



# newsletter

April 2008

## EDITORIAL: PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

### **Centrelink Community Consultative Committee**

Shelter WA is member of the Centrelink Community Consultative Committee that provides for people from NGO's, service delivery organisations, government departments and Centrelink staff to come together to discuss the needs of Centrelink clients. Western Australia is fortunate by comparison with other states in the opportunities available for input from non government organisations to government departments.

The Centrelink Committee gathers quarterly, and the recent meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March grappled with issues around clients struggling with literacy and numeracy, job capacity assessments, free financial advice, information about changes to Child Support Agency policies and procedures, and reported on work from the Seniors and Carers, Mental Health and Disability sub-committees.

The next Centrelink Community Consultative Committee Meeting will be on the 11<sup>th</sup>

June. Contact Shelter if you have a particular issue you would like raised.

### **The Council of Australian Governments**

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 21st meeting in Adelaide on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. COAG is under enormous pressure with the new Reform Agenda, resulting in all State governments making a commitment to comprehensive microeconomic reform for Australia.

Most evident will be the shift in funding arrangements between Commonwealth and State governments with fewer tightly controlled Special Purpose Payments (SPP's) from the Commonwealth and more National Partnership Payments that set outcomes and targets for achievement but allow State Governments to direct resources to areas of need within the overall framework. Currently WA receives around \$3 billion under approximately 90 SPP's and recoups approximately \$4.5b in GST. The number of funding

agreements is ultimately planned to be reduced to a total of 4 or 5.

The COAG Reform Agenda is looking at 7 areas. These are:

1. Business Regulation and Competition.
2. Climate Change and Water
3. Health and Ageing
4. Housing
5. Indigenous Reform
6. Productivity Agenda
7. Infrastructure

The early work of this government's COAG has been focussed on implementing election commitments, however the reforms ultimately will boost productivity by reducing duplication and unnecessary reporting burdens and deliver better services for the community, address social inclusion, and work toward closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and supporting environmental sustainability.

COAG reported it is on course for delivering vital initiatives to assist housing affordability and reduce the number of homeless people; and has set practical goals and agreed more than 23

### **Elsewhere in this Issue**

1. Centrelink Community Consultative Committee
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3. Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability - Barriers to Home Ownership
4. EOC Terms of Reference - Discrimination in the Private Rental Market
5. The Peaks Forum and Human Services Industry Round Table
6. Corporate Community Investment and the NFP sector
7. Review of Rules - Associations Incorporation Act
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specific actions across its agenda, aimed at closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

COAG identified the decline in housing affordability as a pressing issue for Australians and recognised that improving affordability is critical to addressing financial stress and disadvantage, including that experienced by Indigenous communities.

COAG agreed to implement five key housing initiatives;

1. To facilitate improved housing supply through identifying surplus government land suitable for housing development
2. Provide incentives to construct affordable rental housing; lower the burden of infrastructure and regulatory costs built into the purchase price of a new home
3. Improve the evidence base for housing policy and program development
4. Support the neediest in society through joint Commonwealth-State investment in 600 houses and units for homeless people.

COAG agreed to direct \$150 million to deliver new homes for homeless people. These funds will be distributed according to the number of homeless people in each jurisdiction, with a guarantee for smaller jurisdictions that no State or Territory will receive less than \$1 million per annum.

COAG welcomed the decision of the Commonwealth to provide \$30 million from the Housing Affordability Fund

for the roll out of electronic Development Applications in local government with a priority focus on high growth areas. COAG requested the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council to make the implementation of this work a priority.

COAG reaffirmed its commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and agreed to a new national target for its reform agenda -halving the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes within a decade.

Shelter WA expresses support for the tasks of COAG and the Reform Agenda, sympathy for our Public Servants in their work to deliver these ambitious objectives and enthusiasm for opportunities to contribute to the process.

For information about COAG work go to:  
<http://coag.gov.au/meeting/s/archive.htm>

### Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability - Barriers to Home Ownership

Shelter WA made a submission and presentation to this Select Committee when it convened in Perth for a public hearing on

the 8<sup>th</sup> April. The Committee is inquiring into 7 areas and their impact on housing affordability and Shelter WA addressed each Term of Reference and offered general and additional recommendations that fell outside these criteria.

