

Karel Eringa

From: Karel Eringa [karel@shelterwa.org.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 May 2004 16:06
To: Karel Eringa
Subject: [SWA Update] Shelter WA Housing News: 5 May 2004

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Shelter WA Housing News: 5 May 2004

In this issue:

1. Forum: Women and Adequate Housing
2. Tenant Databases

1. Forum: Women and Adequate Housing

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has appointed a Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. The Rapporteur is undertaking an investigation in response to UNCHR 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".

Shelter WA and the Tenants Advice Service are jointly hosting a forum to discuss how women fare with regard to adequate housing in Perth. The Forum will build on an earlier consultation held in Bunbury. The Bunbury consultation heard that there is a lack of access to adequate housing for women and in particular Indigenous women and women on low incomes.

In addition, the outcomes from the day will be incorporated into a Western Australian Report that will form part of both National Shelter's and the National Non Government submissions to the Rapporteur. Guest speakers will provide forum participants with the opportunity to further develop their knowledge of how to work within a human rights framework. The guest speakers include:

- * Professor Jim Ife from Curtin University of Technology; and
- * Mary Anne Kenny from Southern Communities Advocacy Legal Education Services Inc.

The Forum will be held at Claisebrook Lotteries House, 33 Moore Street, East Perth, 1.30pm to 4.30pm, Tuesday 1 June 2004.

For further information contact Paul Pendergast at Shelter WA (paul@shelterwa.org.au or 08 9325 6660) or Donna Bannister at TAS (donna@taswa.org or 08 9221 0088).

Go to www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news) to download the flyer.

2. Tenant Databases

Shelter WA has called for regulation of tenant databases for many years. These databases (also known as blacklists) are often used by real estate agents to assess the credentials of prospective tenants. The problem is that real estate agents can list tenants on such databases without needing to inform the tenant. In fact, the tenant has no right to know what information is contained on the database, and has no right to correct wrong information. Neither is there an onus on landlords to ensure that the information contained on databases is correct. As a result, tenant databases have the potential to cause significant and long term detriment to the ability of

people to access private rental accommodation, without the tenant necessarily being at fault.

Late last month, the Federal Privacy Commissioner found one major tenancy database operator, TICA, to be in breach of the Privacy Act on 13 occasions. According to The Australian of 19 April 2004, the "Commissioner found that TICA breached the Privacy Act by failing to keep tenant records up to date, failing to check the accuracy of information supplied by landlords and agents, failing to inform tenants they'd been listed on a database and overcharging for access to personal information". The Commissioner ordered TICA to cease certain practices and adopt a set of recommendations that will strengthen tenants' rights.

Shelter WA therefore welcomes this finding, as well as a subsequent call from the Real Estate Institute of Australia (REIA) to establish a set of national guidelines for tenancy databases. Shelter WA agrees with REIA's President that "breaches of the Privacy Act by a tenancy database operator could be avoided if a nationally consistent framework for regulation was introduced" and that such a regulatory framework would "provide protection for all stakeholders including the consumer and the real estate industry".

As noted by REIA, the Commonwealth and State Governments are currently undertaking a review of tenancy databases and are expected to announce their findings in coming months. Shelter WA calls on the State and Commonwealth Government to listen to the calls of both real estate agents and housing consumers and introduce a regulatory framework for tenant databases quickly.

SWA Update gives fortnightly updates on housing issues in Western Australia.

To remove yourself from this list, please send a blank email with Subject "UNSUBSCRIBE" to listserv@shelterwa.org.au

To subscribe to the list send a blank email with subject "SUBSCRIBE" to listserv@shelterwa.org.au

Please email karel@shelterwa.org.au with any other queries.

Shelter WA
33 Moore Street, East Perth WA 6004
Ph: 08 9325 6660, Fax: 08 9325 8113
Mob: 0417 295 896
Email: shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au
Web: www.shelterwa.org.au

To receive fortnightly updates on housing policy and research in Western Australia, send a blank email with subject "subscribe" to listserv@shelterwa.org.au

This message has been screened for viruses.