



Significant Changes in Housing

By Gary Wilson, Executive Director



sheltershortz

March has been a busy month in terms of housing announcements. Housing SA released the Disruptive Behaviour Strategy discussion paper and Shelter SA is running public consultations across the State on that during April (see separate list of dates and venues). A new disruptive Behaviour Specialist Response Team is proposed, to ensure earlier intervention and the engagement of appropriate support services. There will be a clearer and faster process of acting on complaints, and different mechanisms to resolve the problems, hopefully to sustain tenancies.

Also, the Service Concepts discussion paper from Housing SA outlines their desire to provide a single access point for housing information and services. This paper takes longer to “digest”, and implies significant changes to the way people are served when they seek State assistance with housing. During May, Shelter SA will run another series of public consultations across

some different parts of the State on this topic. Both discussion papers are available on the Shelter website. YOUR comments and views on both papers are wanted at the consultations, or alternatively, Shelter will accept written comments/submissions by either “snail mail” or directly on the website.

Minister Weatherill launched the Tenants Information and Advocacy Service on March 28th. Anglicare won the tender process and began the service in January. Shelter SA has been advocating for such a service for ALL renters for many years, and we are glad to see it finally established. Importantly, private renters now have a service that is an alternative to the limited advice of the Tenancy Branch of the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs. Housing SA tenants and community housing tenants are also served by the TIAS.

The most significant announcement was about the State Government selling off 8,000 Housing SA (Housing Trust) homes. Without the sale, Housing SA would get further into debt over the years and would eventually “die”. This plan of selling homes to repay the \$700 million debt actually “saves” the old Housing Trust and makes it financially viable by 2013. It’s like amputating a person’s leg to save their life: not desirable but better than the alternative!

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Changes in Housing (cont.)

By Gary Wilson

Supply of new affordable housing is needed to balance the sale of public houses

Shelter SA understands the necessity of selling off housing stock, which will hopefully be retained as affordable home-purchase or private rental, but the announcement made no mention of an increase in supply of affordable housing stock to counterbalance the sales. One can hope that the State Government Affordable Housing Innovations will increase the supply.

The National Affordable Housing Summit group (which includes National Shelter) put out a media release proposing a National Affordable Rental Incentives Scheme. Professor Julian Disney said Commonwealth, State and local governments need to work together to assemble differing incentives to get massive supplies of affordable rental properties to be built. Each project may have different incentives, depending on what fits the local situation. This could involve Commonwealth cash or taxation

treatment, State tax, fees or planning packages, and local government planning and development and/or rates concessions, all aimed at increasing supply. It is hoped institutional investors, such as superannuation funds, will find the incentives practical enough to invest in residential construction.

In Canberra, a new group called Australians for Affordable Housing was launched, calling for Governments' commitment to coordinating various housing and planning policies to reduce the number of families in housing stress or homelessness. AAH says there is a shortage of 134,000 affordable homes nationally. The initiative came from NGO's in Victoria, but the campaign is national. Prof. Disney was present, indicating that this new group supplements the work of the National Affordable Housing Summit group members.



National Shelter will launch its latest Housing Policy Platform April 23rd in Melbourne. Copies will be sent with the next *Sheltershortz*. There will be a glossy 4-page version, backed by a longer Background Paper on the National Shelter and Shelter SA websites, plus some national and state housing facts.



Affordable Housing Models: PowerHousing Australia by Margo Johnson

The need for an increase in affordable housing models has generated a great deal of discussion of late. With South Australia's rapidly decreasing public housing in combination with extremely tight vacancy rates in the private rental market, many South Australians are finding it difficult to find appropriate and affordable accommodation. Indeed, even those who would not generally seek support or advice from housing support services are doing so. According to some estimates, some three million households on low and middle incomes currently rent, and have little hope of buying.

