



# newsletter

## CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

December 2009

In June 2009, Shelter WA was instrumental, as a member of the WA Peaks Forum, in establishing a dialogue about the lack of formalised mechanisms for consumer participation in WA. Subsequently, consultant Christina Kadmos undertook a scoping project to consider the viability of establishing an Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group. The project was broadened to include alternative engagement strategies and consideration was given to the ways in which consumer issues are 'brought to the table', i.e. whether non-consumers carry a consumer message or whether consumers carry their own message.

The final project report "[Bringing Consumers into the Room](#)" was released in November 2009. The report concluded that including consumers in planning and evaluation is good business: a concept which is recognised, resourced and driven by government in other states, most notably South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

Currently WA lags behind other states in supporting consumer participation. The next step towards establishing a consumer participation mechanism in WA will once again be taken by the WA Peaks Forum. Members will meet in February 2010 to determine how to develop, fund and implement this project. Consideration will be given to establishing a reference group or a joint working party or to partnering with a research centre. Diverse approaches will allow for a broader

base of consultation and veracity of output. However this mechanism develops, it remains constant that strong consumer participation in policy areas informs and validates those policies and builds a sense of social inclusion and capacity.

### National Shelter policy platform released

National Shelter launched its 2009 policy platform "Housing Australia Affordably" at the National Housing Conference in Melbourne in November. The platform provides directions for the achievement of a fairer and more affordable housing system in the future. It seeks to address, not only the current national shortfall of 250,000 in rental properties, but also to accommodate the future needs of a growing and ageing population and advocates for a coordinated and collaborative response to National housing policy. The platform focuses on:

- a better planning and regulatory environment;
- improved and expanded affordable rental housing and improvements to the private rental sector;
- appropriate and adequate housing for Indigenous people;
- greater supports for vulnerable households;
- access to sustainable home ownership; and
- fairer tax and income support systems.

Shelter WA contributed to and continues to support and inform the work of National Shelter. Read the

complete policy platform "[Housing Australia Affordably](#)" or a [four page version](#) of the policy, which includes all recommendations.

### EOC S80 Implementation Committee achievements

Shelter WA is proud to sit on the WA Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) section 80 Implementation and Monitoring Committee and applauds its achievements this year. These include:

- publication of the joint EOC / Department of Commerce booklet "Accommodating Everyone" which provides information for Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) consumers on renting a property, and
- the "Aboriginal Housing Joint Statement" from the EOC and the Department of Housing "Housing Inquiry Update" which explains recent Homeswest changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, in consumer friendly terms.

Both booklets work toward addressing unfairness in public housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants by improving communication and services. The initiatives outlined will assist in implementing the 165 recommendations resulting from the 2004 inquiry into systemic discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the rental market, which were outlined in the "Finding a Place" report.

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**Department of Housing news****High-end property sales fund affordable housing**

Auctions of ten high value Government houses in affluent suburbs over the past three months have raised almost \$11 million. The Department of Housing defines a high value property as one valued at twice the prevailing median house price. In the June 2009 quarter, the median house price for Perth was \$445,000.

The Department announced that this windfall would enable them to build at least 35 new social housing dwellings (or 60 if they built on their own land) from the proceeds of these 10 sales. They further announced that their stock review is ongoing and that more homes will in future be identified as suitable for sale under the program. The sale of old homes, in suburbs where values have increased dramatically, to fund construction of a larger number of affordable homes could be viewed as an innovative strategy. However, caution is needed when designating homes 'high value' and subsequently locating any new dwellings. Accessibility to transport and other infrastructure is vital if housing affordability is to be achieved for low income and otherwise disadvantaged consumers. Shelter WA encourages redevelopment and increased density of affordable housing in well located suburbs rather than concentrations of disadvantage in outer lying areas.

**New social housing for North Metropolitan area**

The Department of Housing has announced the planned construction of nearly 900 new affordable dwellings, worth \$160 million, in the North Metropolitan area. They will include 44 single-bedroom homes and 16 two-bedroom homes, to be built in Mirrabooka. The project is being funded by the State and Federal governments, as part of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Package, supported by local government and developed and built by the private sector.

Construction has now commenced on 631 homes throughout WA, funded through the Federal and State governments' stimulus packages, to work toward the Department's stated goal of 20,000 much needed additional affordable dwellings by 2020.

