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Subject: [SWA Update] Shelter WA Housing News: 9 May 2005
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SWA Update: Shelter WA Housing News - 9 May 2005

1. Belmont Housing Forum
2. Public Housing Changes in NSW
3. Position Vacant: Southeast Committee on Homelessness
4. Public Forum: Innovative Solutions to the Stress on a Modern City

1. Belmont Housing Forum

This year Shelter WA will be commencing a new project, which includes a series of local housing forums. These forums are intended to allow housing consumers and Shelter WA members an opportunity to provide direct feedback on housing issues in their area. For Shelter WA, the forums provide a means of providing more direct contact with members and individuals interested in housing issues.

The first of these forum process will focus on housing issues in the Belmont area. We envisage that the forum process will take around three months and includes: meeting with key stakeholders, developing a discussion paper, conducting a forum/s, producing a final report and promoting the findings.

If you are interested in getting involved with Shelter WA's Belmont Housing Forum, please contact Paul Pendergast: email: paul@shelterwa.org.au or phone: 9325 6660.

2. Public Housing Changes in NSW

Late last month, the New South Wales Department of Housing announced a 'plan for reshaping public housing', which includes some far-reaching changes to public housing. The changes include:

- ending security of tenure,
- raising rents to 30% of income,
- making public housing tenants responsible for paying for their water usage, and
- further concentrating disadvantaged people in a rationed public housing system.

A comprehensive overview of the plan is available from the DoH website at www.housing.nsw.gov.au/news_publications/ReshapingPublicHousing/index.htm. Shelter NSW and NCOSS have rejected the package, saying it "is a further step towards public housing becoming a marginalised housing option and does nothing to address the bigger challenge of expanding the provision of affordable housing for those ineligible for social housing assistance". Their response is available at www.sheltersnsw.org.au/docs/mr050428misshaping.html.

Shelter WA shares the concerns expressed by Shelter NSW about these changes. In addition to the marginalisation of public housing,

- the new rent setting policy exacerbates a poverty trap, and will discourage public housing tenants from finding employment,
- fixed term leases will create a churning of tenants in between private rental, public housing, and homelessness, as well as putting more and new demands on welfare services to assist tenants being evicted from public housing at their end of their fixed-term leases, and

- insecurity of tenure will discourage people from putting down roots in their neighbourhoods and contributing to community life and building social capital.

Shelter WA understands that these changes are part of an attempt to address the financial difficulties faced by the NSW Department of Housing. Fortunately, public housing in Western Australia is in a far better financial position due to good forward planning in the 1990s. As a result, it does not face the maintenance backlog experienced in NSW, and Shelter WA therefore does not foresee that the NSW plan will be replicated in this state.

3. Position Vacant: Southeast Committee on Homelessness

The South East Committee on Homelessness (SECOH) was established in response to growing concerns within our community as to the issue of Homelessness. The Committee is comprised of a range of government and non-government agencies, all of whom are endeavouring to provide services to prevent homelessness, or to re-establish accommodation for those who have become homeless. At present there are approximately 15 organisations represented on this Committee.

SECOH has successfully obtained funding from Lotterywest to undertake a research project in relation to Homelessness in our corridor community. The research, which seeks to build upon the work of the State Homelessness Taskforce and the National Homelessness Taskforce, aims to address the following three key questions:

- What is the nature of local service responses and how have these acted to resolve and/or maintain homelessness?
- What does the existing research tell us about the nature and effect of these local service responses?
- Given the answers to the above two questions, what are the strengths and deficiencies within the homelessness strategy in the south-east metro corridor and how do we enhance strengths and weaken deficiencies?

A project worker is sought to assist SECOH to undertake an action research project to address these three key questions. The position is available as a part time contract appointment for duration of 12 months with remuneration at a level equivalent to SACS Award Worker 7.

The successful applicant may work from their own premises or be based at a host service / SECOH member agency located in the south-east metro corridor. The funding will allow for worker's salary, oncosts and consumables. The project worker will be responsible to a Project Steering Committee nominated by SECOH.

The outcomes of the project are to:

- Map and assess existing services and service delivery;
- Gather, assess and present applicable research;
- Prepare a final report with clear recommendations on the re-organisation of existing services and service delivery and identify any gaps and deficiencies.

The selection criteria for the project worker position are:

1. Experienced in social action research;
2. Experience in working with diverse groups at a "grass-roots" level with local service providers;
3. Experience in report writing;
4. Experience in community development and development of service models;
5. Must have access to own transport.

EOIs comprising a cover letter summarising skills, knowledge and experience against the above selection criteria, a Curriculum Vitae and contact details of two relevant referees, should be lodged with Myles Kunzli, Gosnells Community Legal Centre, PO Box 226, Gosnells WA 6990 before close of business on Tuesday 24 May 2005.

For further information contact Myles on 9490 1163, email: myles@gosclc.com.au.

4. Public Forum: Innovative Solutions to the Stress on a Modern City

Urban planning and design is an important issue in Western Australia and as Perth's population grows,

resources are stretched and community capacity is challenged. In celebration of the Australian Innovation Festival 2005, Curtin University is hosting a public forum entitled *Innovative Solutions to the Stress on a Modern City; practical, environmental and creative answers to city design*. Speakers will include

- Professor Fred Affleck, Director, Planning and Transport Research Centre (PATREC)
- Professor Ruth Durack, Director, The Urban Design Centre, Western Australia
- Associate Professor David Wood, Deputy Executive Dean, Humanities, Curtin University
- Professor Daniela Stehlik, Director, Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities, Curtin University

Venue:

John Curtin Gallery and BankWest Lecture Theatre
Curtin University of Technology
(Enter via the Kent Street entrance and follow the signs to Car Park P3 for free parking)

Date:

Tuesday 10 May
6.00pm for a 6.30pm start

Light refreshments will be served at 6.00pm preceding the lecture. Please RSVP by Friday 6 May on 9266 2563 or events@curtin.edu.au.

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