



# Shelter WA Update

## February 2009

### Department of Housing & Works Undergoes Reform

On 16 December 2008, the Government of Western Australia announced significant reform of the Department of Housing and Works. The major change is the Department's separation into two distinct service delivery areas and the movement of the 'works' activities into a division of the Department of Treasury and Finance as Building Management and Works, while the Department of Housing will remain a 'stand-alone' department. Reflecting this change, the internet sites of the Department of Housing [www.housing.wa.gov.au](http://www.housing.wa.gov.au) and Building Management and Works [www.bmw.wa.gov.au](http://www.bmw.wa.gov.au) have been separated and will be undergoing continuing evolution during the transition period in 2009

### Laying the Foundations to 'The Road Home'

Over the past few weeks we have seen the largest multi-billion dollar Commonwealth and State Government funding commitment for public housing since the post war era. Shelter WA commends the State Government for its proactive additional resources beyond Commonwealth transfer and look forward to contributing to the implementation of initiatives in formation. The main features of this funding package include indigenous housing in remote communities, resourcing homeless services and the backlog of repairs and maintenance to social housing across the country. Whilst this is fantastic news and the sector is delighted, many hurdles must be overcome before new stock is available to households in stress on the Homeswest waiting list in WA as is the case in other jurisdictions.

### Invitation to Express an Interest in Sitting on the Public Housing Review Panel

The Department of Housing is seeking new members to sit on the appeals review panel for its customers. If you are interested in applying for consideration to this important role, call the Appeals Coordinator on 9222 4546. Applications close 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009.

### National Human Rights Consultations Extended and Gaining Momentum

The closing date for Public Submissions to the consultation on National Human Rights Legislation has been extended and will now close on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Check out what's happening including the youth forum and the Facebook page. [http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/Consultation\\_News](http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/Consultation_News). If you support the concept of housing as a human right, have your say on this and other human rights.

### Hurry! Gimme Shelter Concert Saturday February 21st Fremantle Arts Centre Lawn

Don't forget the fundraiser for St Patricks Community Support Centre this Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February on the beautiful south lawn of the Fremantle Arts Centre. \$35 on the door. Children under 15 \$10 and children under 6 free. Shelter WA staff will be present at their display marquis as they were last year. Swing by and pick up a brochure and a postcard!

### Get in the Council to Homeless Persons Parity Journal March & April Editions

Work in 'Early Intervention and Prevention' or 'Renting and Homelessness'? Tell the story. For the guide to contributions and to discuss your ideas email Noel at: [parity@chp.org.au](mailto:parity@chp.org.au)

### Consumer Reference Group, Joined up Peaks and Housing Affordability and Sustainability Think-tank

Shelter WA has raised the idea of forming a housing consumer's reference group to consider current initiatives and their potential impact on tenants. Aspects that could be explored and are currently in process include regulation of WA Community Housing providers, the long awaited review of the Rental Tenancies Act, and feeding into the work of the Social Housing Taskforce that has been convened by the Hon. Troy Buswell, Minister for Housing to explore innovative responses to increase the supply of social housing.

On a similar theme Shelter WA is working with the Peaks Forum and WACOSS to coordinate gathering information on the range of needs for affordable, appropriate and secure housing for low income and otherwise disadvantaged households including people with disability including mental illness, youth, those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, older people, indigenous people, people from diverse ethnic backgrounds including refugees and humanitarian entrants and those leaving custodial and care services amongst others.

Shelter WA is also exploring the formation of a Housing Affordability and Sustainability Think-tank, headed up by our Research Manager to bring together cutting edge multi-disciplinary knowledge around housing design, affordability, innovative building materials, diversity and planning. Watch this space for more news on these 3 exciting community based non-government initiatives.

Anyone interested in participating in these groups should contact Shelter by email [shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au) or telephone us on 9325 0666 for more.





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### **Seniors Housing Consultation in WA for National Shelter Project**

National Shelter the Federation of State Shelters, has been granted funding to undertake community consultation and prepare a report investigating Seniors Housing issues across Australia. Shelter WA in conjunction with Roland Naufal the consultant engaged to manage this project and COTA will run two sessions in WA for older housing consumers and seniors organizations, to feed in to this project. Issues to be considered include the adequacy of Commonwealth Rent Assistance, the impact of caravan park closures, access to seniors' independent housing and residential aged care and public and community housing provision for seniors.

These workshops are tentatively scheduled for mid April and will be confirmed in the next few weeks

### **Contribute to the Social Housing Taskforce through Shelter WA**

A Social Housing Task Force has been set up to consider and propose to the Minister for Housing the most effective and sustainable models for social housing that can expedite and expand the quality and quantity of social housing in WA. The Secretariat of the Social Housing Taskforce will be consulting with Shelter WA around ideas to guide the State government in deliberations toward directing implementation of the significant funding available to increase the supply of social housing. Consumers, advocates and interested parties are invited for their input to the policy development underway including feeding into the consideration of the Social Housing Taskforce. If you have any ideas or have experienced obstacles to the provision of housing aimed at low income or otherwise disadvantaged consumers, call the Shelter WA office or drop us a line. Call 9325 0666 or email [shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au) for more information.