The lack of affordable housing has a number of implications, especially for regional and rural areas. Research has identified that the shortage of workforce accommodation, for example, is a major impediment to the growth of non-metropolitan regions. Work force accommodation includes the need for short term and temporary housing for seasonal workers, and long term housing for permanent workers, especially those in emerging industries such as viticulture, horticulture and aquaculture. There is a need for appropriate accommodation for professionals and others whose expertise is essential to the well being of the community.

In response to these issues, there has been a raft of responses and possible solutions. As the peak housing body for South Australia, Shelter SA feels it is inordinately important to ensure that our members are aware of them; to raise awareness of the issues and their implications AND to encourage informed debate. Our focus this month is on PowerHousing Australia. The following has been contributed by Larry O'Brien from PowerHousing Australia:

PowerHousing Australia is a national consortium of not for profit Community Housing Providers. Throughout 2006 a number of community housing providers from throughout Australia met to develop a practitioner focussed organisation to respond to the challenges and problems confronting our sector into the future.

The result is the creation of "PowerHousing Australia", a member based organisation with 13 foundation members from WA, SA, Victoria, Tasmania, NSW and ACT. The group spent 6 meetings throughout last year developing goals and objectives and developing a business plan. PowerHousing had a "soft" media launch on November 23rd last year, and the mainstream media response was widespread in the print media (Australian Financial Review, other national newspapers and regional newspapers), plus Ken Marchingo was kept busy with interviews on national and local radio.

Late last year we were fortunate to meet with the Federal Minister for Community Services to introduce the concept of PowerHousing Australia. Out of that visit, the Minister and his senior staff visited some of our members in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. In Adelaide the Minister and his staff visited MACHA and Housing Spectrum.

When the Minister visited Melbourne Affordable Housing, we were able to introduce him to Allen Kingston (President and CEO of Century Housing in Los Angeles). Allen was in Australia visiting PowerHousing Australia, after discussion with The Housing Partnership Network based in Boston, to provide consultation and advice. Century Housing is a not-for-profit affordable housing provider and "affordable housing bank".

Century Housing was responsible for loans of \$US100 million to not-for-profit community housing organisations in 2006 alone to

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Affordable Housing Models: PowerHousing Australia (cont.)



develop and build affordable housing! The discussion that ensued was dynamic and exposed the Minister to a vibrant, robust not-for-profit solution to housing affordability in the US.

This was certainly the first time that this Minister had visited any community housing provider. We have a new Minister, Nigel Scullion and we have arranged to continue the work of putting community housing practitioners “right, straight and centre” with this Minister. We are also meeting with Tanya Plibersek (Opposition Shadow Minister for Housing).

At a state level we have briefed the respective State Ministers for Housing throughout Australia. The response had been extremely positive, with one Ministerial staff member stating “**PowerHousing Australia is an excellent real time example of the new federalism that everyone is talking about**”.

The 13 foundation members currently manage 15,000 housing units throughout Australia and have in excess of \$120 million in affordable housing projects at various stages of development. PowerHousing Australia is delivering housing solutions and support services to Australian families and individuals experiencing “housing stress” on a daily basis. We are developing strategies to enable our members to move to the next level in the delivery of services by developing mechanisms to leverage our combined asset base – to put more affordable housing on the ground.

We are the practitioners and have absolutely no interest in being a “peak body”. The community housing sector is particularly “well serviced” in this arena. We are focussed on building capacity,

sharing innovation and putting affordable housing on the ground from a practitioner point of view.

Other key activities PowerHousing Australia and its members are involved in are as follows:

- Ken Marchingo (CEO Loddon Mallee Housing Services Ltd.) addressed the Australian Financial Review Housing Congress in Melbourne on the 8th and 9th March on PowerHousing Australia
- Developing partnership relationships with the global community housing sector. With Century Housing and The Housing Partnership Network, a US national consortium of not-for-profit community housing providers based in Boston (87 members)
- Working with a major bank on a rent-buy model for low to moderate income earners – to be a PowerHousing Australia member deliverable
- One Member is well advanced with a credit rating model for affordable housing investment – another PowerHousing Australia member deliverable!
- We are developing relationships with the Philanthropic sector and we are currently working on “Social Return on Investment” examples for affordable housing projects
- We are currently working with two major banks (one international and one Australian) to develop long term sustainable partnerships with PowerHousing Australia
- Currently working with Federal and State Governments on being a key player in the CSHA negotiations to commence this

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Affordable Housing Models: PowerHousing Australia (cont.)

year.

