



# newsletter

## SHELTER WA CONTINUES LOW INCOME CONSUMER FOCUS SEPT 2009

### International Tenants Day Forum

Shelter WA (SWA) and the Tenants Advice Service (TAS) have joined forces once again to bring you the latest developments in the affordable housing sector. A half-day forum "**Government Initiatives in Affordable Housing**" will be held on **October 5, 2009** at the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS) multipurpose room, 211 Royal Street, East Perth.

Speakers from the Department of Housing and the Department for Child Protection, the WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS), the Community Housing Coalition and Landcorp will share their thoughts on a range of topics including:

- the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda that has delivered the National Agreement on Affordable Housing (NAHA) and how this compares to the superseded Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA);
- the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS);
- the role of community housing providers in these growth strategies;
- the work of the Social Housing Taskforce and
- the latest initiatives in the push for housing that is both affordable and sustainable.

The Forum coincides with International Tenant's Day and promises to be of great interest to housing and community workers, those promoting the cause of

affordable housing and those of us who would just like to know what all of these National Agreements are about, what they are going to do and when!

Attendance is by registration only, there is no cost and morning tea will be provided. Interest is running high so please RSVP with your contact details and the name of your organisation to Tenants Advice Service on **9221 9499** as soon as possible, for catering purposes. For more information contact Shelter WA on 9325 6660 or email [research@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:research@shelterwa.org.au)

### Homelessness Legislation

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) has been conducting interviews with stakeholders and service providers as part of its research into the current status of legislation and regulation, accreditation systems and services standards which impact on homeless service in Australia.

The research follows the publication last year of the Government's White Paper - *The Road Home*, which proposes a national approach to reducing homelessness and sets a target of halving homelessness by 2020 and offering supported accommodation to rough sleepers.

Shelter WA gave a comprehensive telephone interview to the consultant, Allison Heller from Urbis, acting on behalf of FaHCSIA, as contribution to the **Homelessness Legislation Terms of Reference**.

Shelter WA, along with Homelessness Australia and other advocacy agencies are keen to preserve the strength of the human rights framework that has been a feature of the Supported Accommodation Assistance (SAAP) Act 1994.

Our view is that the SAAP National principles, developed in the late 1990's and the WA SAAP Service Standards, finalised after a comprehensive 18 month consultation in 2002, would form a sound basis for new legislation. Shelter WA is advocating clear principles which are consistently applied at state and national level, easily translated into action in service models yet responsive and connected to the local community.

WA developed Interagency and Interdepartmental Protocols for referral and response and made some attempt to guarantee service provision between the SAAP non-government agencies and several public agencies which were signed off at Director General level over a 5 year period.

The protocols are stronger than a memorandum of understanding (MOU) but not mandatory and still rely on mutual awareness of their existence, inter-sector and interagency goodwill and service capacity, so have had variable success in implementation. A consistent, coordinated and adequately funded system of referral and response between government and non government agencies would go a long way

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towards furthering the vision of the *The Road Home*.

The WA SAAP Service Standards are available [here](#) and the WA SAAP Protocols can be found [here](#)

## **Womens Business**

### **Review of domestic violence laws in Australia**

Nearly 1 in 3 Australian women experience physical violence and nearly 1 in 5 experience sexual violence over their lifetime. Sexual assault, domestic and family violence have devastating consequences for victims, their extended families and the community, and are a major precipitating cause of homelessness.

Speaking at the inaugural Ministerial Council on Family Violence, Attorney-General Robert McClelland and Minister for the Status of Women Tanya Plibersek launched a report addressing domestic violence and sexual assault laws. The report, '**Domestic Violence Laws in Australia**', provides an overview of Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand legislation. It finds significant differences across Australia in:

- maximum penalties for contravening a domestic violence order;
- approaches to counselling and rehabilitation programs; and
- police obligations to take action where domestic violence is suspected.

The report also analyses overlaps and potential gaps between:

- the *Family Law Act 1975* and State and Territory domestic violence protection orders
- the registration processes for domestic violence protection orders
- 'portability' between jurisdictions
- options for a national register of protection orders to better protect victims

The work will inform the development of a national plan to reduce violence against women and is available [here](#)

### **CEDAW Project Report**

The Australian Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Non Government Organisation Report has been released. CEDAW is an international convention that requires participating countries to implement a number of legislative, policy and financial measures to protect women from discrimination and to uphold the human rights of women.

