

SOUTH EAST HOUSING NETWORK UPDATE

SHELTER SA

Torrens Building
220 Victoria Square
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone: 08 8221 6488

Fax: 08 8221 6292

E-mail:

margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au

*Welcome to the first
South East Housing Update.*

After a tenuous and rather foggy start, a number of individuals representing a variety of organisations dealing with housing in the South East converged on the Quality Inn International Mount Gambier. Shelter SA initiated this meeting to provide an opportunity to discuss housing issues specific to this area, to connect with interested parties and to investigate the possibility of forming a branch of Shelter SA.

Various issues were raised in regard to housing that are quite specific to the South East, including the lack of youth emergency accommodation, the severe lack of mental health services and the absolute shortage of housing particularly in the mid to upper South East. Other issues raised are common to the community services sector in metropolitan areas, with organisations operating at crisis level, discrimination experienced by those accessing SAHT bonds, and the lack of appropriate housing stock for the changing population demographic. It is estimated that 2% of SAHT housing stock is appropriate for single people, yet this is the fastest growing client group.

*“Money isn't
the issue
here, its that
there is
nowhere to
live”*

One of the compelling issues that arose from these discussions is the distinctions made between the lower, mid and upper South East reflecting quite different housing needs. However, in ALL areas, many tenants required long term, ongoing and consistent support, particularly in relation to mental health. Mount Gambier, for example is generally accessible and affordable, while in the upper South East there is a severe housing shortage. As one participant stated “Money isn't the issue here, its that there is nowhere to live”.

One of the reasons put forward for this seemingly unique situation is that financial institutions and potential investors are loathe to invest in an area like the upper South East for fear of a market collapse. There is a generally held perception that the area attracts only transient workers, due to the variety of seasonal work available. But as another participant stated, 'There is enough seasonal work here to keep someone employed for 9-10 months of the year'.

The result is that caravan parks are full to overflowing all year long, charging \$250 per week in peak season. It is important to acknowledge that a three bedroom home in the same area can be rented for \$150 per week with full tenancy rights and obligations. Unfortunately, tenants rights and obligations afforded by the Residential Tenancies Act DO NOT apply to caravan parks, which

SHELTER SA

The strongest concern in the South East is the need to address interrelated housing issues; mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic violence and discrimination and housing

Special thanks to

Ute Hermann-Bullock
Kelvyn Enright
Rosemary Carter
Liz Jarrett
Deidre Quinlon
Mark Braes
Sandy Clarke
Elaine Pollock
Peter Mitchell
Rory McEwen and
Glen Brown

means long term residents of caravan parks can be evicted over the peak seasons. This has resulted in families and young people at risk, being evicted over Easter long weekends. Even a boarding house in Bordertown costs around \$100 per week.

Another aspect of the high employment rates and severe shortage of accommodation is that families are fractured as a result. Families are forced to separate as one parent stays with the children while the other relocates to the upper South East for work. Conversely, families will opt to live in caravan parks where they can be evicted without notice.

The strongest concern voiced over the two day visit was the need to address interrelated housing issues, such as mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic violence, discrimination and black listing. There is also a lack of support mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of successful tenancies for rural indigenous people.

The overarching strength of the South East region is the ability to network between organisations. Time and again we were told of situations where positive outcomes were reached as a direct result of individuals from a variety of organisations working with one another to achieve this. This level of co-operation is reflected in a recent study carried out by Dr Lorraine Kerr and Ross Drumm (*Breaching and Homelessness*), where outcomes for those in the country are more immediate and positively consistent than in metropolitan areas.

It is clear that a unified and consistent effort is required to challenge the housing concerns raised. At Shelter SA we believe this presents a unique opportunity to develop these networks further. Shelter SA wishes to contribute to raising housing issues experienced in the South East to a broader audience. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the development of regional housing networks throughout the state. Individuals with an interest in housing in the South East are invited to join the South East Housing Network branch (\$15 waged, \$5 unwaged). Please contact Cheryl on 8221 6488 for further information, alternately our email is sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au.

Thankyou to all who participated in the housing discussions on June 30th and July 1st.

We look forward to working with you.

The Team at Shelter SA