



newsletter

February 2008

EDITORIAL: NEWS FROM SHELTER WA

News

Staff Changes

Similar to many non-government organisations in the current strong labour market, Shelter WA experienced a turbulent 2007 with a number of staff changes.

Karel Eringa resigned from Shelter in November to begin work identified out of the joint Shelter WA, AHURI project "Scoping the Capacity of Indigenous Community Housing Organisations". We wish Karel every success in his new role and look forward to seeing results from implementing strategies to enhance the capacity of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers to respond to the urgent need for secure, affordable and appropriate housing, particularly for indigenous people in remote and very remote communities.

In November Jim Anthony also resigned from his position with Shelter. During the last half of 2007, Jim single-handedly delivered updates and newsletters to members. Jim continues to work with Shelter on a consultancy basis and will be keenly missed by those of us who grew fond of his

Scotsman's brogue around the place.

Despite this, January 2008 sees Shelter return to a complete staff team with the appointment of Bronwyn Kitching to Executive Officer and Heidi Stewart as Shelter's Research Manager.

Heidi comes to Shelter from the City of Stirling, where she was the Road Safety Project Officer. In this role Heidi researched, developed, delivered and evaluated programmes and also successfully accessed grants to implement related initiatives. Heidi has a strong background in community consultation and working with Reference Groups and Committees, she holds a Bachelor of Communications with a Double Major in Advertising and Public Relations, and has almost completed her Masters in Human Rights. Welcome to Shelter Heidi.

Bronwyn has been involved with Shelter for many years, acting EO 1-day p/wk from July 07 after stepping down from the role of Chairperson to the Management Committee in late June. Previously Bronwyn worked with the Alcoa

Research Centre for Stronger Communities at Curtin University evaluating the social impacts of Natural Resource Management programs in the South Coast and Avon Regions of WA. Bronwyn has significant experience as a clinical social worker in hospital settings, a SAAP Protocols Project Officer and at the 'pointy end', coordinating a program delivering housing advocacy and personal care services to people over 50yrs old with a history of homelessness. In 2006 Bronwyn completed a Graduate Diploma of Human Resource Management and is reviewing and implementing changes that will ultimately enhance Shelters organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

Corinne Mercer is Shelters Administration and Finance Officer for the past 4 years, and has remained steady, warm, cheerful and on task throughout. Thank you Corinne.

Together we look forward to strengthening Shelters role as the peak body in WA for low income housing consumers. Watch this space!

Elsewhere in this issue

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Other News

Two recent events highlighted widespread concern about the shortage of Affordable Housing in Western Australia and generated energy and commitment to address the lack of affordable rental and home purchase options, particularly for people on lower incomes.

The **'Improving Housing Outcomes Summit, WA'** presented by IQPC in mid December, showed there is consensus across business, government and non-government sectors that action is needed to deliver accessible, appropriate and secure housing at a price within reach for people currently struggling to find or maintain housing. Highlights of the conference included an address by the WA Minister for Housing, The Hon. Michelle Roberts, along with presentations from Dr. Fiona McKenzie, HURIWA, Saul Eslake and Harley Dale, Chief Economists with ANZ, and HIA respectively. Bronwyn delivered the opening presentation, which can be found here:

[Presentation State of Affordable Housing 2007.pdf](#)

The **Community Cabinet meeting** in Canning Vale on 20th January gave people in the community an opportunity to meet with Federal Cabinet

members in person and ask questions directly about issues important to them. Shelter WA joined with Denise O'Dowd, from Community Housing Coalition to meet with the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This event supports the hope that the new Federal Government is committed to addressing a lack of stable accommodation exit points for crisis and emergency services, particularly mental health, disability housing, and humanitarian entrants services to access and maintain tenancies, and increasing the overall provision of public and social housing.



Shelter and CHCWA meet the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The **WA Community Housing Conference**, held on 22nd November, provided the opportunity for local and interstate Community Housing Providers, representatives from the Department of Housing and Works, Local Government and others to discuss and share issues impacting the community housing sector in

WA. Topics included regulation and standards, improved access and the vision of having a common waiting list for public and community housing.

Dr. Paul Flatau, Murdoch University presented findings about the effectiveness of homeless services, and highlighted that the consequences in costs to the community and taxpayer (such as crisis assistance, emergency health care, police, justice and prison) of not providing homeless services, far outweigh the funds for delivering services.

