housing for Aboriginal people, including poor maintenance, poor training of officers and a lack of stock.

Much of the report confirmed findings published by Shelter WA over the last few years in a number of reports, and Shelter WA therefore supported many of the report's recommendations. Regrettably, however, the report missed an important point, being that public housing in Western Australia is under-resourced to cope with the demands that are placed on it. Consecutive funding cuts and an increased focus on those who are 'most in need' have resulted in

falling income for our State Housing Authority, forcing it to reduce costs in order to prevent shortfalls.

The Department of Housing and Works initially accepted only nine of the 168 recommendations made in the report. However, in May 2005, the DHW approached Shelter WA as Chair of the Homeswest Operational Standing Committee to conduct a project operationalising the recommendations of the report.

Broadly speaking, Shelter WA will:

- keep the Homeswest Operational Standing Committee (HOSC) informed regarding the decisions and deliberations of the EOC Implementation Committee throughout the life of this Committee,
- conduct background research and analysis in order to develop any recommendations from the EOC IC into a format in which

HOSC is in a position to provide practical advice to the DHW,

- advise the DHW regarding the position of HOSC, and
- provide guidance to HOSC and DHW regarding any recommendations that come through the EOC IC.

The project started in June 2005, and all parties have now agreed to a process by which many of the report's findings will be implemented. Funding for the project is initially for one year. However, Shelter WA expects that the implementation process will take a minimum of two years.

Finding a Place is available from the Equal Opportunity Commission's website, www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au. Shelter WA's response is available from www.shelterwa.org.au.



Shelter WA / Tenants Advice Service Annual General Meeting



Thursday 20th October @ 3.30-5.30pm

Ground Floor Conference Room,
Claisebrook Lotteries House, 33 Moore Street, East Perth
Drinks and Nibbles will be provided.

	Order of Proceedings	
	Registration	
	Welcomes	
TAS Agenda	Guest Speaker Shelter AGM	Shelter WA Agenda
Introduction	TAS AGM	Attendances / Apologies
Attendances / Apologies	Refreshments	Previous Minutes
Previous Minutes		Presentation of Annual Report
Presentation of Annual Report		Appointment of Auditor
Appointment of Auditor		Election of 2005/2006 Executive Committee
Election of 2005/2006 Executive Committee		General Business
General Business		Close
Close	Guest Speaker	
	<i>Prof. Geoffrey London</i>	
	Government Architect Government of WA	
	Topic: Sustainability and Affordability	

For catering purposes, please RSVP by **Thursday 13th October** to Corinne Mercer at ShelterWA on 9325 6660 or email corinne@shelterwa.org.au

Please Note: It is important that you are aware of your membership status. Please ensure that you have registered at the desk and that you know what your voting status is.

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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Editor Karel Eringa
Contributors Karel Eringa, Corinne Mercer, Paul Pendergast, Jim Anthony, Helen Doran-Wu

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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