PowerHousing Australia is not an “exclusive club”. The 13 foundation members worked hard throughout 2006 to set the organisation up, and we see 2007 as a year of consolidation.

PowerHousing Australia has not set out on any “recruitment drive”, but if you are in a community housing organisation and you are interested in what we are doing, please refer to www.powerhousingaustralia.com.au or call Larry O’Brien, Business Development Manager on 0438 750 013 or email at larryo@lmhs.com.au

Some key points made on the PowerHousing Australia website are as follows:

- There is currently a \$60 billion capacity in the public housing marketplace that is currently not being leveraged, \$10 billion of which is in the community housing sector.
- PowerHousing is positioning itself to become the core provider of affordable housing, but is not yet recognised as such by government. The opportunity is there for federal government to take leadership by partnering with the organisations identified as growth providers of affordable housing.
- The issue of affordable housing is Australia-wide, affecting metropolitan, regional and rural communities.
- PowerHousing Australia is the only national not-for-profit network of affordable housing providers, which meets the affordable housing needs of low-income individuals and families.
- PowerHousing is currently made up of thirteen affordable housing providers.

- Members deliver affordable housing solutions on-the-ground, under the clear leadership of a nationwide organisation.
- By working together, members can respond effectively to the dynamic regulatory, economic and policy environment by:
 - Sharing practice innovation
 - Obtaining higher risk capital based on member demonstrated performance & capability
 - Enjoying co-operative ventures and strategy
 - Benefiting from a shared knowledge bank.

PowerHousing members are significant providers of community and affordable housing services in metropolitan, rural and remote communities across Australia. Our members are currently managing more than 15,000 housing units with an asset base of some \$4bn.

Members are all housing practitioners who are committed to delivering practical housing solutions through harnessing the local capacity of community organisations.

PowerHousing will leverage investment from public, private and foundation sources to grow the social impact of member programs. PowerHousing's business model focuses on developing partnerships at all levels:

- Local partnerships (public and private sector)
- National collaborations with member organizations
- Financial institutions, foundations, government bodies and members.

While not an advocacy group, PowerHousing will work with academics and policy developers to ensure a positive, realistic and effective framework is in place

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Affordable Housing Models: Powerhousing Australia (cont.)

across government and industry.

In summary PowerHousing Australia is a practitioner driven response to the multiple challenges and complex issues confronting our sector at this moment. It is also recognition of the fact that the community housing sector needs to adapt and change to remain relevant. As practitioners, we need to be proactive and to work on multiple strategies to deliver real results to our clients. It is no longer acceptable to be “mendicants” waiting at the end of the table for “housing scraps” to fall into our begging bowls.

At a federal and state levels, “affordable housing” is becoming a key issue and PowerHousing Australia will provide a small “significant” response to providing a holistic solution to this very vexed issue. There will be other players! The private sector in various guises is busy putting alternative free

market “affordable housing solutions” to both federal and state governments. If these solutions are robust, sustainable and build this sector, then community housing will have a real fight on their hands to remain relevant and a “real player” in this emerging scene. Just as in the UK, Europe and the US, this sector has had to grow, adapt and respond to the dynamic environments that operate in these jurisdictions.

PowerHousing Australia is determined to be a robust, sustainable “face” of community housing in Australia. We also acknowledge that there needs to be a number of community housing strategies and innovative practices. We are driven to work in an open collaborative and innovative manner with any partners in delivering affordable housing outcomes for disadvantaged Australian families and individuals.



