



# Sheltershortz

## Homes Give Hope!

by Gary Wilson, Shelter SA & Jo Wickes, Chair Homelessness SA

### Special points of interest:

- You now need 6.8 times the median income to buy the median home.
- The median rent for a 2 bedroom unit in Adelaide is \$175 a week
- There are 8000 households paying more than half their income in rent.

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Well, the State election is over – we are pleased that Jay Weatherill will stay on as Minister for Housing, but housing supporter Steph Key won't be Minister for Youth and Women, and Kate Reynolds probably won't be there to be the social conscience of the Upper House.

The banks and builders and real estate agents would have us believe these are the Golden Years. And for those who have full-time, well paid, secure employment (and two incomes per household), it probably is.

But the stark reality is that:

- 1 household in 5 lives on less than \$400/week.
- 30% of all households in SA rely on government benefits as their sole income.
- 1 child in every 5 lives in a jobless household.

- 273,000 people in SA are living in poverty.
- 1 in 3 users of homeless assistance services is a child.

To buy a median priced house in Adelaide (\$276,000) now requires 6.8 times the median household income, so many people let the dream of home ownership fade and are forced to continue renting, often for more than 10 years. The median rent in the metropolitan area for a 2 bedroom flat/unit is \$175/week. 84% of low income households are in housing stress, and 8,000 households are paying more than HALF their income in rent. That leaves very little for food, power, clothes, health care, transport, and often leads to financial difficulties and potential eviction.

Recent research says SA needs 19,000 more rental homes in the affordable range

over the next 5 years. But the private rental market is not responding to the needs of low income renters. And the Housing Trust is not able to meet demand, with 25,000 people on the waiting list.

The state government has poured millions into helping the homeless. But for every person housed, another takes their place in the queue. Last year in SA, more than 6,000 parents with 5,000 children sought emergency accommodation. Each day families are turned away from emergency housing services, because the facilities are full. 80% of couples with children (most under age 12) were turned away, to sleep in a car or a park, on a beach, or in a laneway. Families are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.

*continued on page 2*

## Homes give Hope! (cont)

**Neighbourhoods and communities will benefit if EVERYone has appropriate and affordable housing**

The Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations says there are more people "sleeping rough" than are in emergency accommodation. More than half the homeless are staying (very temporarily) with relatives and "friends" (young people often get into inappropriate arrangements with dubious older people).

Various governments talk about keeping families together, investing in children, reducing domestic violence, improving school retention rates, encouraging healthier families, and people participating in the social fabric of our communities. But two safety nets are missing: 1. an adequate income to overcome poverty (Centrelink payments are too low, but paid employment is the best answer), and 2. an adequate supply of safe, secure, affordable housing.

So what is required to achieve these safety nets? Boldness, innovation, creativity and flexibility.

We need to offer work options most commonly seen in social enterprise models of doing business,

where work is flexible enough to accommodate participants' lifestyles and for them not to be penalised for being unable to work traditional hours and in traditional ways.

We need to be creative and bold and look at alternatives to traditional housing models. For example Thinker in Residence, Rosanne Haggerty set South Australia the challenge to see if we can set up a Common Ground project and there are successful models operating overseas, such as Foyers accommodation. These housing models offer a house, but even more importantly a home and the chance to become part of the fabric of their community. Isolated single accommodation doesn't suit everyone. What is required now is exactly what has been required (but lacking) for people with mental health issues following deinstitutionalisation and that is ongoing support to create a home. If this were offered, social housing would be more successful, the community would be more accepting of social housing and the community would help people to make a home. People with homes build their community and play

a valuable role in it - they have a sense of belonging, continuity and connection.

Homelessness results in social and economic costs to individuals, families, communities and the nation. It makes it difficult to maintain school or study, and leaves people vulnerable to long-term unemployment and chronic ill-health.

Our neighbourhoods and communities will benefit if EVERYone has appropriate and affordable housing. Investing in the **provision** of housing, as a basic human right, will actually save money in other portfolios, and will provide the stability that children need to grow in if they are to become productive and valued members of society. *What will be the future costs if we do nothing about this housing crisis?* It is now up to the Rann Government to deliver on the promises, fully implement the Housing Plan for SA, and to reduce homelessness and housing stress.