The NGO Report was prepared by YWCA Australia and Women's Legal Services Australia. It reflects the diversity of women consulted and cites positive developments, ongoing challenges and recommendations for change, providing information for women about contributing to national and international policy formation and building the capacity of the community sector to use the international human rights treaty reporting system as an advocacy tool. The CEDAW NGO Report is available [here](#)

### **Alternatives to Violence Project**

The Alternatives to Violence Project WA (Inc) is a non-religious, not for profit organisation which conducts workshops for members of the general community to help participants discover new, creative and positive ways of responding to conflict situations and build community. They are holding a Basic Workshop "Peaceful Pathways to Conflict Resolution and Community Building" from **Saturday 17 to Sunday 18 October, 2009** at Enterprise House (corner Great Northern Highway and Eveline Street, Middle Swan). The workshop covers themes such as affirmation, communication, co-operation, community building, trust and conflict resolution. Morning and afternoon teas are provided and the cost is \$40 unwaged, or by negotiation and \$80 waged. Registrations close on **8 October** - forms can be obtained by phoning 93715407 or by emailing [sallyherzfeld@ozemail.com.au](mailto:sallyherzfeld@ozemail.com.au).

### **Anti Poverty Week**

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians.

Anti-Poverty Week **11 to 17 October** aims to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship and to encourage research, discussion and action. Show your support by attending one of the many activities, workshops, lectures and forums, as well as displays, stalls and awards. Email [apw@antipovertyweek.org.au](mailto:apw@antipovertyweek.org.au) or visit [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)

### **Shelter WA Presentations**

Our Executive Officer, Bronwyn Kitching has been busy presenting to conferences. In July, Bronwyn presented two papers to the **11<sup>th</sup> Trans Tasman Community Psychology Conference** at Notre Dame University in Fremantle.

In "**Housing for People with Mental Illness**" Bronwyn discussed the prevalence of mental illness in WA and the continuum of housing options for people living with mental illness. Her presentation provided an insight into the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Agenda, the National Mental Health Strategy and the 2006 review of the Independent Living Program in Western Australia. In addition, it provided an historical overview of the intersection of social housing and mental health systems and initiatives such as the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the WA and National Mental Health Reviews and Strategic Planning. For the complete PowerPoint presentation see [here](#)

The second paper "**Housing for Humanitarian Entrants**" discussed the work of the Housing Crisis Committee for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (HCCCaLD). This group formed in 2006 from a range of agencies expressing concern about humanitarian entrant households lacking access to secure, appropriate and affordable housing. The HCCCaLD focused on problems in rental housing supply, changes to housing policy for humanitarian entrants and difficulty with access to housing and support. Bronwyn's presentation provided an overview of

humanitarian entrant and refugee immigration in Western Australia, in particular the Intensive Humanitarian Support Services (IHSS), the Special Humanitarian Program and the Integrated Services Centre Pilot Project. For the complete PowerPoint presentation see [here](#)

In September, Bronwyn drew a large and attentive audience at the **Mental Health Services (TheMHS) Conference**. Her paper on “**Housing Policy, Mental Illness and Homelessness**” was well received and promoted the concept of appropriate secure and affordable housing as a foundation for individual well being and as a cornerstone of a civilised society.

Bronwyn talked about past decades de-institutionalisation that has led to people who would have formerly been accommodated in special purpose facilities now being managed in the community. Simultaneously, public housing eligibility has become increasingly targeted and a shift in funding arrangements resulted in the slow contraction of state housing as a proportion of the total number of dwellings. Alongside these shifts, home ownership for younger people has decreased and tax policy favours share trading and private investment in rental housing at the higher priced end of the market.

The combination of these factors has resulted in a significant undersupply of affordable rental housing and inflationary pressures on rent with the interaction of high demand and low supply.

The audience learned about the comparison of subsidies to supported accommodation providers across a number of service groups including corrections, aged care, and disability.

Bronwyn discussed the social housing system response to low income consumers experiencing mental illness. The lack of adequate housing for people accessing mental health care services is consistently reported as a primary barrier to effective management and recovery.