The terms of reference (abbreviated) were:

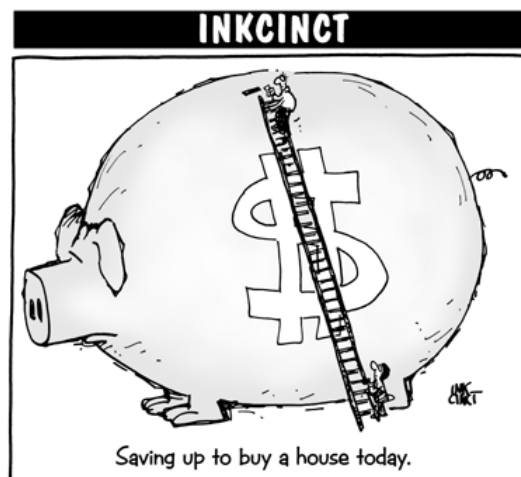
1. Taxes and levies imposed by state governments
2. Rate of release of new land
3. Proposed assistance for first home buyers in the absence of supply
4. Role of all levels of government in facilitating affordable home ownership
5. effect of government intervention - planning and industrial relations
6. Role of Financial Institutions in lending and
7. Home ownership and retirement incomes

Read Shelter WA's submission on the Parliamentary webpage: [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/hsaf\\_ctte/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/hsaf_ctte/index.htm) (number 42)

### Equal Opportunities Commission Terms of Reference

The Equal Opportunity Commission is preparing to investigate race based discrimination in the private rental industry and the possible causes and appropriate remedies for addressing such discrimination.

The EOC provided draft Terms of Reference for an inquiry which Shelter WA took the opportunity to respond. Shelter WA is very supportive of the overall thrust of this investigation, and welcomes the initiative.



Shelter WA is hopeful that discrimination in securing and maintaining private rental tenancies faced by Aboriginal and CaLD people will be addressed and that Landlords and Real Estate Agents who refuse a tenancy based on racial grounds will eventually be appropriately penalised in an open legal process.

### Peaks Forum

The WA Peaks Forum is a body of Peak organisations. Membership of the Peaks Forum is open to any Peak organisation that:

- a. is a member of WACOSS;
- b. has a state wide focus;
- c. has a representative role:
  - o of issues,
  - o of a constituency or population group, or
  - o of a service network or broad service sector;
- d. has a membership base; and
- e. supports the purposes of the WA Peaks Forum.

The Peaks Forum meets 4 times a year and its purpose is:

- a) To provide an opportunity for information exchange, networking, discussion and mutual support about key issues affecting the non-government human services sector.
- b) To provide a mechanism for consultation and conversation between non- government human services sector peak bodies.
- c) To facilitate strategic alliances and joint policy, projects and initiatives; particularly in relation to sector sustainability and viability.
- d) To facilitate strategic planning for the non-government human services sector as a whole.

- e) To identify cross sector policy priorities for the non-government human service sector in WA and inform WACOSS of these priorities.
- f) To provide a link between the non-government human service sector, WACOSS and representatives on the Industry Round Table.

Shelter WA is a member of the Peaks Forum. If there are any issues that fall within the purposes of this Forum, contact Shelter WA or your peak body to have them raised. For more information about the membership and activities of the Forum contact WACOSS.

### WA Human Services Industry Round Table

In November 2006, NGO Industry Plan signatories gathered together to: identify a preferred model for the proposed Industry Council; develop a set of operating parameters for the Council and formulate an action plan for its establishment.

It was agreed that a high-level Roundtable would be the most suitable model to progress and monitor the policies of the Industry Plan and for government and non-government sectors of the industry to discuss industry wide issues of concern. It was decided that this Roundtable should be made up of:

- 7 representatives selected by Government
- 7 representatives selected by the NGO sector
- 1 independent Chair

Recently a vacancy arose on the HSIRT and a new representative was nominated. Non-government reps are now:

Mr Chris Hall, President, WACOSS

Mr Carlo Calogero, CEO, National Disabilities Services WA (formerly ACROD)

Ms Jill Rundle, CEO, WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies

Ms Tricia Lee, CEO, Children, Youth and Family Agencies Association

Ms Angela Hartwig, Coordinator, Women's Council for Domestic and Violence Services

Ms Marita Walker, CEO, Perth Home Care Services

Francis Lynch, Chief Executive, Ruah Community Services

### Corporate Community Investment and the NFP sector

Shelter WA recently attended a half day workshop conducted by the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs. The workshop explored issues around NFP corporate partnership in the areas of:

- Motives and philosophical underpinnings
- Nature of engagement
- Partnerships
- Nature of activities
- Management
- Key success factors and potential problem areas

Other factors that will impact on Corporate Investment are the review of the Charitable Benefits Act and work currently being undertaken by the Fundraising Institute with WACOSS and Queensland Institute of Technology for consistent accounting guidelines.