## Launch of the Women's Housing Caucus "Victims or Villains: Mothers in the Crossfire"

Two high profile British researchers from Sheffield Hallam University, Judy Nixon and Caroline Hunter presented 'Victims or Villains', based upon their research findings of the link between family violence and anti-social behaviour among tenants. This lunchtime forum, held at the State Library on Monday March 6<sup>th</sup> 2006, heralded the official launch of the Women's Housing Caucus, as a branch of Shelter SA

Judy Nixon and Caroline Hunter have recently completed a two year evaluation of a small number of pioneering Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Projects providing support, predominantly to lone parent women at risk of losing their home as a result of anti-social behaviour. The research findings are fascinating and highlight the contradictory ways in which women are portrayed as both 'villains' and 'victims' in anti-social behaviour policy debates. Talking to women about their experiences they found that the term 'anti-social behaviour' was seen as carrying with it a host of negative connotations and was associated with bad parenting, out of control children and disregard for neighbours. Being labelled as anti-social was described as 'embarrassing', 'upsetting' and 'humiliating'. Here the focus of attention is on

lack of responsibility and the culpability of women for the behaviour of members of their household and visitors to their home. The research however, also showed that as well as being the subject of complaints women were just as likely to be 'victims' of the behaviour of others in a number of different ways, for example, in terms of the high incidence of family violence, as the target for youth nuisance, and the focus of harassment and victimisation from neighbours.

The fact that women can be both simultaneously 'victims' and 'villains' has not been recognised by the British New Labour politicians or the media who predominantly portray perpetrators of ASB in negative and demonising ways. Thus in the ASB policy discourse lone parent women are held to be responsible for the behaviour of their sons and partners in both public and private spaces. Failure to exercise control is attributed to irresponsible behaviour, fecklessness and regardless of the circumstances women are held culpable. In contrast to this negative construction of women's behaviour a brief examination of the policy debates around family violence shows there to have been a shift away

from the portrayal of women as responsible for the behaviour of their violent partners and children towards recognition of the damaging impact of male violence. A comparison of the different responses to ASB and domestic violence raises interesting questions about how social problems are gendered and the way in which concepts of blameworthiness, culpability and responsibility are variously employed in relation to lone mothers.

**Please Contact Janet at Shelter SA if you are interested in joining The Women's Housing Caucus**  
**janet.adkins@sheltersa.asn.au**



Chris Halsey speaking with Judy Nixon and Caroline Hunter



Avid Listeners at the Event!

## Telling Stories - David's Story

*This interview forms part of a series of stories we wish to present to Shelter members to explore the impact of government policies and agendas on South Australians. These interviews examine the participants' experiences and how they understand, negotiate and respond to situations they are confronted with. Wherever possible we will present updates to our readers of the people in our stories, where they are now and how they are going. The following is a record of an interview with a single man with a mental health issue. David's story, as a man recently diagnosed with schizophrenia, raises a number of issues which are discussed in the conclusion.*

**It is estimated that around 1 in 5 Australians experience mental illness at some time in their life.**

When David was 18, he left his parental home and moved into a share house. After some of his belongings were stolen, the rent wasn't paid on time, and he didn't feel safe, he decided to move back to his parent's home. Some of the people that visited the share house were criminals; he recently found out that one of these visitors has just been incarcerated for murder. David was so frightened by this share house experience, he felt he needed to hide for the next two years. He ended up staying at his parent's for another ten years. David registered with the South Australian Housing Trust in this time, and

when he was 28 he moved into a two-bedroom maisonette in Elizabeth. David was unable to get a look inside the property before moving in, however he could see that the underlay that had been left by a previous tenant, had been ripped up in places, with glue and underlay dotted all over the floor. When his brother-in-law arrived with the trailer to help him move in, he hesitated saying 'are you sure you want to do this?' There were strips of mesh used to reinforce cement, and broken glass strewn around the backyard and the garden was a mess. David was told that this would be cleaned up before he moved in. David had a dog that would get her paws cut every time she went into the backyard and he was always picking bits of glass out her paws. David stayed there for about two months but decided to leave as he couldn't deal with the mess and arguing about who was going to deal with it. He felt that getting this situation resolved would involve a solicitor and he didn't know where to go for help. David moved back home to his parents for another couple of years.

