



# newsletter

## EDITORIAL: TIME FOR HOUSING CONSUMER PARTICIPATION MARCH 2009

### Time for an Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group

Shelter WA is keen to establish an Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group to consider the implications for tenants and consumers of affordable housing resulting from policy and programme changes happening in WA.

Other Australian states have well established tenant unions, regional groups tenant associations from public housing estates, but WA lacks a formally established group comprised of tenants to actively evaluate and monitor the situation for tenants informed from direct experience.

In WA Community Housing providers can include tenants and residents in their Management Committees or Board structure and some Government committees include a consumer representative but for the most part no mechanism exists to consult with and inform tenants of what is happening that may have implications for their tenancies.

Many current initiatives warrant consideration by tenants including;

- the establishment of National Rental Affordability Scheme properties (with rents set at 80% of market rate and a ceiling on the income levels of eligible tenants),
- the ongoing review of the WA Rental Tenancies Act,
- changes to legislation for long term residents in caravan parks,
- the Commonwealth and State funding stimulus to increase supply of social housing,

- stock transfers from Homeswest to Community Housing Providers
- a common wait list for Community Housing and Homeswest applicants,
- Regulation of Community Housing Providers to ensure minimum standards
- the shift in funding arrangements for homeless services and crisis accommodation from SAAP to the NAHA
- the establishment of a WA Ministry for Mental Health with increased accommodation services for people with Mental Illness
- recognition of the lack of disability housing options and increased building for this group
- acknowledgment of youth homelessness in WA
- improving exit points for crisis accommodation.

The governance structure and evaluation mechanisms for the new National Affordable Housing Agreement are still in development and we hope that real and effective consumer participation in the implementation monitoring and evaluation of the NAHA as it is rolled out in WA can be included.

Shelter WA will be partnering with WACOSS over the coming months to ascertain the potential for establishment of such a group with ongoing secretarial support and participating member's fees.

If you are interested in contributing to the development of this group please contact the Executive Officer Bronwyn: [bronwyn@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:bronwyn@shelterwa.org.au)

### Affordable Housing – WA and Government Initiatives

A number of Affordable Housing initiatives to increase supply of housing for low to moderate income households currently experiencing rental stress and those on the waiting list for public housing are in train.

The WA Minister for Housing Hon Troy Buswell has committed to bringing forward \$316M from forward budgets to deliver more than 1000 new homes across the state. 600 of these homes will be available to applicants on the Homeswest waiting list and 400 will be built in country areas to accommodate Government Regional Officers. The Commonwealth Social Housing Initiative funding to WA provides \$606.1M for new construction through 2011-12 and \$40.5M for repairs and maintenance until 09-10 a total of \$646.6M over the next four years.

This is in addition to the construction of up to 4,200 new dwellings and repairs and upgrades to 4,800 remote indigenous houses across Australia by 2018 through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

WA also gained almost 15% of the total allocation of Commonwealth NRAS subsidies released in the first round to build and deliver rental properties to the market at 20% below market rent. A total of 401 were allocated to WA from the first round of 2,800 in December 2008, showing WA still punches above its weight in national initiatives.

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## National Youth Week and Homelessness Matters Events

National Youth Week is happening across the country between 28<sup>th</sup> March and 3<sup>rd</sup> April. An arts exhibition by Propel Youth Arts WA will be held between 2-5 pm on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March at the Perth Town Hall cnr Barrack St and Hay St and a candlelight vigil will be held on the lawns at Parliament House for Youth Homelessness Matters – No Joke between 6-7pm on the evening of Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup>. For more information go [www.yacwa.org.au](http://www.yacwa.org.au)

## Visible Homelessness

Recently there have been stories in state wide print media and local papers bringing attention to the increasingly evident numbers of people sleeping rough in inner city and adjacent suburban centres.

This terrible indictment on our society brings into stark relief the lack of social justice and public support over decades to those individuals and households now not able to hide their misfortune. Years of decreasing social housing, the neglect by most mainstream agencies to effectively respond to the community care needs of service users and abdication of responsibility to provide a service to individuals with multiple and complex needs (often a euphemism for homelessness) has led to the situation where homeless service providers are totally overwhelmed by demand and unable to service a large proportion of those in the direst of need. Coupled with a lack of effective 'exit points' or discharge avenues, those lucky enough to access homeless services may find they are then 'stuck' in the system with no adequate independent ongoing community living options to move on and free up space for homeless agencies to accept new clients.

The many initiatives that are now in process, the promise of the CoAG Reform Agenda and high ideals of the White Paper, coupled with what we hope will be a review of our tax laws to ensure that opportunities for individual and corporate wealth

creation will be balanced with a healthy community and social obligation requirement are part of the medium to long term solution.

In the short term we must be mindful that ***being without a home is not a crime but a tragedy***. It is something that has occurred often not through individual failures but through a systemic over-emphasis on the wellbeing of the wealthy and a misguided belief in the 'trickle down theory' that has created burgeoning greed and individual excess for the lucky few and left the rest of us struggling to keep up and make ends meet.

