



Shelter WA Update

April 2008

Effective International Homelessness Models suitable for Broome WA

In response to recognition that the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of WA experience longstanding indigenous overcrowding and homelessness alongside very low stock of public and community housing, a lack of crisis and emergency accommodation and some of Australia's worst housing affordability problems Shelter WA was commissioned by Broome Circle with FHaCSIA funding to undertake a review of international best practice homeless response strategies suitable for Broome. Jim Anthony recently completed this report which covers a review of international homelessness policies that have achieved significant reduction in homeless populations and offers recommendations for best practice strategies suitable for Broome.

The report builds on a range of government and independent research demonstrating that a strategic homelessness framework developed with all levels of government and NGO's, underpinned by central guidelines and adequate resourcing offers a positive contribution to alleviating homelessness. The report looks at best practice frameworks in the UK, Germany and several states around Australia.

Research exploring homeless trends in England suggests there are strong links between fewer numbers of homeless people and:

- Amendments to legislation – the *2002 Homelessness Act*;
- Increased funding (since 2002 the Department of Communities and Local Government has invested more than £360 million in grant funding to help local authorities deliver tailored case managed direct service and preventative schemes)¹;
- The development of a best practice framework within which homelessness surveys are a central component; and
- Setting targets to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010².

In 2005 the United Kingdom set a target to halve homelessness by 2010. The target looks like it will be achieved - homelessness rates have reduced by 50 per cent between 2003–04 and 2006–07³ and the number of rough sleepers in the UK now stands at a record low.

Like England, Germany has managed to make significant inroads to reducing their homeless populations. The provision of social housing and homelessness services is provided at the municipality level. Non government organisations also play a significant role as direct providers of state funded homelessness assistance⁴. The German social rental system operates a highly subsidised programme unlike any other in Western Europe adding to Germany's best practice model in homelessness⁵. The homelessness framework concentrates on the prevention of homelessness and addressing social exclusion and indicators are that the approach is succeeding⁶.

¹See Pawson et al, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, Department for Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk

²See Shelter UK, 2007, *Policy briefing: Homelessness prevention*, www.shelter.org.uk

³See Pawson et al, 2007, *Evaluating homelessness prevention*, Department for Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk

⁴See Stephens et al, 2002, *Social market or safety net: British social rented housing in a European context*, The Policy Press, Bristol

⁵See Lowe, S 2004, *Housing policy analysis: British housing in cultural and comparative context*, Palgrave, London

⁶See Mandic, S, 2006, *Fourth review of homelessness in Europe*, www.feansta.org

Homelessness Models suitable for Broome WA (continued)

Recent estimates reveal a 47% decline in the homeless population in England from 1996/1997 to 2003⁷ - a reduction by half over a ten-year period.

The report explores human rights and legislation in Australia for homeless people and makes recommendations based on international frameworks and Australian Census data. It was noted that the Commonwealth government and WA State government could consider developing a Homelessness Act or major amendments to the current Act to ensure the statutory right to a home for unintentionally homeless people. This approach was also suggested by the United Nations Special Rapporteur in his visit to Australia in 2006⁸

Shelter WA recommends that the Western Australian State government should revive the State Homelessness Strategy, build on elements of good practice and develop a best practice framework and guidelines that include:

- Setting metro and regional reduction targets for homelessness;
- Promoting the development and management of local and/or regional homelessness frameworks by NGO's, local government and other organisations using a competitive tendering process; and
- Establishing regulations, protocols and standards for homelessness services
- Provide grant funding to encourage development of local best practice homelessness strategies in regional areas with significant demand for public housing and high homelessness rates.

Funding should require evidence of strong cooperation, communication strategies and the integration of regional homelessness services and also encourage homeless service partnerships between NGO's, regional housing authorities, regional development commissions, local government and regional housing associations.

State government should also provide subsidies and incentives to encourage a variety of social housing providers in areas experiencing overcrowding in Indigenous housing and significant homeless populations such as the Town of Broome and the Kimberley region.

The final report is available on Shelter WA's website:

http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/papers_reports/2008/SWA_review_of_International_Homeless_Strategies_Final_April08.pdf

(Inter-) National Neighbour Day – Celebrate the Last Sunday in March

Neighbour day is an initiative from Andrew Heslop in Victoria. Andrew was spurred to action in March 2003 after reading a letter to the editor in *The Age* newspaper about an elderly woman found in her flat 2 years after passing away. This situation is sadly not uncommon, and regular media reports of people dying alone at home, not missed by any family or friends and subsequently not found for some time, prompted Andrew to begin the push for a dedicated day to encourage people to connect with their neighbours in a low-key, friendly and informal way.