David went back to school (having left at Year 10) and successfully completed Year 11 and 12 and then got into university. Studying at University, David found it

heavy going and began to get depression.

He began seeing a Counsellor at University for six months before finally withdrawing from his studies. After six months or so, David began a Community Development Course at TAFE which he completed. He applied for work in this field but kept getting rejection letters due to a lack of experience. At this stage he was still living at home with his parents and was on unemployment benefits. After visiting Volunteering SA, they suggested he try volunteering which he has continued to do for the past nine years. Following this he also completed a Legal Studies course at TAFE.

Colleagues at the place he volunteered at told him about co-operative housing, which he followed through with a request to the Community Housing Council of SA (CHCSA). David wrote letters to around six different co-operatives, however he didn't receive a reply. Two years later he tried again and was invited for an interview. Two members interviewed David and reported back to the co-op. He was then invited to attend general meetings as a prospective member.

## Telling Stories - David's Story (cont.)

David secured a house within a few months and is currently a prospective member with a six month lease. The Tenancy Officer showed David and his family around the property, the yard is a bit overrun and there is play equipment in the yard from a previous tenant. This has been discussed at the meetings and will probably go to another member who has recently had a child. The lease allows David and the co-op to settle in – 'The neighbours may not like you or you may not like your neighbours; this way everyone has an out'. David's whole family is happy with this choice. The property is closer to the city (previously he had been commuting from the outer suburbs to his volunteer work). There is a sense of community and belonging: 'You know your neighbours here'. The rent is affordable and he feels safe. There is also a sense of privacy, stability and belonging.

David has taken on the roles of IT and Education Officer in the co-op, utilising the IT skills he developed over the years in his own time, and is also the Convenor. David is currently preparing a report for the IT update and is looking forward to becoming a full member of the Co-op.

David's health has been an issue for the past twenty years. However it

has only recently been addressed. He has attended Cognitive Therapy for a couple of years and it was around this time that he had a scan that showed cerebral atrophy and some bruising to the brain from a *grand mal* seizure he experienced when he was ten years old. David attributes his later mental health issues to this event. Last year, David was finally diagnosed with Chronic and Severe Depression, and Avoidance Schizoid Personality.

Now that David's independence is relatively secured, and he has a clinical diagnosis, he has applied for a Disability Pension which was initially rejected. He has appealed this decision and is awaiting the outcome. Most importantly, now he is being referred to appropriate support services. In addition to his volunteer work, David also attends a drop-in centre specifically designed for mental health support, offering recreational activities, gardening and tips on home maintenance. In the future he hopes to gain skills that will lead to appropriate employment that will accommodate his particular health issues.

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*David's story raises a number of issues related to mental health and housing. It is estimated that around 1 in 5 Australians experience*

*mental illness at some time in their life. This may occur once in a person's life or be a recurring feature. Around 60% of the mental health budget is directed at hospitals and acute care, while the proportion allocated to non-government organisations providing community support has been reduced to 1.9% of the entire mental health budget (compared to 17.9% in other states). Given the spectrum of support that is needed, particularly with the episodic nature of mental health, current funding is clearly not attending to the **preventative** support aspects required in order to maintain people's mental health.*

*The process of diagnosis is often understated. However, as David's story illustrates, getting a diagnosis is crucial to receiving appropriate supports. David had experienced enormous frustration with job networks and other mainstream services that he was urged to attend in order to keep receiving unemployment benefits. In hindsight, it is clear that they were inappropriate and may well have contributed to the isolation he experienced.*

*continued on page 6.*

**Current mental health funding is not attending to the preventative supports required to maintain people's mental health.**

## Telling Stories - David's Story (cont.)

**Getting a diagnosis is crucial to receiving appropriate supports.**

*David was fortunate to have the support of his family throughout this period. Social withdrawal and depression, deterioration of personal hygiene, inability to sleep or hyperactivity and unusual sensitivity to light or noise are just some of the symptoms of schizophrenia placing enormous pressures on families to cope. Other symptoms, such as lack of motivation or apathy, and the flattening of emotions (limited or non-existent facial expression or gestures) can be misinterpreted as not*