### **Financial Counsellors Conference 19 October**

Bronwyn will also be speaking at the Financial Counsellors Association of WA Conference on 19 October, as part of an expert panel on housing. Joining her will be speakers from Keystart, the Department of Housing, the Community Housing Coalition of WA and the Tenants Advice Service. The conference runs from **Monday 19 to Friday 23 October** and promises a “comprehensive program of professional development and networking opportunities”. For further information or to submit expressions of interest email [ralph@eventswa.com.au](mailto:ralph@eventswa.com.au) or phone 9248 5788

### **WA Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan Consultation Feedback Forum 29 September**

An information forum by members of PriceWaterhouse Coopers, the Mental Health Division and the Project Steering Committee, who are overseeing the development of the State Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan 2010-2020 will be held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on **Tuesday 29 Sept 2009** and **all are welcome** including community members, consumers, carers, health professionals and service providers. For enquiries contact Cath Polley at [cath.polley@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:cath.polley@health.wa.gov.au).

This forum presents an opportunity to hear the results of the consultations to date, to have your questions answered and to contribute ideas or information. The consultation has been undertaken across WA through workshops, interviews, online submissions and presentations.

Of concern is the possibility of funding cuts to the Health Department and reductions in direct health care for inpatient and community services.

Shelter WA calls on the Minister to quarantine direct health care services particularly mental health care and focus any cuts on the top-heavy bureaucratic, middle management and administrative departmental roles that have

ballooned at the expense of coalface service to people in need.

### **National Mental Health Consumer Scoping Project - Online Survey**

The Australian Government is seeking to establish a new peak national mental health consumer organisation. In Nov 2008, the Department of Health and Ageing determined a need for a nationally owned, representative and independent consumer organisation after consultation with community groups and in recognition of the increasing role that consumers are able to take in shaping the mental health system.

A scoping project has been commissioned to map and engage with existing mental health consumer organisations and groups on appropriate organisational models for a new peak consumer organisation. As part of this project, Craze Lateral Solutions P/L, mental health and social policy consultants, are conducting an online survey for all mental health consumers, advocates and agencies to have their say in a 10 minute online survey [here](#)

To learn about how else to become involved phone (02) 623 81549 or email [Leanne.Craze@bigpond.com](mailto:Leanne.Craze@bigpond.com)

### **WA Social Housing Taskforce Final Report announcement**

The long awaited final report from the Social Housing Taskforce will be unveiled at the Hyatt Hotel Ballroom on **Tuesday 6 October 2009** by the Hon Troy Buswell MLA, Minister for Housing and Works. His keynote address “More than a roof and four walls - A new era in Affordable Housing for Western Australia” will be presented at the breakfast launch to an invited audience of key stakeholders. Shelter WA will be represented by Katie Arpino, our Curtin social work student.

### **Must see**

#### **4 Corners: Last Chance Motel**

This report from Sarah Ferguson broadcast by the ABC on September 21, 2009, follows the lives of



families who are dealing with the combined reality of the global financial crisis, a non-existent affordable private rental market and years of government neglect of public housing. The common perception of homelessness in Australia tends toward people who are mentally disturbed and/or have drug and alcohol issues and older single men often sleeping rough.

This documentary shatters that perception as we see what looks uncomfortably like average families struggling to find a place to live.

It is confronting viewing and a sad indictment on the progress of the newly funded public housing program. The report is available for viewing [here](#)

New models to respond to homelessness embrace a 'housing first' principle which secures permanent housing as a first response rather than the end goal. Basic housing should not be viewed as a prize to be gained by jumping through a series of humiliating bureaucratic hoops.

Bypassing the current fragmented crisis system of transitional and temporary accommodation and the associated instability and trauma to families would also save the community the excessive costs of paying for temporary private motel rental, reduce disadvantaged households' turning to rogue landlords renting substandard housing and the counterproductive, costly and frustrating prolonged administrative burden.

### Tax Expenditures and Housing

If you have always suspected that the rich get more benefits, you are correct - much more! A report by Professor Judith Yates, with the **Brotherhood of St Laurence** and **AHURI** - "Tax Expenditures and Housing" shows the capital gains tax (CGT) exemption on owner-occupied housing as favouring those on the highest incomes.

