

## Karel Eringa

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### SWA Update: Shelter WA Housing News - 28 April 2005

1. Good Neighbour Policy
2. Underoccupancy Forums
3. Update: National Housing Conference, Perth 2005
4. Conference: Transport Oriented Development

#### 1. Good Neighbour Policy

Housing Minister Fran Logan announced a new Homeswest 'Good Neighbour' policy on 22 April. According to the Minister's website, "the major plank of the policy requires Homeswest tenants to sign an agreement where they promise not to engage in anti-social behaviour. A breach of the agreement could lead to legal action and ultimately, eviction. The Good Neighbour policy is part of the State Government's general crackdown on anti-social behaviour and aims to protect the lifestyle of people living in close proximity of public housing."

In practical terms, the new policy amalgamates existing policies and procedures into a much more accessible format. Shelter WA generally supports the Good Neighbour policy, as it gives Homeswest tenants a clear indication of their rights and responsibilities. However, Shelter WA believes that the policy needs finetuning. In particular, it should not unduly disadvantage, in the words of the Minister, "the overwhelming majority of Homeswest tenants who are outstanding citizens". Shelter WA is currently working with the Minister and the Department of Housing and Works to ensure this.

Having said this, Shelter WA believes that while the new policy may help reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour to some extent, it does not address the underlying causes. One of these is that over the last decade, Homeswest has increasingly been expected to 'target' its housing to the most disadvantaged people. These tenants are often more difficult to manage, but at the same time pay less rent. The cost of targeting has not yet been recognised in Homeswest's funding.

#### 2. Underoccupancy Forums

Shelter WA has facilitated two community consultations on behalf of the Homeswest Operational Standing Committee (HOSC). The Forums were held in Perth and Bunbury some of the outcomes include:

- Many of the under occupied large family houses are the family homes of long term Homeswest tenants. These households were eligible for a family house when they first moved in but now that their children have grown and moved out are under occupying.
- Given that most households in this situation are long term tenants that have paid their rent and looked after their home, participants at the forums felt that protecting the security of tenure of these tenants should be a high priority for DHW.
- At the same time, participants wanted to see Homeswest's housing stock fully occupied, particular in the light of families facing long wait times for allocations and declining resources available for expanding public housing stock. Homeswest has developed a package of incentives to make it attractive for tenants to relocate to more appropriately sized dwelling and this type of approach was felt to be the best way for Homeswest to approach the problem.

A full report on the Homeswest Under Occupancy Policy Forums will be available in late May.

### 3. Update: National Housing Conference, Perth 2005

The website of the National Housing Conference is now online. As reported previously in SWA Update, the Conference will be held at the Perth Convention Centre from 26-28 October 2005; the theme is *Building for Diversity*. The website, [www.dhw.wa.gov.au/NHC](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/NHC), contains:

- a Call for Papers, with abstracts to be submitted by 27 May,
- an outline of the program and keynote speakers, and
- a registration form, with Earlybird registrations due by 29 July.

Shelter WA has applied to LotteryWest for funds to assist a limited number of WA housing consumers and representatives from rural and remote locations to attend the National Housing Conference. The outcome of this application will not be known until July and therefore any subsidies will only be available on a reimbursement basis. For more information please contact Karel Eringa ([karel@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:karel@shelterwa.org.au) or phone 08 9325 6660).

### 4. Conference: Transport Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development combines walkable access to public transport with a vibrant mixture of urban life, including shopping, entertainment, recreation, business and community facilities. Focussing development where public transport is most accessible will create new job and educational opportunities for many people. It will also help to create more vibrant community hubs and a welcome alternative to the ever rising cost of car travel. It's a combination that is already appealing to many Australians, opening opportunities for developers and challenges for planners and governments.

A conference on *Transit Oriented Development - Making it Happen* will be held at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle from 5-8 July 2005. The Conference will explore all aspects of transit oriented development, including urban design, community concerns, transport planning, performance measurement, urban policy and efficient regulatory pathways for developers and governments will be open for discussion. Further details, including a provisional program and registration form, are available from the Conference website, [www.congresswest.com.au/TOD](http://www.congresswest.com.au/TOD).

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