As a community we need to address an escalation in fear and suspicion, isolation and loneliness. Alarm about crime and moral decay can impact on our sense of wellbeing and is not always an accurate reflection of the real level of risk to personal safety and security. People are highly sensitive to bad news or negative information with our 'fight or flight' response biologically predisposed to strongly react to a real or perceived element of danger. This human condition is effectively exploited by home security companies and the media – 'bad news sells'. Shelter WA attended a presentation by Andrew Heslop on 26th March about the idea of Neighbour Day, supported by the Department for Communities, Office for Seniors Interests and Carers.

⁷See, Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2005, *Homelessness and the changing role of the state in Germany*, European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA)

⁸ see <http://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/documents/resources/A.HRC.4.18.Add.2.pdf>

Neighbour Day (continued)

The principles behind Neighbour Day are to:

1. Strengthen communities and build better relationships with the people who live around us.
2. Create safer, healthier and more vibrant suburbs and towns.
3. Promote tolerance, respect and understanding.
4. Break down community barriers.
5. Protect the elderly, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged

Andrew encourages us all to:

1. Say G'day to your neighbours.
2. Make a special effort to introduce yourself to older residents in your street and anyone who lives alone.
3. Leave your mobile and home number for their use in an emergency.
4. Agree to keep in contact

Check out the Neighbour Day website and start thinking about what you can do on the last Sunday in March 2009: <http://www.neighbourday.org/>

AHURI Scoping the Capacity of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations

An ICHO is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation that manages housing for Indigenous people. These organisations include resource agencies and land councils that may have a range of community services functions along with responsibility for housing.

The viability factors explored were:

Table 1: Viability Factors and Indicators

VIABILITY FACTOR	INDICATOR
1. Location	1 i. Jurisdiction
	1 ii. Degree of Remoteness (ARI i.
	1 iii. Settlement Type (Mammott & Moran)
2. Governance	2 i. Organisational Management
	2 ii. Range of Services
	2 iii. Government Policy
	2 iv. Links to other Organisations
3. Human Resource Management	3 i. Recruitment and retention of staff
	3 ii. Skill Development Strategy
	3 iii. Linked Training
	3 iv. Enterprise and Employment Development
	3 v. Community Participation
4. Housing Management	4 i. Housing Stock
	4 ii. Management Systems
	4 iii. Rent Setting and Collection
	4 iv. External funding

Conclusions from the report revealed that;

- ICHO funding formulas need to account for the impact of differing degrees of remoteness.
- Need for support and assistance from government departmental officials
- Amalgamation / centralisation of services is required, but needs to be sensitive to ICHO locations and circumstances and avoid losing services by destroying internal synergies (economies of scope).
- Need for governance training for Board and Committee members

Scoping the Capacity of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (cont)

The following Policy Implications for improving the capacity of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations are offered:

POLICY IMPLICATION 1

Strategies aimed at building the organisational capacity of ICHOs must address governance, human resources and financial issues simultaneously.

POLICY IMPLICATION 2

All elements of the government policy framework that affect ICHOs must differentiate between remote, very remote, very very remote and very very very remote locations in their funding and cost formulas as well as their performance indicators.

POLICY IMPLICATION 3

Organisational capacity building should include governance training for members of the governing committee as well as members of the wider community.

POLICY IMPLICATION 4

Organisational capacity building strategies should take explicit account of the particular needs of each ICHO.

POLICY IMPLICATION 5

Increased resources should be made available to increase access to governance training for members of Indigenous communities in general and for members of ICHO governing committees in particular.

POLICY IMPLICATION 6

Further consolidation of the housing stock managed by the ICHO sector is required, but depending on location and circumstances the most appropriate way in which this can be undertaken is either amalgamation of ICHOs (urban / regional) or centralisation of services (remote).

Shelter WA eagerly awaits the publication of this important research and commends our previous Executive Officer, Karel Eringa along with other researchers including Fred Spring, Mara West and Martin Anda on the quality, sensitivity and rigour of their work.

The brief for this project is here: <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/projects/p80316>

Gimme Shelter Fundraiser Concert for St Pats Fremantle



St Patricks Community Support Centre in Parry Street Fremantle has been operational since it began as a soup kitchen in 1972 an initiative of St Patricks Basilica. It now offers boarding house and shared accommodation for up to 90 men and women, the meals service, drop in centre and health services.

Shelter WA Executive Officer Bronwyn and Research Manager Heidi attended the St Pat's Gimme Shelter Fundraising Concert in Fremantle on February 29th enjoying the warm weather, good music and fantastic cause.