**Planning calls for public submissions to proposed Multi Unit Housing Code**

The Department for Planning has invited public comment on its proposed Multi Unit Housing Code. The Code will introduce separate planning controls for higher density housing in urban areas to facilitate and better regulate this type of development. The proposed changes follow consultation with industry and local government, expanding and simplifying the provisions of the current residential codes and recognising the need to provide different types of appropriate housing forms.

There will be two separate parts to the Residential Design Codes, one applying to single houses and grouped dwellings and one applying to multiple dwellings and mixed-use developments. Proposals include new maximums plot ratios and parking requirements depending on proximity to public transport; as well as, the removal of minimum lot size requirements and the introduction of minimum and maximum dwelling size requirements.

The Government is anticipating that the changes will accommodate population growth through urban infill, enabling developers to deliver diversity and choice in housing and more effectively meeting the housing needs of the community.

The proposed Multi Unit Housing Code and the accompanying explanatory guidelines are available from the [Planning WA](#) website. Public submissions are invited until 22 February 2010.

**Disruptive Behaviour Policy**

The Department is reviewing its Disruptive and Antisocial Behaviour Policy to give more powers and clarity for rental housing staff to act when tenant behaviour is causing

neighbour or community concern. The policy paper is included in this circulation and comments are requested by 29 January 2010 to [Scott.Campbell@housing.wa.gov.au](mailto:Scott.Campbell@housing.wa.gov.au)

**FaHCSIA news****National Homelessness Research Agenda released and funding applications invited**

The National Homelessness Research Agenda for 2009-2013 has been released. The agenda sets out the priorities for a whole-of-government research response to homelessness. It emphasises cross jurisdictional and partnership approaches to research to ensure that the response to homelessness is effective and that research is relevant to different sectors. This includes building on projects undertaken by non-government organisations such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

The agenda is broader than, yet complementary to, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and aims to improve the evidence base for delivering sustainable solutions to homelessness (i.e. sustainable housing) and provide a better understanding of the impact of homelessness on individuals and families. For more information visit [Homelessness Research](#).

The Government has committed \$5.5 million to further research over the next four years and is now inviting applications for funding for two elements of National Homelessness Research. The National Homelessness Research Partnership Agreements are to provide large-scale, high-quality research through multi-year funding agreements with a small number of research organisations, whereas the National Homelessness Research Projects are to be of national significance, align with research priorities identified in the National Homelessness Research Agenda and / or respond to the emerging needs of homelessness related policy and program delivery. The National

Homelessness Research Projects are designed to support small-scale research and evaluation projects proposed by a broad range of organisations including those in the community sector.

Applications have now been extended until 20 January 2010. Further information and [Application Packs](#) can be obtained by phoning 1800 668 356 or by emailing [Homelessness Research](#)

### **Building a National Compact with the Third Sector: a new way of looking at non-profit organisations**

The Third Sector refers to a range of organisations that provide not only essential community services but also the 'value added' services that connect people to their communities. They include non-government organisations (NGOs), charities, unions, cooperatives, clubs, associations, peoples' organisations, churches, temples and mosques and are formed by people to provide a service for themselves or others.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, has committed to pursuing "a robust and creative relationship with the Third Sector" based on collaboration and mutual respect. To facilitate and strengthen this relationship a National Compact is being developed: an agreement between the Australian Government and the Third sector which will outline how the two will work together. This will provide a framework for Sector development, a platform for discussion and an affirmation of the value and contribution of non-profit organisations. For further information visit the [National Compact](#) website. An online forum is also available which is seeking new topics for discussion at the [Social Inclusion website](#)

### **Social Inclusion Conference Melbourne 28 and 29 January 2010**

The Australian Government (Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet) would like to invite you to attend its Social

Inclusion Conference at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre on 28 and 29 January 2010. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Inclusion, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, will open the conference. Dr Keith Suter will facilitate this interactive conference and encourage participants to exchange ideas, discuss topics and learn from each other to build a more socially inclusive Australia. The conference is an opportunity to join a national conversation about effective and innovative social inclusion policy and practice. For further information contact [janis.dogan@pmc.gov.au](mailto:janis.dogan@pmc.gov.au) phone: 02 6271 5742 or visit the [Conference](#) website

### **Jobseekers2Communities Program**

The WA Council of Social Services has been funded by the Commonwealth Government Jobs Fund to offer project services to the community sector at the same time as providing job seekers with an opportunity to enhance their job prospects and sample a career in the community sector.

The project will establish a pool of workers with skills in management, human resources, information technology, quality assurance, administration, grant / tender preparation and marketing. There will be three rounds of inductions for pool workers over the course of 18 months with the successful applicants then assigned to work in organisations as required.