### **Contribute to the Centrelink Homeless Taskforce through Shelter WA**

Centrelink has convened a WA Homeless Taskforce to investigate how Centrelink can better respond to the income support needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Issues that can be obstacles to homeless people acquiring and maintaining housing include 'breaching' policies for non attendance, non compliance or lack of reply to Centrelink communications, Proof of Identity requirements, indigenous language barriers and a lack of affordable and reliable transport, telephone and internet access in remote areas. The first meeting is planned for 25<sup>th</sup> February. Tell us your issues and we will represent them.

### **Progress from the Equal Opportunity Commission on 'Finding a Place' Homeswest Recommendations**

The EOC S80 Implementation and Monitoring Committee continues working with the Department of Housing to address all of the 165 recommendations contained in 'Finding a Place'. The committee is making strong progress and members acknowledge genuine efforts undertaken by the Department in re-aligning and reviewing policies and practices that have a detrimental impact on Indigenous public housing consumers. These include a complete overhaul of data collection processes and record keeping policies, staff cultural awareness and sensitivity training at all levels and support for development of a stronger Aboriginal housing workforce. We anticipate a milestone report will be prepared and published in the near future.

### **Homeless Persons Week and Missing Persons Week Synchronized August 3 – 8**

This year Homeless Persons Week will coincide with Missing Persons Week and a national effort is underway to promote these issues and coordinate events and activities. Homelessness Australia, the Federal Police Service and other interested agencies will be calling for ideas over the coming months.

### **The Mental Health Services National Conference in Perth TheMHS September 1 – 4**

With a theme of *You, Your Family, Your Community, Your Mental Health – the path ahead*, and the WA State Government's commitment to improve mental health service responses, evidenced by the appointment of an inaugural Minister for Mental Health, this national conference promises to be stimulating and engaging. A call for papers is currently underway. If you would like to submit an abstract go to the website: [www.waamh.org.au](http://www.waamh.org.au) or [www.themhs.org.au](http://www.themhs.org.au)

### **Homelessness Australia White Paper Response Submission**

Homelessness Australia has prepared a response to 'The Road Home' detailing what cross government and inter-sector work will be required to achieve the aims of reform to the homeless service system and bring about improved outcomes for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. The paper has a state breakdown of the levels of funding approved over the next 5 years and is a good resource for those looking to understand this policy and process. Go to the Homelessness Australia website [www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au) to download the paper and for more news.





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### Counting the Homeless State Data Coming Soon

February is the month we are anticipating state and regional breakdowns from 'Counting the Homeless' derived from the 2006 Census and other data, according to Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie. We are very interested in this data as it will be a useful comparison of regional variations in the incidence of primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. Following the 2001 Census, the Pilbara and Kimberley regions showed a far higher incidence of homelessness (particularly indigenous) than any other region in WA and this report will identify if there has been any change in these alarming statistics.

### Augusta Margaret River Affordable Housing Summit 17<sup>th</sup> February

Shelter WA recently attended a one day summit in the beautiful town of Margaret River where local government, Shire Councillors, community members and providers met to participate in afternoon workshops and to hear from the Minister for Housing the Hon. Mr Buswell talk to recent announcements from State and Commonwealth government to stimulate social housing provision. Shelter WA congratulates the Shire of Augusta Margaret River for holding this summit and the speakers and information presented were of the highest calibre. To quote Professor Julian Disney local government is where 'the rubber hits the road' and it is often at the point of building social housing on the ground in local communities where the most complex and sensitive issues arise. We anticipate the report from this summit soon.

### Recent Reports of Interest

#### **AHURI:** <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/recent.asp>

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute have released several reports recently including:

- What makes case management work for people experiencing homelessness?
- Operating Deficits and Community Housing: Reversing the Trend.
- Scoping the Capacity of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
- The role of home maintenance and modification services in achieving health, community care and housing outcomes in later life

The AHURI Research Agenda for 2009 is both ambitious and topical. Hone your knowledge, visit the site and do some reading !

#### **AIHW:**

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare continue to provide public reports relating to government and non-government service provision in the area of Health and Welfare. Recent publications include:

- [Younger People with Disability in Residential Aged Care Program: final report on the 2007-08 Minimum Data Set](#)
- [Public rental housing 2007-08](#)
- [State owned and managed Indigenous housing 2007-08](#)
- [Child protection Australia 2007-08](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2008 report: detailed analyses](#)
- [Homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in SAAP 2006-07](#)
- [Community housing 2007-08](#)

#### **ABS**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics remains the foremost data collection agency in the country on a wide range of economic and social indicators including the 5 yearly Census of Population and Housing. See recent statistics on:

- Labour Force Australia : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001?OpenDocument>
- Housing Finance Australia Dec 2008 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/5609.0?OpenDocument>
- Overseas Arrivals and Departures Dec 2008 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3401.0?OpenDocument>
- Average Retail Prices of Selected Items : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3401.0?OpenDocument>
- Building Approvals Australia Dec 2008 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8731.0?OpenDocument>
- Consumer Price Index Dec 2008 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0?OpenDocument>
- Australian Economic Indicators Feb. 2009 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0?OpenDocument>
- House Price Indexes Capital Cities Dec 2008 : <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6416.0?OpenDocument>

### Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services

The Productivity Commission reports to the public on the performance of government services. See the report for 2009 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp>

