



# newsletter

## GOVERNMENT OR NOT - QUALITY PROFESSIONALISM & RESPECT

### From the EO

This past quarter of 2008 has seen all who work in human services, community based non-government and public sector agencies busier than I can ever remember being. Whilst the atmosphere is still infused with hope and cautious optimistic anticipation, the volume and pace of consultation demands, reviews, requests for comment and input has been particularly high and is in addition to the 'business as usual' central workload all agencies are funded and resourced for.

Never one to let an opportunity for input go by, Shelter WA has done it's best to get long held concerns addressed and voice the needs of people at risk and experiencing homelessness to decision makers. The input that took the lions share attention of Shelter WA staff has been to the Homelessness Green Paper, and we have been pleased to receive strong positive feedback and support for this submission.

In the next quarter Shelter will be holding and contributing to a number of forums. Homeless Persons week 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> August will be a very eventful time, with Shelter WA joining the Tenant's Advice Service, Community Housing Coalition and WACOSS to brief and consult with people around Homeless Services and Funding, Social Housing provision, Rental Affordability and Tenants Rights. We will also be

introducing the work of the Creating Room in the Boom (CRiB) campaign and seeking suggestions and endorsement of the recommendations we have developed. Look out for the flyer.

Further activity planned for the first week in August includes lunchtime street surveys, taking the pulse of WA public opinion around people's experience of homelessness, if any, identifying the causes and gathering suggested solutions.

For a full list of planned events see CHCWA's website: <http://www.communityhousing.com.au/raining-and-events/hpw08/>

### Professionalism, Peak Acknowledgement & Intellectual Property

Recently I have had cause to reflect on the non-government sector, the quality of agency relationships, partnerships and collaboration.

This is particularly relevant as Shelter WA observes other bodies galvanise action around housing, plan and advertise forums on issues that have to date been recognised as the core business and expertise of Shelter. It is imperative that agencies and individuals act in a way that is professional, respectful and mindful of the value of each and every organisation and the unique and valuable perspective and expertise that every agency brings to the table.

### In this issue

**Editorial: Relentless workloads & Intellectual Property**  
**Affordable Housing Summit Chair Prof Julian Disney**  
**Outcomes from the 2020 Summit**  
**WACOSS Conference May 1-2 2008**  
**5th National Homelessness Conference in Adelaide**

**WA Housing Crisis Committee for CaLD**  
**Creating Room in the Boom**  
**WACOSS WA State Budget & Utilities Project**  
**Conferences: Mens Advisory Network and Youth Affairs**  
**Upcoming Events and Late Press**

If the non-government sector wishes to gain equal standing with the public sector we must ensure that rigour and standards are applied consistently to services and activities and agencies and individuals are professionally accountable, open to feedback and scrutiny and that the quality of outputs delivered is at least as good as that provided by government. In parallel with the union campaign to address parity in salaries and conditions for the non-government sector it is particularly important that managers deliver and expect quality and professionalism from staff, colleagues and stakeholders.

Recognising and respecting intellectual property is part of this professional orientation. Copyright and academic ownership of publications, reports, data from original research and surveys, and information gathered and correlated for a particular purpose are all items that hold intellectual property sensitivity and if reproduced or referenced should be acknowledged and in some cases have permission granted for their use.

A quick guide to intellectual property, referencing styles and copyright with links to topics such as plagiarism can be found here: <http://www.caslon.com.au/ipguide.htm> or here: [www.ipaustralia.gov.au](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au)

### Chair National Housing Summit Group Prof. Julian Disney in WA

Shelter WA is pleased to announce that Professor Julian Disney, chair of the National Affordable Housing Summit Group is coming to Western Australia and will deliver a round table discussion forum on the 21<sup>st</sup> August between 3-5 pm. The forum will explore affordable housing policy at a national and state level and provide participants an opportunity to understand and contribute to the formulation of an Australian National Affordable Housing Agreement that will replace the current Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

Participant places are limited and confined only to attendees with high level housing policy knowledge and expertise. The National Summit Group state affiliates - Shelter WA, CHCWA, WACOSS, Unions WA and the Housing Industry Association warmly welcomes Prof Disney. Invitations to this event will be circulated to individuals.

For more on the work of the National Affordable Housing Summit Group including a report of the Roundtables undertaken in see the website:  
<http://www.housingsummit.org.au/>

### Outcomes from the 2020 Summit

The Prime Minister has announced the public release of the Final Report of the Australia 2020 Summit held April 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> 2008.