2. Housing Issues in Broome Update

Shelter WA's research into affordable housing and homeless services in Broome continues with the Broome Circle Financial Counsellors and Broome Residents Action Group.

A survey to gather community information and opinions focusing on homelessness in Broome has recently been completed, and Shelter WA is investigating international best practice models for homeless strategies to guide decision making in the area.

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Shelter and CHCWA meet the PM and the Minister for the Environment



The Kimberley has a significantly higher homelessness rate than Perth, with statistics showing homelessness in the Kimberleys is 16 times higher than the rate of homelessness in metropolitan Perth. The Broome study revealed 23% of the people surveyed were homeless or insecurely housed and 27% of these people were Indigenous with 15% non-indigenous. The length of time people remain homeless or insecurely housed also varies significantly between indigenous and non-indigenous people. It was found that 91% of the Indigenous participants who were homeless or insecurely housed had been for over a month, and 45% for over a year. In comparison, of the homeless or insecurely housed non-indigenous people 29% had been for over a month, and 14% for over a year.¹

Housing stress is also an issue in Broome. Yates, (2007)² describes housing stress as “Lower income households paying at least 30% of their income to meet housing costs.” The survey indicated that the most frequent housing cost in Broome is \$480 – \$866 per fortnight, and the most frequent income is \$800 - \$1,599 per

¹ Strain Rowena, “Broome Residents Homelessness and Overcrowding Survey 2007, Report of Results”. January 2008

² Yates Judith, “Housing Affordability and Financial Stress National Research Venture 3: Housing affordability for lower income Australians.” Research Paper No.6, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Sydney, 2007.

fortnight which exceeds the benchmark 30% of Income to housing costs necessary to avoid housing stress.

The final report from the survey will be presented at a Forum with network agencies and other interested parties in Broome on February 7th. Homeswest will give an overview of public housing in the region and Kathleen Gregory from Foundation Housing will speak about community housing options. The Forum will also deliver the preliminary findings of Shelters research on best practice models of homeless service delivery and develop a local homelessness strategy and model of service. Recommendations will be drawn together in a report to Government that will be presented at a second Forum planned in March. For details please telephone Rowena Strain, Financial Counsellor with Broome Circle on: 08) 9193 6425.

To download a full report about Housing Issues in Broome go to: http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/news/Housing_Issue_s_In_Broome.pdf

3. Affordable Housing in Peel Project

Shelter WA continues participation in the Peel Region Affordable Housing Steering Group (PRAHSG). The Group comprises a range of key government and non-government agencies and is chaired by The Hon Dr Sally Talbot MLC Member for South West. Peel Development Commission provides

executive support with additional support from the Department of Housing and Works. The aim of the PRAHSG is to develop a Peel Region Affordable Housing Plan (PRAHP) and identify opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing through major infrastructure projects and housing

The PRAHP is now in final draft stages, outlining five main objectives to address the needs of the Peel region. The objectives focus on an effective framework, diversity in housing types, access to appropriate housing, housing to support employment and economic opportunities and a plan for future housing needs. The report includes objectives and strategies that are for the short, medium and long term.

A full report on Mandurah and Pinjarra Housing Analysis, 2007 can be accessed free at; http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/news/Mandurah_Pinjarra_Housing_Analysis.pdf

In further news, a recent international report from US ‘Demographia’ headed by Prof. Wendell Cox highlighted concerning statistics for Australia and particularly the Mandurah region of WA. Shelter WA along with other researchers challenge Prof. Cox’s premise that containing urban sprawl and planning residential land release is a negative policy. Prof. Peter Newman, our own sustainability expert, argues that a more accurate measure of housing costs must include the costs of private car travel and travel time, development

of new public infrastructure such as roads, sewerage and utilities and the social and emotional costs of living distant from urban centres, employment opportunities, shops, recreational and other facilities including schools and hospitals.

Demographia's analysis also fails to account for particular characteristics of the Mandurah region in that it is a popular retirement and holiday destination, where a significant proportion of older residents own their homes outright, are not paying a mortgage and live comfortably on a small income. Expensive holiday homeowners in higher income brackets are not necessarily residents of the area and are therefore not included in population income data for the region. These factors inflate Mandurah's house price data and depress income data giving a misleading picture.