*caring or laziness. Anyone with teenagers would be familiar with many of these symptoms and know that it is no picnic!*

*Access to appropriate supports is integral to the successful and ongoing maintenance of mental health. Access to supports is equally important in avoiding discrimination and isolation, to ease the stressors on families that are often coping alone, and to allow a sense of empowerment to the individual. For the first time in David's adult life, he has lived outside of the*

*family home for longer than three months. As discussed in last month's edition of Sheltershortz (see Michelle's story,) Community Housing represents around 1% of the available housing in South Australia and offers a much needed alternative style of housing tenure. For David, Community Housing has enabled him to develop his independence and self-confidence, while giving him a sense of community and belonging which will positively impact on his mental health.*

## Men's Information and Support Centre

For the past 24 years, the Men's Information and Support Centre has been in operation, providing a unique service to South Australians. MISC, located in the Torrens Building, Victoria Square, is primarily a referral and information provider service for men and their families; however they also

offer Anger Management Courses in the day and evening (also open to couples) and are looking to extend this program into schools. They provide counselling services by psychologists, social workers and trained counsellors. In addition, MISC work closely with other agencies in the

community to deliver greater service provision. In the past year, MISC has attended to 3300 enquiries, 390 requests for counselling sessions and one hundred clients have completed their Anger Management course.

### Editor's Comment:

The Men's Information and Support Centre (MISC) operates on a \$12,000 budget and is currently under threat of closure due to lack of financial support. This is of concern, given the paucity of services and supports available for men and their families in general, and of enormous concern in regional areas where many services such as this are nonexistent. Shelter SA extends our continued support to MISC and urges others to act in support to keep this unique service open and accessible to men and their families. There are also important issues to do with housing men and their children



## The Impact of Homelessness on Children A Homelessness SA Forum



Homelessness SA is holding the first of the 2006 series of forums on March 31<sup>st</sup> at Pilgrim Hall (Flinders Street) 1-4pm. The focus of our first forum is on the impact of homelessness on children. A recent report on the demand for SAAP accommodation (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003-04) stated that family groups are more likely to be turned away from supported accommodation than other homeless groups. Even more alarming, around one in two people who request immediate SAAP

accommodation are turned away on an average day, and almost two in every three children accompanying a person seeking immediate accommodation are refused a place.

As many of you would know, accommodation for family groups is relatively scarce. For the past 10 years, there has been increasing awareness of accompanying children as a group requiring particular attention. In the 2002-03 period 53,800 accompanying children accessed SAAP services, equalling more than half the total SAAP

clients for the year. The Homelessness SA forum seeks to further highlight the concerns this significant group raise.

### Guest Speakers include:

**Pam Simmons** (Guardian for Children and Youth Protection),  
**Robyn Sutherland** (Uniting Care Wesley),  
**Stephen Sheehy** (Fatherhood Program),  
**Desi Alexandridas** (Young Women's and Children's Support Services) and  
**Cecile Dutreix** (OARS).

**All Welcome!  
Free Event**

**The Forum will be held  
on  
March 31st  
Pilgrim Hall  
Adelaide  
1-4pm**

**Gold Coin Donation**

## Phone In on Mental Health Issues 27th March - 30th March 2006

The Social Inclusion Board has been asked to provide advice to the Premier on policy review and program redesign to improve the delivery of mental health services in South Australia.

The Board invites you to share your experiences of the system and your views on how mental health services could work better for you.

Phone between 8am and 6pm on the freecall number: 1800 232 532.

Alternatively you may wish to complete the online survey located at:  
[www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au](http://www.socialinclusion.sa.gov.au). Commencing March 22 and finishing April 3 2006.