The purpose of the Australia 2020 Summit was to explore the challenges facing Australia in the next decade and beyond, to discuss ambitions for Australia as a nation, and to identify policy mechanisms to realise those ambitions.

The final report seeks to capture all of the ideas and issues raised

at the summit. This report is intended to provide a record of the Australia 2020 Summit and recommendations on each of the discussion areas for consideration by the Australian Government. It is based on ideas put forward by participants during the Summit discussion sessions, outcomes from preliminary Summit events and ideas generated from public submissions received prior to the Summit.

Additional events were held including more than 500 school summits across the country. Reports from these events are available on the Australia 2020 website,  
[www.australia2020.gov.au](http://www.australia2020.gov.au).

The report will assist policy development by describing the discussions and outlining the many ideas generated at the summit. The depth and range of ideas in each chapter reflect the diversity of summit participants and the wider Australian community.

Some ideas and suggestions emerging from the 2020 Summit in relation to housing were;  
*Population and Cities*

- To climate-proof low-income households—for example using compact fluorescent light globes, low-flow shower roses, and home energy audits. This acknowledges the impact of managing climate change on low-income households. It would apply to rental properties, where many low-income people live. (Final Report Australia 2020 Summit p64)

*Strengthening communities, Supporting families and social inclusion*

- Establish a national housing foundation, with a small percentage from the sale of every property in Australia to go to public housing and homelessness. (Final Report Australia 2020 Summit p173)

*Strengthening communities,*

### *Supporting families and social inclusion*

- Establish a Charter of Human Rights and a National Action Plan on Social Inclusion. (Final Report Australia 2020 Summit p173)

Summit participants and all other interested parties are welcome to comment on this final report and to continue to provide submissions on the challenges facing the nation: through the Australia 2020 website,  
[www.australia2020.gov.au](http://www.australia2020.gov.au)

To view the final report visit:  
[http://www.australia2020.gov.au/final\\_report/index.cfm](http://www.australia2020.gov.au/final_report/index.cfm)

### WACOSS Conference May 1-2

The WACOSS Communities at Work Conference was held on May 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> and resources made available by the presenters are now available to download by visiting the following web address  
<http://www.wacoss.org.au/conference2008/index.php?page=program>.

Some highlights from the WACOSS Conference included the performance by Yirra Yaakin Aboriginal Theatre Group - Muttacar Sorry Business, a powerful story of the tragic consequences of drink driving, spinal injury and personal growth through reflection, insight and healing family support.

Jason Clark of Minds at Work was also inspiring and challenging as he led us through his model of social action based on inclusion and hope.

The sessions about Housing Stress & Homelessness were relevant and well evidenced with both papers offering a sound exploration of public housing, housing stress and international models.

Perhaps the most timely and current offering at the conference was the keynote by Professor Rob Watts from RMIT. His challenge to

the community service sector was not always play the poor cousin, he also challenged that the “poverty research” needs new rethinking. In that *vulnerabilities* “should not be used to characterise the whole person or their collectively.” This simply promotes the neo-liberal and neo-conservatives, those which we are trying to oppose. For example, he states that “A person with epilepsy is not an epileptic.”

Above all he promoted a Human Rights framework, not as the sole solution but as a law reform and litigation as one part of the process. More still needs to be done in culture and behaviour change and political mobilisation. He asked the conference participants to make a recommendation to the state government from the conference to encourage a Human Rights Act for Western Australia.

### **5th National Homelessness Conference Adelaide May 21-23**

This conference, organised by Homelessness Australia was energetic and inspirational with many service providers from around the country attending to discuss and reflect on their work, the current policy environment and opportunities that have presented as a result of the change in government.

The Homelessness Green Paper was launched and informative presentations from SAAP Innovation and Investment projects were showcased including one that focussed on complex client needs and responses. Participants at this conference had the pleasure of hearing from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness Director Philip Mangano and the thrill of a Homeless Street Soccer game. Papers are now available from the Homelessness Australia website: <http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.a>

[u/site/5th%20National%20Homelessness%20Conference.php](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/site/5th%20National%20Homelessness%20Conference.php)

### **Housing Crisis Committee for CaLD**

The Joint Community Sector report, Gaps in Housing and Support Services for Humanitarian Entrants was launched on the 30th of May at the Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka. Margaret Quirk, local MLA for Girrawheen and Minister for Corrective Services attended the launch and accepted the report. The report outlines difficulties for newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants from CaLD communities and includes recommendations for consideration.