On average the CGT exemption is worth \$10,000 a year for the wealthiest 20 per cent of households

yet just \$1200 a year for the lowest 20 per cent of income earners. Of the \$45 billion a year that the tax system provides in indirect assistance to owner-occupiers, \$30 billion is for CGT exemption for family homes.

The concessions are heavily weighted towards older Australians - those over 65 in the wealthiest 20 per cent receive about \$20,000 a year from the CGT and other related exemptions. However, tax concessions for the younger home buyer in the lowest 20 per cent of income earners are worth just \$2500 a year.

Shelter WA feels that the current system provides inequitable support and unfairly disadvantages renters, young people and those trying to enter home ownership. We look forward to further analysis from the Henry Tax Review later this year and call for political will to make the hard decisions that address the inequity in our current tax and transfer system. For the full report see [here](#)

### Count Us In Awards

Nominations are now open for the 2009 Count Us In Awards. The awards, run by the Disability Services Commission and People with Disabilities (WA) Inc, are held annually to showcase the achievements of individuals, schools, businesses and State and Local Governments which strengthen opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in professional and community life.

The awards will be presented at the Burswood Entertainment Complex on **3 December 2009** as part of the 'International Day of People with a Disability' world-wide celebrations. For more information and to make a nomination, download and complete the attached documents, visit [www.countusin.com.au](http://www.countusin.com.au) or contact [stephen.eadie@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:stephen.eadie@dsc.wa.gov.au). Nominations close on **19 October 2009**.

### Future Forum

McCrindle is a research agency specialising in the fields of social trends, generational studies and

demographic shifts. They are holding a "Future Forum 2009", a one-day seminar on global social, technological, environmental and economic trends.

The presentations from world-class experts aim to provide solid forecasts and practical strategies to equip attendees with insights into Australia's future over the next few years and forward to 2020.

The agenda includes: technological trends; budget and economic forecasts; political and legislative trends; international trends; demographic and social trends; household and consumer and commercialisation strategies. The Forum will be held in **Sydney on 23 October** and **Melbourne on 22 October 2009**. For more information phone (02) 8824 3422, email: [info@futureforum.com.au](mailto:info@futureforum.com.au) or see the website: [www.mccrindle.com.au](http://www.mccrindle.com.au)

### 6<sup>th</sup> National Housing Conference

The Victorian Department of Human Services and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) invite you to attend the **6<sup>th</sup> National Housing Conference** in Melbourne from **24-27 November 2009**.