PowerHousing’s South Australian Members

MACHA

Contact: Matthew Woodward

Email: m.woodward@macha.org.au

213 Gouger St Adelaide, SA 5000

Phone: 8237 8777

Fax: 8237 8700

Office Hours: 9-4pm – Mon to Fri

Spectrum Housing

Contact: Lyn Bell

Email: lyn@housingspectrum.org.au

1130 South Rd, Clovelly Park, SA 5042

Phone: 8357 6899

Fax: 8357 6955

Office Hours: 10-4pm – Mon to Fri



Shelter SA got together with Habitat for Humanity and shared a stall for this year's WOMAD held 9-11 of March. Our stall offered a wealth of information regarding housing and homelessness issues, including the latest on Common Ground, regional housing, and our branch activities. Habitat for Humanity also had fliers and information regarding their building projects here and overseas. With estimated attendance at the festival reaching around 70,000 people, the event is a great opportunity to introduce ourselves to a new audience and generally raise awareness about the issues around housing and homelessness.



Gary Wilson, Executive Director, Shelter SA's Chair, Sharyn Goudie, and Habitat for Humanity's Scott Langford, at the Womadelaide Stall.

To grab the attention of passers-by, we challenged people to test their housing knowledge. We have attached a few of the questions here to test out reader's knowledge. (Answers are on page 9)

How many homeless people are there in Australia?

How many long term homeless people got permanent housing last year?

How many homeless people are there in South Australia?

How many homeless people are 24 years old or younger?

How long can you wait for emergency accommodation?





ASHRA



Most of our ASHRA network would have received an ASHRA overview, and request for a letter of support by now. This is all in aid of our latest funding application for \$2500 for the publication and launch of the directory. A very special thank you to our network members who have forwarded their letters of support - very much appreciated. At the time of writing, the latest funding application had been completed and sent off and now it is a matter of collectively crossing our fingers!! I will let you know how this application goes in upcoming Sheltershortz and of course the ASHRA newsletter.

There is still time to contribute to the directory, so if your organisation or group has taken on a 12 month or longer project that would benefit from being promoted across a broad cross section of the community, please let us know. One of the more innovative projects that warrants greater community support is being carried out by members of the Circle of

Friends in Blackwood. Rob realised how important it was for refugees to get a drivers licence as it so often meant that you are able to support others in your community, have greater freedom and choice for education and employment, and increased self esteem and confidence. Rob set about teaching people to drive and all the learners had to pay for was the petrol. Rob also helps them get their first car, make sure it is in good running order and is insured appropriately. At the last ASHRA meeting, Rob told us that of the 21 young people he has helped get their licence, 20 of them are now employed. So far Rob has been able to find enough cars through donations, so if you have or know of someone with an unwanted car and can afford to donate it, please let us know and we will forward your details on to Rob.

The sixth edition of the ASHRA Edition will be out soon!

The next ASHRA Meeting will be held on April 11 3-5pm Torrens Building All Welcome

Shelter SA is 30 Years Old!

Shelter's 30th Birthday Celebrations will be held at a dinner on the evening of May 31st, and the Pavilion Restaurant in Veale Gardens (off South Terrace in Adelaide). Costs and program are being worked out.

If you had some involvement with Shelter SA over the last 30 years, you are cordially invited to join us for a retrospective discussion, a look at what's changed, and the future of Shelter SA. **Please call the office on 8221 6488 to register your interest in attending** (and leave your contact details!).

*If you know the whereabouts of some of the **early members or staff** of Shelter, please contact the office so we can extend an invitation to them*





Consultations on Service Concepts

Want help with housing services? Are you a tenant of Housing SA? Have you applied for assistance at Housing SA? (formerly the Housing Trust)

Shelter is conducting public consultations about Housing SA's proposed new services and delivery system. The discussion paper is available on www.sheltersa.asn.au.