Ideally corporate agencies seek arrangements where they are able to celebrate achievements and gain a social return on their investment. Increasingly corporate bodies offer staff time to volunteer activities and negotiate branding and sponsorship rights.

Larger NGO's with profile recognition, visibility and capacity to actively promote investment opportunities in the corporate sector have been more successful than smaller agencies and the point was raised that if there was a legislative requirement for a minimum level of pre-tax profit to be directed to community and social infrastructure, NGO's would not be placed in the position of having to go 'cap-in-hand' seeking funds from business to undertake projects or initiatives that fall outside government contract funding parameters.

For more about socially responsible business see the website:

<http://www.accpa.com.au/index.php>

### **DOCEP Review of Rules - Associations Incorporation Act.**

The Department of Consumer and Employment Protection is conducting a one day forum on May 30<sup>th</sup> to gain input to a new set of rules for organisations and associations that will guide the formal structures and governance regulations of most clubs and organisations underpinned by a Constitution or Rules of Association.

Many non-government agencies operate under the governance of a Management Committee or

Board and comply with a formal Constitution including regular meetings and Annual General Meetings. However the practicalities of recruiting and retaining members to the Board or Committee members having understanding of their legal responsibilities and assurances for attendance and commitment to the organisation vary.

One of the most frequent reasons cited for failure of organisations to meet their contract requirements and for agency staff to stray into areas and practices that are outside the mandate of an organisation lies with gaps in the governance processes of Management Committees. Many Aboriginal organisations experience great difficulty engaging and maintaining a strong Board of Management and this has been shown to be one of the key factors in the viability and capacity of these organisations.

If you have any comments or point for suggestions to improve the governance requirements for organisations under Incorporations Law you would like raised in this Forum, contact Bronwyn at Shelter before the 30<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Conferences**

Shelter WA has been very busy attending a number of conferences, forums and workshops both here at home and interstate.

The **ACOSS Conference** held in Melbourne on April 9-10 saw over 600 people attend to explore issues of social inclusion across 9 themes:

- Climate change, essential services & equity
- Disability

- Early Childhood Development
- Health
- Housing and homelessness
- Inclusive and diverse communities
- Indigenous communities
- Supporting employment and participation
- Youth transitions and education

The Conference aimed to identify medium and long term targets to reduce social exclusion and workshops examined who is excluded, the effects of this exclusion and the broad strategies which would help achieve social inclusion targets, within each of the streams.

The Hon. Julia Gillard, Acting Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment, Workplace Relations, & Social Inclusion, spoke to conference participants and was given a verbal report from each of the 9 concurrent session leaders.

### **Mental Health Community Network Forum**

Heidi Stewart, Shelter WA's Research Manager attended this one day forum on April 4<sup>th</sup>. The Mental Health Community Network Forum was fantastically run, providing an open communication for all participants, following the method of Open Space Technology, "a philosophy, practice and process that enables groups of any size to come together around complex, important issues and accomplish something meaningful." (Peggy Holman, Founder of The Open Circle Company)

Participants were asked to write down their issue and

'post' this issue to add to the day's agenda. Participants could then chose between participant-created issues and select subjects and contribute accordingly. All discussion was then captured in a Book of Proceedings that will be made available to the public. The forum was developed to facilitate community input into WA mental health planning and public policy development. Mental health Open Space forums will be held over the next two years throughout WA. For more information Contact Department of Health, Mental Health Division, 9222 4099

### Upcoming Events

Shelter is looking forward to

- **Outcomes from the 2020 Summit held April 19-20**
- **WACOSS conference May 1-2**
- **5<sup>th</sup> National Homelessness Conference in Adelaide May 21-23**
- Report from the February Forum held by the **WA Housing Crisis Committee for CaLD** to be launched
- The **Creating Room in the Boom** campaign group to launch agreed policies and recommendations
- **Outcomes from the Anglicare Youth Homelessness Forum** on April 16 exploring issues for youth impacting on their access to housing
- Planning with COTA and OSI for a **WA seniors housing** mini-conference in August
- The **WA State Budget** on May 8<sup>th</sup>

### 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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