The Consultation Forum that gathered information for the report was held on February 4th 2008 with a wide range of participants working in migrant services. Thirty-four (34) participants from twenty-eight (28) agencies participated in the consultation forum. In addition 9 observers, moderators and guest speakers were present. It was shown that the difficulties for recently arrived humanitarian community members in accessing and maintaining housing is increasing with time and is exacerbated by the current high demand for rental housing, related low vacancy rates and increasing rents.

The report (Gaps in Housing and Support for Humanitarian Communities) is available on Shelter WA’s website here: [http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/papers\\_reports/2008/Gaps\\_in\\_Housing\\_and\\_Support\\_for\\_Humanitarian\\_Communities.pdf](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/papers_reports/2008/Gaps_in_Housing_and_Support_for_Humanitarian_Communities.pdf)

The WA Commissioner for Equal Opportunity has now announced an investigation into racial discrimination in the private rental market, calling for submissions from individuals, organisations assisting tenants, home owners and real estate agents.

The investigation, pursuant to Section 80 of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 will assess whether persons from ethnic minority backgrounds and Aboriginal people are discriminated against on the basis of their race either directly or indirectly in the private rental market.

Submissions can be made by individuals and organisations and information sessions are being held in major metropolitan and regional centres over the coming weeks. Community advocates and organisations are encouraged to attend the forums so that they may work within their community to lodge submissions to the inquiry on behalf of clients and consumers.

Shelter WA together with the Housing Crisis Committee for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities will offer a consultation Forum for people from CaLD backgrounds, advocates and representatives to provide submissions to the Inquiry before the closing date 30 Sept. For more information visit [www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)

### **Creating Room in the Boom**

The Creating Room in the Boom (CRiB) campaign group including Shelter WA, the Community Housing Coalition of WA, WACOSS and the Tenants Advice Service is gearing up to launch their recommendations to address community service bottlenecks and gaps, rental housing stress experienced by low-income and otherwise disadvantaged households and the overall shortage of appropriate, secure and affordable housing. The low availability and high cost of housing, both to rent and purchase in WA is severely impacting people on low incomes who are increasingly facing difficulty accessing

accommodation that meets their needs.

The CRiB campaign has identified four primary areas requiring immediate action:

1. An increase to 6% (from the current 4% of all housing stock) of social housing including public and community housing;
2. Reducing the large numbers of people in financial stress in rental housing by increasing the range and provision of Private Rental Loan, Subsidy or Grants Schemes, increasing the number of short-term, crisis and transitional accommodation places, exploring the development and implementation of an authorised and approved 'Social Landlords Register' for landlords and private citizens to offer rental homes, rooms or other facilities to low-income or otherwise disadvantaged consumers unable to access housing in the mainstream private rental market, explore improved provision of income support and rent allowance for low income housing consumers in private rental, encourage implementation of the National Rental Affordability Scheme by facilitating partnerships with community housing providers local governments and financial investors and encourage development of current undeveloped, titled and serviced urban land focussing on dwelling construction along transport routes and in regional centres.
3. Improve tenants' rights, including legislative protection against excessive rent increases and outlawing residential tenant blacklist databases, end no-cause evictions, remove option fees and bring Boarders and Lodgers under the protection

of the Residential Tenancies Act

4. Address the funding shortage for homeless services and staff, by increasing funding to the non-government sector both for salaries and service delivery, increase the provision of transitional and ongoing case management, practical supports, financial and advocacy services

The Creating Room in the Boom Campaign group strongly encourages the Government of Western Australia to deliver the benefits of current economic windfalls in Western Australia to all people, but particularly those with fixed and low incomes and other risk indicators of social exclusion who are most affected by the current shortage of affordable housing.

The CRiB objectives, media releases and actions will be available shortly on-line and events will be held throughout Homeless Persons week. Letters have gone to Ministers and other Politicians. Watch this space!

#### **May & November State Budget**

The Treasurer's State Budget released on May 8th was disappointing for funding for the community services sector and public housing. Currently in WA, stock of public and community housing has fallen to a proportion of ~4% of all residential dwellings. With the rising cost of living and the public housing waiting list at an all time high, the proportion will continue to fall unless there is a significant and sustained commitment by government to build and purchase increased numbers of dwellings.

Shelter WA is working with other peak bodies contributing to WACOSS activities that feed in to government in the form of a pre-budget submission, particularly

important in a pre-election environment. The previous pre-budget paper 'If Not Now, When?' is being revisited as many community concerns and gaps in service continue to be overlooked by government and policy decision makers.