Public consultations will be held from 2-4 pm:

Salisbury	April 30 th	John Harvey Gallery, City of Salisbury, 12 James St
Adelaide	May 2 nd	Mead Hall, Flinders Street Baptist Church (2.30-4.30pm)
Noarlunga	May 17 th	Christies Beach Sports & Social Club, Christies Ave, Christies Beach
The Parks	May 18 th	Parks Community Centre, Cowan St, Angle Park
Modbury	May 21 st	Community Learning Centre, City of Tea Tree Gully, Montague Rd

And from 1-3 pm:

Port Pirie	May 8 th	Central Hotel, 30 Alexander St
Port Augusta	May 9 th	Australian National Institute, 32 Flinders St
Port Lincoln	May 10 th	Media Room, Civic Hall, Tasman Tce
Berri	May 14 th	Berri Resort Hotel, Riverview Drive

Homelessness and SAAP Reform Report Launch



Homelessness SA will launch their report on the Homelessness and SAAP Reform Conference, (held last November), on the 20th April, between 11.30am and 2.30pm at the Pilgrim Hall, 12 Flinders Street Adelaide.

Conference participants were encouraged to contribute their concerns regarding the current homelessness system and offer solutions. The responses form the basis of the report.

Come to the launch to hear about the conference and to discuss the recommendations, including:

- Do the recommendations cover all the relevant issues for the SAAP sector?
- Are the issues important to all SAAP agencies?
- What are the top three concerns for the SAAP sector?

For further information, please see the enclosed flier, or call Margo Johnson on 8221 6488

Answers to the Womadelaide Housing Knowledge Questions (from page 7):

- 1) 100,000
- 2) 65
- 3) 7,586 (ABS 2001) increased from 6,837 in 1996
- 4) 46% (10% are under 12 years old)
- 5) 6 weeks to 4 months



Homelessness, Health & Housing Expo



In the lead up to the 2007 Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo, we felt it would be useful to remind our readers of the purpose of the holding an event such as this and to encourage broader sponsorship and attendance.

The implications to health for those experiencing long term homelessness are extensive and multifarious. The Australian Federation of Homeless Organisations (AFHO) has highlighted higher rates of asthma, ear infections, vision problems, low immunisation rates, eczema, and developmental delays as just some of the effects of homelessness on children.

Rossiter, Mallett, Myers and Rosenthal identified high rates of attempted suicide, self harm practices and a quarter of participants reported a level of psychological distress indicative of a psychiatric disorder. Another homeless study (Connelly and Crown 1994), reported that half of the homeless population group studied had a treatable psychiatric disorder, but only 20% had ever received psychiatric help. In addition, significant misuse of tobacco, marijuana, heroin and alcohol was also reported.

Yet another study found that mental health problems are eight times higher for people living in hostels and bed sits, and eleven times higher for those sleeping rough, compared to the housed population. It is also estimated that around two thirds of the homeless population need help, for example with general health problems, income support, legal issues, work or employment sought assistance.

It is often believed that substance abuse issues are the cause of people becoming homeless. However, a recent RMIT University Report found

the contrary: homelessness is more likely to be the precursor to substance abuse and mental illness. In a study of more than 5000 homeless and at risk people, 66% developed substance abuse issues and 53% experienced mental health concerns after becoming homeless.

In this context, the Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo is an attempt to effectively address the impact of long term homelessness on individuals and their families. Last year there were a number of really exciting projects and services taking part, many of whom were unknown outside of their locale. For example, the Bilby Bus is a mobile playgroup run by Centacare and operates in four different regions across Adelaide, offering lots of activities for babies to 5 year olds and information and support for any issue affecting the family, such as housing, finance or health. The Playford Food Co-op is another great project aimed at providing low cost nutritional food and essential grocery items. The Co-op also has a range of complete meal packs available for purchase, with all the necessary ingredients needed to prepare a meal for 4, including meat, vegetables, herbs and spices, all pre-measured for under \$6.00. These two examples are just some of the projects around Adelaide that contribute to rebuilding peoples lives after experiencing hardship and homelessness.

This year we would especially welcome interest from optometrist, podiatrists and any other health specialist with an interest the health needs of those who have had or continue to experience homelessness. Please contact Margo on 8221 6488 or email margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au for further information.