**Phone In  
Freecall Number  
1800 232 532**

**27 - 30 March  
8am and 6pm**

## Children and Homelessness in Australia: Policy and Practice Change Required

*Authored by David Wright-Howie*

*Reviewed from a South Australian Perspective, by Janet Adkins*

**In 2004-2005, 7,100 children attended SAAP funded services in South Australia.**

David Wright-Howie reports, in his paper for the 4<sup>th</sup> National Homelessness Conference (March 2006) that, in 2004 – 2005, 56,800 children attended SAAP (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program) funded services in Australia. This represents an increase of 12% from 50,800 in 2001 – 2002. These figures are not the total number of children who are homeless, but only those who present at SAAP services. Eighty-six percent of these children were aged under 12 years old. Single female parent families make up over 80% of all families, with accompanying children, who access SAAP services.

For South Australia, there were 7,100 children accompanying parents. 56% of families with children, access SAAP services through the domestic violence service sector. In South Australia, when the size of the general population is considered in comparison with the rest of Australia, less funding is allocated to family related services. However, 60% of the family related funding allocation goes to services targeting domestic violence, which is clearly

where the demand is. According to Wright-Howie, the Commonwealth government has reduced their funding contribution to core SAAP services between 2004/5 and 2005/6 by 9.5%. In South Australia the State government have made up some of this shortfall by announcing significant funding commitments, *although the amounts were not stated.*

Wright-Howie outlines the difficulties children can face as a result of the impact of homelessness:

- Emotional and behavioural problems such as sleep disturbance, eating difficulties, aggression and over activity, depression, anxiety, grief and self-harm.
- Learning difficulties and disrupted schooling impacting upon literacy and numeracy skills, socialisation, self-esteem and health and well being.
- Medical problems including potential for higher rates of acute and chronic illness, asthma, ear infections, skin problems and developmental delay.

He goes on to break down the effects on children at

different stages throughout their childhood, from babies with developmental delays through to teenagers with anti-social behaviour. The solution to this problem, Wright-Howie suggests, is by having clarity in both policy and practice changes through 6 broad goals:

- “1. Recognising the distinct needs of children who have experienced homelessness.
2. Supporting, encouraging and enhancing good parenting and parental relationships.
3. Develop clear, consistent and professional relationships with both child(ren) and parent(s).
4. Provide accommodation and housing stability for the family.
5. Connect both children and parents to the community.
6. Increase capacity to respond to the diversity of children, parents, families who are homeless.”



## Social Housing Allocation Systems – How Can They be Improved?

*By Hulse, K & Burke T,*

*AHURI Swinburne -Monash Research Centre, 2005*

### Synopsis by Janet Adkins

Hulse and Burke report findings from their research of a national overview of both the policy and practice of the allocations process. They used a multi-method approach and found that 71% of public and 87% of community housing workers believe the current allocation system works well. Conversely, housing workers stressed their concern over households who miss out through current targeting policies.

Hulse and Burke also highlight the different criteria for access to private as opposed to public housing. They propose that access to the social housing system is predicated on administrative allocations, whereas private housing is predicated upon the

criteria of choice.

Hulse and Burke report a convergence in eligibility criteria for public housing across States and Territories, namely targeting. However, they use the term 'primary rationing' to indicate that not all States and Territories use segmented waiting lists but rather that three States (Queensland, Western Australia, and Northern Territory) use an 'administrative priority system based upon a date-order waiting list, and that Tasmania uses a priority points system.

Ninety-three percent of all public housing workers indicated that responsibility for appropriate allocations were dependent upon individual staff, compared to only 27%

of community housing workers. Although surveys were not the only data source, these figures need to be viewed with caution because 81 public housing workers and 203 community housing workers were surveyed.

Hulse and Burke stress their report does not make policy recommendations due to the systemic change required to the allocations process. However, they do state their report 'provides a framework for reviewing allocation systems', with ideas on how to 'break the dualism' which currently exists between models of access to the public and private system.



## Sheltashortz is available in an Electronic Version!

Sheltashortz is also available in full colour, pdf version.

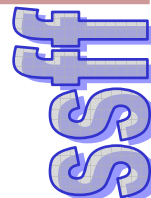
If you would like to receive this version to distribute among your email lists, please contact the office with your email address and details.

Shelter SA, Telephone: 8221 6488 or Email: [sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au](mailto:sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au).