See the Real Estate Institute of WA's response to Demographia's findings here: <http://reiwa.com/art/art-public-view.cfm?id=10262>

4. Housing Crisis Committee for CaLD

The Housing Crisis Committee for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (HCCCaLD) is exploring the impact of the tight housing market in WA on refugee and humanitarian entrants. Refugees and humanitarian entrants are particularly affected by the lack of affordable rental housing and have additional issues that require specific solutions.

HCCCaLD organised a consultation day with community workers providing housing and support services for humanitarian and refugee entrants on February 4th. The consultation identified factors and impacts of the housing crisis specific to refugees, explored successful models of service delivery, discussed gaps in service provision and made short and long term recommendations.

The consultation gathered the experience of workers in the field and will form the basis of the development of a joint community sector report to government. The report will outline issues and recommendations generated by the community sector working with refugees/humanitarian entrants. For more information about this project please contact Nihal Iscel at the Edmund Rice Centre in Mirrabooka on Ph: (08) 94400 1920

5. National Shelter

National Shelter is the federation body of State and Territory Shelters and the national peak body on housing issues for people on low incomes. Funding to National Shelter was withdrawn in 1997 and members are now calling for restoration to provide coordinated and representative input toward the National Housing Strategy and a national response to homelessness.

The next National Shelter Council Meeting will be held:

February 19 & 20th 2008, Sydney

National Shelter's Housing Policy Platform for 2007: 'Australian Housing – A Fair Share' can be downloaded free at:

<http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/ns/ns%20platform%202007.pdf>

6. National Housing Conference

This important event will be held February 21 & 22nd 2008, Sydney. Registrations close soon. To view details please click on the link below:

<http://www.iceaustralia.com/holding2008/program.html>

7. Boarding Lodging Houses and Backpackers

The South Australian Backpackers Association recently called for a ban of mentally ill persons from staying in Hostel and Backpacker accommodation following last month's death of a mentally ill young woman from Perth who had been staying at an Adelaide backpacker hostel. This instance highlights the extreme shortage of appropriate and safe accommodation for people with mental illness, and the general lack of affordable housing choices for people struggling on a low income or with other disadvantage.

Backpackers, boarding and lodging houses are often the only affordable housing option for people on low incomes needing to reside in inner city and urban areas in order to

access medical and other support services.

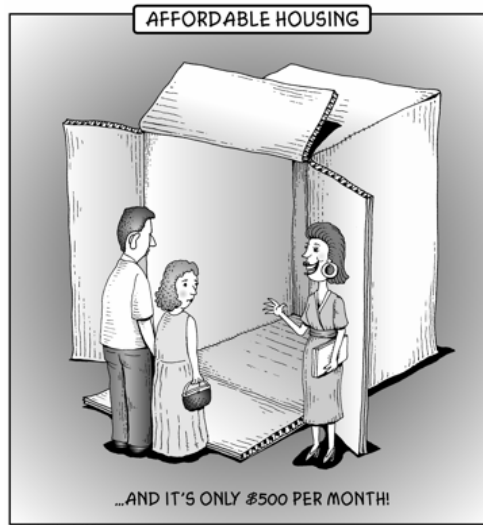
Chamberlain and MacKenzie define people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis as 'tertiary homeless'. They explain "They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the minimum characteristics identified in the community."³ In Western Australia, 2001, 15% of the homeless were living in boarding houses.⁴

As described in the "It's No Palace" report "living in a boarding house is an insecure and commonly inadequate option."⁵ Many issues arise living in backpackers and boarding and lodging houses, namely the lack of privacy, lack of security and lack of culturally appropriate facilities. Residents usually do not have separate bedroom and living rooms, and often must share bathroom and kitchen facilities. The variable quality of amenities and lack of secure housing tenure fails to meet community standards for basic accommodation.

Over the past 15 years WA has lost most of its Boarding and Lodging Houses due to rising costs of providing staff caretakers and supervisors, caution about Occupational Health and Safety risks providing accommodation to a

transient client group, increased regulation of fire and safety standards requiring significant building renovations and the opportunity for property owners to cash in on booming inner city land and property market.

For a recent paper delivered by WACOSS as part of the '**No Room in the Boom**' campaign please follow the link: http://www.wacoss.org.au/images/assets/events/nritb_notes2007.pdf



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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³ Chamberlain and MacKenzie, "Counting the Homeless 2001" Cat. 2050.0

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004

⁴ Ipid., p24.

⁵ Anderson P, Hume A, Rogers N, Stephenson T, "It's No Palace Boarding Houses: the sector, its clientele and its future" Department of Human Services, 2003