Should you experience concerns about homeless people in close proximity to your work or private residence please remember the WA Police Service will respond to behaviour that is threatening, unlawful, aggressive, or causing a public nuisance to the extent that it prevents people from going about their normal daily business. But the police are powerless to solve an individual's homelessness, and have been dealing with the lack of crisis accommodation, a dearth of effective community mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment options that have been unavailable or impotent for decades. Indeed the Police are just as frustrated and uncomfortable as many in the community.

So often now the biblical cliché - 'there but for the grace of god' is a reality for households that are suddenly facing job loss or cuts to work hours while struggling to keep their homes, and maintain a modest lifestyle, health and security of education and opportunities for their children.

We all need to be patient and compassionate – particularly for those people who missed out on the 'boom' and are not directly impacted by the 'crunch' but are the same people in the community that needed support then and continue to need it now and into the future, particularly while the boom time winners turned crunch time losers join their ranks.

## Human Rights Consultation

The Consultation for a National Human Rights Bill continues to progress with a series of Roundtables coming to WA in the week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> May and travelling to regional areas including Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Busselton and Paraburdoo.

**The deadline for submissions has been extended until the 15<sup>th</sup> June with a report to government due on the 31<sup>st</sup> August.**

Shelter WA will prepare a submission and attend the consultation roundtable to be held in Perth in early May. Details will be circulated as they are available. Visit the website:

<http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf>

## Seniors Housing Consultation

National Shelter have been allocated research funding by FHaCSIA and together with Shelter WA and other State Shelter organisations will be undertaking consultation exploring housing options for seniors.

**The WA Forum is scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> May and will be held in the Ground Floor Conference Room Claisebrook Lotteries House 33 Moore Street East Perth.** It is hoped that a brief presentation from Council on the Ageing and an overview from senior Department of Housing representatives will complement the preliminary literature review by Roland Naufal, and lead to a stimulating and creative workshop with seniors and professionals to identify appropriate housing responses to meet with dignity, projected housing needs of the ageing population.

## News on the National Compact

The Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has convened its first meeting with the Community Response Taskforce on Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> drawn from the Social Inclusion Board, and chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister assisted by Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens

## News on the National Compact

The Community Response Taskforce will initially focus on three issues:

- what Government and the community sector, working with financial service providers, can do to provide relief and support to Australians experiencing difficulty with personal and household debt through emergency relief, financial counselling and other forms of support;
- what assistance can be offered to Australians facing redundancy or finding themselves unemployed, including young people, workers being made redundant and others facing the risk of long term labour market disadvantage; and
- options for regulatory reform in the third sector that could help agencies to focus even more on meeting the needs of vulnerable Australians by cutting red tape, streamlining contracts and compliance procedures and improving collaboration between Governments

Shelter WA encourages Senator Stephens in this important role and calls for the Social Inclusion Unit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to consider some of the administrative barriers to effective service provision by the third sector in the form of;

- lack of consistency in boundary and regional zoning across and between government departments
- lack of consistency for a minimum standard data set with common definitions across and between government programs and departments; and a
- lack of adequate indexation of funding for non-government services to allow them to keep pace with the real increasing costs of service provision particularly wage rises and on-costs of providing service in the community.

The current situation where governments departments have established regions without uniformity, failed to collect end point consumer service data and

outcomes that can be compared to that collected by other departments and the non-government sector, and failed to adequately provide the resources to deliver contracted services, whilst adding ever increasing layers of accountability, reporting and monitoring without resources to ensure that this process doesn't detract from front-line service delivery, must be addressed.

Western Australia is again ahead of other states in that we have an agreed State based standard reporting and funding model that applies to all non-government services funded by any of our State departments that ensures funding is indexed to reflect the proportion of non-government expenditure on wage price growth indexation and rational reporting criteria that are common across different state departments.

See the Social Inclusion website for more:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Department/SocialInclusion>

### ACOSS Conference 2-3 April

The Australian Council of Social Services is holding its annual conference 'Building a Fair Australia in Tough Economic Times' on April 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> in Sydney. This year guest speakers include Geraldine Doogue, Dr. Ken Henry, Professor Julian Disney and Senator Ursula Stephens. There is still time to register. Visit the website for online registration and more: <http://www.acoss.org.au>

### Ethnic Disability Housing Consultation

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance is hosting a focus group on **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2-4 pm at the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC) 320 Rokeby Rd Subiaco** to explore the experiences in Australia of people from a non-English speaking background with a disability. The focus group will ask what community, home and belonging mean to people with disability from CaLD and NES Backgrounds.

For more information telephone Zel Iscel on 04477 24001 or email [zel@neda.org.au](mailto:zel@neda.org.au) and get in quick!

## Contribute to Parity

The Council to Homeless Persons publishes Parity, a regular magazine exploring issues surrounding homelessness and disadvantage. The April edition is concerned with **Renting and Homelessness and submissions should be received by April 10<sup>th</sup>** to Noel Murray at Parity: [parity@chp.org.au](mailto:parity@chp.org.au). If you are a service provider, clinician, academic, professional or someone who has experienced homelessness and gained effective assistance to overcome the situation Noel wants to hear from you. Articles should be no longer than 1800 words artwork and graphics are welcome.