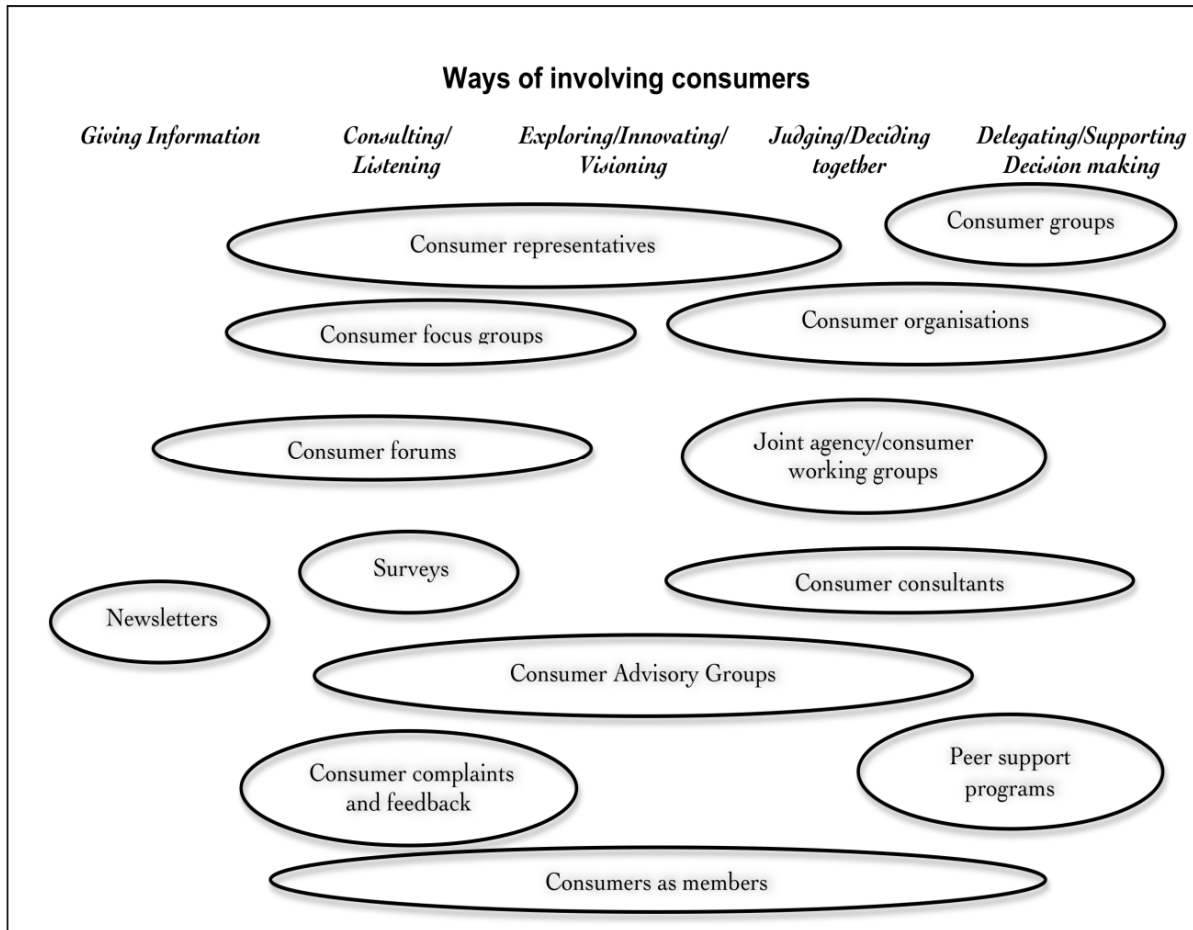
This year's theme 'Housing in a new era: building the connections' signifies the importance of home to our social, economic, spiritual and physical well-being.

Housing affordability, homelessness, climate change and the global economic downturn are all leading the political agenda. Recent government investment in social housing and homelessness makes it a critical time for the government and the private and not-for-profit sectors to work together.

With insights into the possibilities of affordable housing, the conference will highlight what can be achieved and barriers to be overcome. It is a must for anyone involved in Australia's housing and homelessness policy and practice. Standard registrations close **23 October 2009**. For more information email: [HCinfo@icmsaust.com.au](mailto:HCinfo@icmsaust.com.au) or see [here](#)

### Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group Scoping Project: final report coming soon

Christina Kadmos, the consultant working on the Affordable Housing Consumer Reference Group Project commissioned by the WA Peaks Forum, has been busy finalising consultations with affordable housing consumers and writing her report. In August, Christina facilitated a Mental Health Advisory Group discussion and a Focus Group for Low Income Housing Consumers to express their opinions on housing policy and the potential for a consumer reference group on affordable housing. In her report, Christina references work undertaken by the Citizens and Civics Unit from the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Western Australian. Their publication, *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide* (2002:p9) outlines the following model of consumer engagement:



A draft of the final report has been accepted by the Steering Committee, which comprised the Executive Officers from Shelter WA and WACOSS. The project points to a future body of work including further development and engagement with the Peaks Forum and a suggested model for Affordable Housing Consumer Participation has been proposed which would engage Peak Bodies, their member agencies, staff and consumers to jointly participate in a 'Working Group' to develop a suitable Terms of Reference and ongoing structure. The final report has been eagerly anticipated and will soon be available on our website. To see the Discussion Paper and Consultation questions click [here](#)

### The 4<sup>th</sup> State of Australian Cities (SOAC) Conference

The SOAC Conference in Perth from **24-27 November 2009** at the University of Western Australia (UWA) is a conference of the Australian Sustainable Cities Research Network, jointly hosted by UWA, Curtin, Edith Cowan and Murdoch Universities.