Not-for-profit and small to medium Community Service Organisations are invited to apply for Project Officers to carry out specific project tasks at no or low cost. Organisations must have the capacity to provide support to the worker, be in the metropolitan area and have available workspace.

The deadline for the next round of applications (from Community Service Organisations wishing to apply for Project Officers to carry out work) is Wednesday 13 January 2010. Applications will be assessed monthly from then on. For more click [Jobseekers2Communities](#) or

contact the Program Coordinator: [eira@wacoss.org.au](mailto:eira@wacoss.org.au)

### **Climate change readiness for community services project**

The "Climate change readiness for community services project" is a joint initiative between the West Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) and the WA Peaks Forum, funded by the Federal Government Jobs Fund scheme. The project aims to provide employment opportunities for job seekers from the South West regions of Perth in the sustainable energy sector and to prepare the community services sector for changes associated with climate change. It will advise the sector of strategies to minimise increasing energy tariffs and costs associated with the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

Eligible trainees will complete Energy and Carbon Management and Retrofit Skills Training courses to qualify as Energy Auditors. They will then form a pool of workers available to community service organisations who apply for energy audits and minor retrofits to reduce their energy consumption. Organisations are required to meet selection criteria to access retrofits ranging in value from \$1000 to \$25,000 and including the installation of energy efficient light globes, appliance timers and photovoltaic systems and weatherproofing. Staff will undergo behavioural education to encourage energy saving habits and further reduce energy costs and greenhouse pollution. For further information phone 9420 7222 or contact [luke@wacoss.org.au](mailto:luke@wacoss.org.au)

### **Homeless shelter project for the Salvation Army to go ahead**

In May 2009, The Salvation Army launched its "Doorways of Hope Initiative" in response to increased need in the areas of crisis accommodation, women's homeless services, transitional accommodation and an expanding public housing waiting list. The initiative proposed an increase in emergency accommodation beds that were flexible and responsive in order to facilitate the movement of

people from dependence to independence.

Funding from the Federal Government will see the centrepiece of this initiative, the redevelopment of the 1970's facility Lentara, commencing in February 2010, to replace the existing institutional model with a more progressive facility. Lentara will be administered through the Department of Housing at State Government level.

Further projects for 2010 include: the completion of redevelopment of the women's refuge in February 2010, providing an additional 25 beds for women who are homeless; and, construction of three and four bedroom units at the Harry Hunter drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Gosnells to cater for women, particularly those who have children and are striving to beat addiction. These projects will broaden options for accommodation and work to reconnect people with their community.

### **St Patrick's Gimme Shelter Fundraiser on again**

The third Gimme Shelter Fundraiser will be held on February 20, 2010, at Fremantle Arts Centre. The organisers, St Patrick's Community Support Centre, are hoping to once again raise funds to support their accommodation service at Ignatius House, which provides low cost lodging for single independent men over 21 years. Community organisations are invited to have an information stall at the event. For further information or to register your participation, contact the Gimme Shelter team at: [vcrevatin@stpats.com.au](mailto:vcrevatin@stpats.com.au)

### **Centrelink public holiday payment arrangements**

Centrelink has announced details of special arrangements in place during the Christmas, New Year and Australia Day holiday periods. There will be some office closures and

changes to reporting and payment arrangements. Visit the [Centrelink website](#) for further information.

### **Participating in the Tenancy Reform Report**

The 1987 Residential Tenancies Act in WA is long overdue for an overhaul. Community organisations have been advocating for changes to include provisions for boarders and lodgers, rent capping and better protection from landlords who attempt to circumvent consumer legislation. It now seems that this work may be overtaken by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda. Shelter WA in conjunction with State and Territory Shelters will be contributing to the dialogue on a National tenancy legislation reform. Contributions can be forwarded to the National Association of Tenant Organisations convenor [Penny Carr](#)

## **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**

Publisher Shelter WA

Editor: Bronwyn Kitching

Contributors: Susan Sharples, Bronwyn Kitching

### **Contact Details**

1st Floor, 33 Moore Street,

East Perth WA 6004

Ph: 08 9325 6660

Fax: 08 9325 8113

[shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:shelterwa@shelterwa.org.au)

**FROM ALL OF US AT SHELTER WA**

**WE WISH YOU AND YOURS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR 2010**

Join SWA Update – Shelters **FREE** Email Communication List – email: [corinne@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:corinne@shelterwa.org.au)

**accessible affordable appropriate and secure housing for everyone**