## Mental Health Conference

The WA Association for Mental Health are one of the WA co-convenors of this conference.. Together with the Transcultural Mental Health Conference and the Australasian Refugee Health Conference running consecutively this event promises to take a global perspective of mental health in a with a local focus. The conference outline is being finalised and Shelter WA has committed to presenting on affordable housing options for people with mental illness.

**The conference will be held at the Perth Convention Centre 1-4 September.** Further details will be circulated as they come to hand or visit the website:

<http://www.themhs.org/09-annual-conference>

## The Road Home - White Paper WA Implementation Session

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs with the Western Australian Department for Child Protection will be holding an information session to inform the public of the White Paper Implementation Plan. **This will be held in Perth on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2:30pm-4:30pm City West Reception Centre, 45 Plaistowe Mews, West Perth** - If you haven't RSVP'd contact Liz Brown on (08) 9222 2602 or email [liz.brown@dcp.wa.gov.au](mailto:liz.brown@dcp.wa.gov.au) The White Paper can be downloaded here:

[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/housing/white\\_paper\\_on\\_homelessness.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/housing/white_paper_on_homelessness.htm)

**Big Issue Open Day**

Can selling a Magazine on the streets change lives? Find out by attending the Big Issue Open Day how this created business opportunities for 3 people and turned their lives around.

**Where:**

The Big Issue's office REAR St. Brigid's Convent  
60 John Street NORTHBRIDGE W.A. 6003

**When:** Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009

**Time:** 10.00AM – 11.30AM

Morning tea provided. – Please RSVP to Bill by phoning (08) 9228 2711 or email: [wtoon@bigissue.org.au](mailto:wtoon@bigissue.org.au)

**Perth Family Relationships Centre Event**

Invites professionals working with culturally and linguistically diverse clients to an Wine, Wit and Wisdom afternoon event to hear presentations about

- Family Law Changes and Mandatory Family Dispute Resolution
- Perth Family Relationship Centre Services, and Exclusive Perth City Family Relationship Centre Service for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Tuesday, 24 March 2009 from 3pm – 5pm at the Perth City Family Relationship Centre, Sheffield House, Level 1, 713 Hay Street Mall, Perth (opposite Target). Please RSVP to Terese on 9278 4000 or e-mail [perthfrc@wa.relationships.com.au](mailto:perthfrc@wa.relationships.com.au) by 19 March 2009

**The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Call for Conference Papers**

ARACY has announced its 2009 Conference theme and is calling for submissions. The conference is around *Transforming Australia for our children's future: Making prevention work* and will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre September 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>.

Submissions on the broad issue of primary prevention are invited. They may be theoretical, policy-based, research-based or practice-based. The Program Committee is particularly keen to receive submissions on successful models and best practice examples of prevention. Besides the three themes of the Conference - Macro-level prevention, Politics and processes of social change, and Prevention pays - submissions may address prevention in relation to themes in the [ARACY Report Card](#), such as health and safety; education; training and employment; peer and family relationships; behaviours and risks; participation; and the environment.

Those making submissions are encouraged to involve young people in a meaningful way in the development and delivery of presentations. While the focus is on improving the wellbeing of children and young people, relevant examples of prevention from other sectors are welcome. Closing date for Abstracts is April 30<sup>th</sup>. See the website: <http://www.aracyconference.org.au/call.php>

**Opportunity at Shelter**

Shelter WA has a vacancy for a committed and motivated Research Manager. Shelter WA is an equal opportunity employer, has recently negotiated a new Enterprise Agreement that includes above award wages and flexible family friendly conditions, is located close to public transport and the CBD, and is engaged with some of the most important work in the housing field to have occurred in WA and Australia for over a decade.

Whilst formal qualifications are not essential, a strong work ethic, competence with the Microsoft Office suite of programs including Excel databases, and PowerPoint presentations will be looked on favourably. For more information go to the Shelter WA home page: [www.shelterwa.org.au](http://www.shelterwa.org.au). Applications close 4pm Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April and a hard copy application addressing each selection criteria is required.

**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.

**Newsletter Production**

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**Recent Reports**

- The National Housing Supply Council State of Supply Report 11 March  
[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/housing/national\\_housing\\_supply](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/housing/national_housing_supply)
- [Final Report: Integration and social housing in Australia: theory and practice](#)
- [Final Report: Operating deficits and community housing: policy options for reversing the trend](#)
- [Final Report: What makes case management work for people experiencing homelessness?](#)
- [Final Report: 21st century housing careers and Australia's housing future](#)



Pictures from the Gimme Shelter fundraising concert held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February for St Pats on the lawns of the Fremantle Arts Centre - pictured Bronwyn Kitching (EO Shelter WA) Colin McClughan (EO Community Housing Coalition) and Stephen Kirk (volunteer)