This year's theme 'City growth, sustainability, vitality and vulnerability' will review the condition and prospects of our cities including the pattern, processes and drivers of change, showcase policy, relevant research and future direction and provide a forum for dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

It promises to be an interesting event in light of the resources boom that has fuelled the Western Australian and also the national economy resulting in phenomenal changes in terms of population growth, house prices and the urban footprint of the Perth metropolitan region. Such changes have raised both academic and policy questions and conundrums about the sustainability – economic, environmental, social and physical – of the Perth metropolitan region as well as the feasibility of providing West Australians with the opportunity to keep pursuing the so-called great Australian dream of home ownership. Early bird registrations close **Friday 2 October 2009**. For more information see: [www.promaco.com.au/2009/soac/index.htm](http://www.promaco.com.au/2009/soac/index.htm)

## Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Seminar

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), with the support of the Western Australian Department of Housing is conducting a half day **Research Seminar** at the Hyatt Regency Perth on **Wednesday 7 October 2009**.

The seminar will be facilitated by Dr Ian Winter and will discuss indigenous homelessness and the implication for older private renters of the loss of a partner. Speakers will include Director General, Department of Housing Grahame Searle, Dr Mike Dockery, Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie and Dr Christina Birdsall-Jones. Phone (03) 9660 2303 or email: [damien.coup@ahuri.edu.au](mailto:damien.coup@ahuri.edu.au) for more information

## News from Shelter WA

### Shelter WA AGM

Members are invited to attend our Annual General Meeting to be held on **Wednesday October 28, 2009** in conjunction with the Tenants Advice Service AGM, from 3.00 to 5.00pm in the multipurpose room of the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service (AADS), 211 Royal St East Perth (off Clotilde St).

The Department of Housing's Shane Edmonds, Executive Director Public Housing, and all round good guy, has kindly agreed to speak on some international perspectives of tenant participation and methods, following his participation in the UK Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference in Harrogate, June 2009, the largest housing conference in the world. Shane is also president of the Australasian Housing Institute.



Rocco Esposito and Leonie King (Housing NSW), Paul Diggory (CIH) and Shane Edmonds at the Harrogate conference.

For more information contact us on 9325 6660. To RSVP email [corinne@shelterwa.org.au](mailto:corinne@shelterwa.org.au) by October 23, for catering purposes. There will be an election of members of the Management Committee and consideration of Constitutional amendments. More details about the election will be available soon.

### **Pro-bono legal work for Shelter WA's Constitution review to be conducted by award winning firm**

Shelter WA will shortly be undertaking a Constitutional review to look at broadening our membership categories and clarifying executive powers and functions amongst other things. Kosta Lucas, the Pro-bono Coordinator from the Law Society, has sourced the award winning legal firm Jackson McDonald to undertake this work for us. [Jackson McDonald](#) is a full service commercial law firm with expertise in construction, property, tax, insurance, intellectual property and commercial transactions. We look forward to working with this prestigious firm, who recently won the Australian Legal Business 'Perth Law Firm Award for 2009', for the third year in a row.

### **Last Word: Shelter WA Laments Cuts to Social Housing Construction Funding**

On February 2 the Commonwealth Government announced a Nation Building - Economic Stimulus Plan that included the allocation of \$5,988 million for the construction of 20,000 new social housing dwellings with \$400 million for repairs and maintenance of 2,500 public housing dwellings.

Six months later \$750 million is to be slashed from the Government's social housing program – this translates to 800 fewer homes being built across the nation. Funding is to be redirected to the P21 program for building school infrastructure. West Australia will shoulder \$58.38 million of these cuts, meaning that less will be spent on construction and on the refurbishment of existing social housing dwellings.

Whilst Shelter WA applauds the vision and the commitment of *The Road Home* these drastic cuts to social housing construction funding can only be seen as a step backward and will make the strategies and initiatives outlined that much more difficult to achieve.

## New Face of Learning with Shelter WA

Our Curtin University 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Social Work Practicum Student Katie Arpino has been busily familiarising herself with the work of Shelter WA. Katie has had a personally challenging but inspiring life journey and brings a determined, resilient, generous and compassionate presence to the office. Katie will be with us until the end of November and will be arranging agency visits as well as preparing the next edition of the Shelter WA Information Sheet – An Acronym, Abbreviation and Initialisation Dictionary. We are sure this document will be a handy reference tool for all of us out there in housing land trying to understand the new terminology.



### 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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