# Sheltershortz - Fast Facts

## March Quarter 2006



### General Information

Population of Australia (June 2005) <sup>1</sup>	20,329,000
South Australian population as % of Australian population <sup>1</sup>	7.6%
South Australian population (June 2005) <sup>2</sup>	1,542,000
Average number of persons in Household <sup>3</sup>	2.4
Average weekly total earnings—all employees (Trend Aug 2005) <sup>1</sup>	\$696.00
Average Gross Household Income (2003 - 2004) <sup>3</sup>	\$1,033.00

### S.A. Housing Specific Information

Median weekly rent (Private Landlord) <sup>4</sup>	\$185.00
Average weekly housing mortgage and rates costs <sup>1</sup>	\$220.00
Percentage of households renting from a private landlord <sup>1</sup>	16.2%
Percentage of single parent households with dependent children <sup>1</sup>	6.3%
Percentage of lone person households <sup>1</sup>	29.7%

<sup>1</sup> ABS, 2003-2004, Housing Occupancy and Costs, Cat.4130.0.55.001, released 13/3/06 retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au> 15/3/06

<sup>2</sup> ABS, 2006, South Australia at a Glance, Cat no. 1306.4 retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au> 15/3/06

<sup>3</sup> ABS, 2003-2004, Household Income and Income Distribution, Cat no. 6523.0.55.001, retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au> 15/3/06

<sup>4</sup> OCBA, December 2005

## Housing Policy in South Australia since White Settlement

By David Kilner

*Housing Policy in South Australia since White Settlement* is a study at the regional level of how housing policy in an advanced industrial society – and former British colony - has been shaped by a variety of domestic and international forces since 1836.

*Housing Policy in South Australia since White Settlement* will be useful to anyone wishing to broaden their knowledge of how countries settled by Europeans evolved, or with an interest in comparative housing policy. Issues covered include public health, building controls, planning and development, housing finance, taxation, social housing and tenancy law. The rise of home ownership and social

housing are carefully charted. Linkages to economic development are explored.

Dr Kilner sets housing policy in the unfolding context of the times, showing how national and international trends and developments played their part in shaping South Australian housing policy.

David Kilner trained as a social worker and practiced in the aged care and housing fields before pursuing doctoral studies in housing policy at Adelaide University. He subsequently worked as a health researcher before becoming a government policy worker in the area of housing. He managed the Housing Strategy Unit for the South Australian Housing Trust. Since

leaving government service in 1994 he has practiced as a consultant and trainer in the human services field, specialising in policy, research, evaluation and program development, and also worked as a policy officer in a non-government agency supporting family carers. He has taught sociology and evaluation methodology at the University of South Australia. He is currently Senior Policy Officer for the Community Housing Council of South Australia Inc, and also maintains his consultancy practice. He is the author of *From Dream to Reality: a History of the Northern Suburbs Housing Co-operative*.

**The cost of the book is \$46.00 including postage and handling within Australia. For orders, telephone 8342 4130 or visit [www.davidkilner.com/orderfin.htm](http://www.davidkilner.com/orderfin.htm)**

## ASHRA Logo Competition

As you can see, the logo competition is well underway with lots of symbolism and meaning behind the designs. The examples displayed illustrate some of the variety and thought entrants are putting into their designs. If you think you could do better, have a go and you could win our \$200 prize!

Enter as many times as you like!



**Logo Competition Closes on April 28**

**For more information Contact Margo at Shelter SA [margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au](mailto:margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au)**

# Upcoming Events

## Forum

*The Impact of Homelessness on Children*

March 31  
Pilgrim Hall  
1-4pm

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| March 31      | <i>The Impact of Homelessness on Children</i><br>Homelessness SA General Meeting<br>1-4pm, Pilgrim Hall, Flinders St, Adelaide        |
| April 19      | <i>ASHRA Meeting</i><br>3pm, Torrens Building   |
| April 27 - 28 | <i>National Shelter Council Meeting</i><br>Melbourne  |
| May 9         | <i>Mental Health &amp; Housing Forum</i><br>Shelter SA & The Mental Health Coalition<br>9am-1pm, further details coming soon          |
| May 10 & 11   | <i>Mental Health First Aid for Housing Workers</i><br>Details: <a href="http://www.housinginstitute.org">www.housinginstitute.org</a> |



**Shelter SA**  
Housing: a basic human right

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