References

Rossiter, B., Mallett, S., Myers, P., and Rosenthal, D. (2003) *Living Well? Homeless young people in Melbourne* La Trobe University in collaboration with the University of California

Stephens, J. (2002) *The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Young People* The Mental Health Foundation UK

'Homelessness in Melbourne: Confronting the Challenge' (2007) Chamberlain, C. Johnson, G. and Theobald, J. RMIT Melbourne



Managing Disruptive Behaviour Public Consultations

How will Housing SA's new Disruptive Behaviour Strategy impact on public housing tenants and their neighbours? Housing SA has prepared a discussion paper on a proposed *Disruptive Behaviour Strategy*. Shelter SA is conducting public consultations across the state over the coming four weeks. You are cordially invited to attend to discuss the proposed changes to conditions of tenancy in public housing. The consultations will be held on:

Port Adelaide

April 3rd, 2-4 pm
Pt Adelaide Uniting Church
169 Commercial Road

Whyalla

April 12th, 1-3 pm
UniSA (Whyalla), Room 36
Main Building (Ground Floor)

Elizabeth

April 4th, 2-4 pm
United Way Community Hall
Elizabeth Shopping Centre

Mt Gambier

April 16th, 1-3 pm
Anglican Community Care Inc
White Avenue

Marion

April 5th 2007, 2-4 pm
Marion Cultural Centre (Sturt Room)
287 Diagonal Road, Oaklands Park

Murray Bridge

April 17th, 2-4 pm
Murray Bridge Golf Club
Ritter Street

Adelaide April 19th, 2-4 pm, Mead Hall, Flinders St Baptist Church 65 Flinders St

The draft *Disruptive Behaviour Strategy* discussion paper is available on www.sheltersa.asn.au. If you are unable to attend but would like to contribute, forms are available on the Shelter SA website for your comments.

Upcoming Events

ASHRA Meeting

When: April 11 2007, 3pm
Where: Room 2, Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide
More Information: Contact Margo Johnson on 8221 6488.

African Resettlement in Australia Conference 2007

Melbourne 11-13 April
Contact: (03) 8344 3682 for further details

Launch of the Homelessness SA Conference Report and Recommendations

When: 20 April 2007 11.30am-2.30pm
Where: Pilgrim Hall, 12 Flinders Street Adelaide
More Information: Contact Margo Johnson on 8221 6488

Are We There Yet? Past Learnings, Current Realities and Future Directions for Youth Affairs in Australia.

When: Tuesday 1 to Thursday 3 May, 2007.
Where: Melbourne Park Function Centre.
More Information: www.yacvic.org.au/conference

Youth Homelessness Matters

34 400 independent young people aged between 12 and 25 were accommodated in the homelessness service system in 2004-05. There are more young women who are homeless than young men. One in every 50 young women between 18 and 19 will stay in a homeless assistance service this year. Young people face a hard time finding somewhere safe and secure to live. Homelessness makes it more difficult for them to maintain support, connect with their community and participate in education, training and employment. Young people who experience homelessness are at increased risk of experiencing ongoing homelessness as adults.

The main activity in Adelaide will be handing out information on the day at Victoria Square, and the Railway station. Volunteers Needed!

*For further information,
contact
Michael Traynor,
Program
Coordinator,
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347 South Rd,
Morphett Vale 5162
Ph: 08 8186 8926*



Shelter SA is 30 years old!

A dinner will be held on May 31

(see page 8 for details)



Shelter SA
Housing: a basic human right

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Shelter SA is a peak housing organisation representing housing consumers' views to Government, the housing industry and the community. It is primarily concerned with the availability and adequacy of low cost housing, and that people on low incomes have access to secure, affordable and appropriate housing.

Please contact Shelter SA if you are interested in becoming a member, or would like further information.

Secretariat

Executive Director: Gary Wilson

Sector Development Officer: Margo Johnson

Clerical Officer: Cheryl Shepley