#### **The Consumer Utilities Project**

The Consumer Utilities Project has been established by WACOSS to work with consumers and consumer representative organisations to achieve reform in the provision of utilities for West Australians. The project operates a telephone hotline to provide advice and assistance on complaint mechanisms, issues concerning financial hardship, how to take the next step with your issue and referrals to agencies that can advocate on behalf of consumers.

You can contact the Consumer Utilities Project Hotline on (08) 9420 7217, Tuesday to Thursday from 1pm-5pm.

#### **Mens Advisory Network Conference**

This conference will be the second national conference and will cover topics such as fatherhood and parenting, mens health, the men's shed movement, male sex work, relationships, emotional expression, empathy and compassion. Fabulous keynote speakers will present including; Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan, Nightline radio presenter Graham Maybury and Dr Sue Gordon. See the back page for contact details and get in quick to register.

#### **Youth Affairs Council Photo Art Exhibition and Fairground Conference**

An exhibition of photos created by collaboration between young people experiencing homelessness and emerging photographers is being exhibited from 8<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>

August at Gingers Garage, 167 William St, Perth. YACWA is also preparing for their Fairground Youth Sector Conference 9-10<sup>th</sup> October.

### Upcoming Events

- **Homeless Persons Week** August 4-8<sup>th</sup> and the many events and activities that are being held during the week. Look for us in Forest Chase at lunchtimes and do a vox-pop street survey
- **The Mens Advisory Network Conference: From Babies to Blokes** 3-6 August in Fremantle. See the MAN website to register: <http://www.man.org.au/>
- Supporting **The Big Issue** to reach a circulation of 4,000 and cheering on our **Street Socceros** in the homeless world cup
- **CHCWA book launch 'The Affordable Housing Crisis. Where to from here?'** at the Irish Club on August 6
- **Prof. Julian Disney, Chair, National Affordable Housing Summit Group** in WA for a flying visit late August. Shelter in conjunction with state affiliates of the National Summit Group will host a affordable housing policy roundtable with invited participants.
- Hearing our Minister speak at the **Community and Economic Development Conference** on 30<sup>th</sup> July
- Continuing the push for reinstatement of **National Shelter** core funding, but undertaking projects in the meantime
- The WA Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into **race based discrimination in the private rental market**
- The **WA Peaks Forum** meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> August
- Speaking to **WA Centrelink Job Capacity Assessors** on August 27

about the barriers to meeting mutual obligations for homeless people

- Continuing to work with the **Equal Opportunity Commission** on implementing the recommendations from the 2004 investigation into discrimination against indigenous people in the Department of Housing and Works.

Shelter WA is very pleased to see that DHW Director General has personally committed to ensuring that all EOC recommendations are rapidly acted on and this systematic disadvantage of original Australians by a public agency will be ended.

- Seeing the results of the **Australian Bureau of Statistics consultation into a Housing Information Development Plan** held in WA on June 20. Comments on the draft IDP close on 4<sup>th</sup> August.
- Continuing the energy, passion and commitment around the **WA Civil Society Dialogues**, most recently held on July 1<sup>st</sup>
- **The WA South West Youth Conference for 15-25 year olds in Busselton** 19-21<sup>st</sup> September. For more information contact coordinator Tiffany Leake Youth Affairs Council on (08) 9754 6714 and RSVP by the 22<sup>nd</sup> August.
- Supporting the **City of Perth** to host a **Homeless Connect day** in November.
- The next **WA Centrelink Community Consultative Committee** meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup>
- The implementation of reviewed WA legislation guiding **Associations and Incorporations** following DOCEP workshops and sector consideration. See the final report by AHA Consultants here: <http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/>

### LATE PRESS: SAD FAREWELL

Heidi Stewart, our recent and valuable recruit to Shelter WA's Research Manager position has sadly resigned to complete her studies and address a chronic health concern she has been experiencing. Shelter WA will be advertising to fill this vacant position in the very near future, and hopes that current industrial negotiations over salary (in line with the Community Services What's it Worth? campaign) will deliver a more attractive work package for potential applicants.

### Shelter WA

Shelter WA is Western Australia's peak independent housing organisation. Shelter represents the views of consumers and community groups on major housing issues. Shelter WA aims to ensure that every person has access to affordable, appropriate, secure and safe housing that is free from discrimination.

#### *We do this through:*

- coordinating and representing community sector views to government;
- developing and responding to policy;
- providing education and information; and
- promoting alternative housing models.

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