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Shelter WA Housing News: 4 June 2004

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1. Report: A Profile of Homelessness Survey 5

Shelter WA has released its latest survey on homelessness. The survey is part of a project called *A Profile of Households Experiencing Homeless in Western Australia*. This project has been running since early 2001 and focuses on the nature of homelessness in Western Australia. Key findings of Survey 5 are:

- Children aged 14 years and below have represented around one third of homeless people in all five surveys conducted since 2001.
- More than half of Indigenous households in Survey 5 were single parents with children; nearly 80% of non-Indigenous households in Survey 5 were single persons.
- Households that stayed with friends or relatives on a temporary basis were predominately Indigenous, whilst households that stayed alone were mainly non-Indigenous.
- Low income continues to be a principal feature of the homeless population, with around 90% on incomes less than \$400 per week.
- Affordability continues as a major barrier to homeless households accessing rental housing.

In the next few months, Shelter WA hopes to release an overview report of developments in homelessness over the last three years. This report will summarise the findings of all five surveys, and highlight trends and developments in this area.

A Profile of Homelessness in WA: Survey 5 can be downloaded from www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news). Previous reports in this series are still available from www.shelterwa.org.au (publications).

2. National Housing Alliance

Building unions, industry associations and community organisations have joined forces in a newly formed National Housing Alliance. The Alliance has called on all Governments and all political parties to implement reforms to private rental, social housing and home ownership. The National Housing Alliance has developed a four-point plan, which calls for:

1. A National Housing Policy to target affordable housing jointly developed by Federal and State Governments;
2. Increasing the supply of affordable housing through both direct expenditure and fiscal reforms;
3. Reforming and standardising planning systems across Australia; and
4. Acting to stabilise activity cycles in the Australian housing industry.

In addition, the Alliance is planning a National Summit on Housing Affordability for the end of this month. The Four Point Plan and a background to the National Housing Alliance can be downloaded from www.shelterwa.org.au (housing news).

3. Increase to Keystart Home Loans

The maximum loan under the Keystart program has been increased from \$240,000 to \$360,000, and loans for land sales have been raised from \$122,500 to \$190,000. Keystart is the State Government's lending scheme, and aims to assist West Australians into home ownership with a low deposit and no requirement for mortgage insurance. The Minister for Housing and Works, Nick Griffiths, said that the increase was made because recent house price increases meant that the current limits excluded applicants "from buying properites, other than on fringed areas."

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