



## Rental Housing Problems Will Continue in 2009.

By Gary Wilson, Executive Director

There are plenty of “doomsayers” around, who are forecasting the dramatic fall of house prices, as has happened in the USA (but Australia has a problem of high demand, not a problem of oversupply). Many homes in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, and Perth were ridiculously overpriced, so it is no wonder their prices have fallen.

Demand for housing remains high in Adelaide because of a lack of supply, particularly of rental accommodation. The State Government is still pushing for an increase in our population (assuming there will be enough water and power for them), but construction of new housing is not surging ahead.

The Federal Government has tripled the First Home Owners Grant for those who build a new home and this is impacting on the new home market. The Reserve Bank has slashed interest rates, benefiting the 35% of households with a mortgage, and perhaps making it more enticing for first home purchasers to get into the housing market.

But those people on low incomes (workers often worried about their continued employment, and those in receipt of Centrelink benefits) who are renting are facing continued increases in rents. Limited supply and high demand means rents will increase at a rate higher than CPI or Award increases. High demand means those who can afford it can offer the landlord or agent more money than the property was advertised for.

The most disadvantaged in our community cannot compete with those who can offer more than the advertised rent; this forces them further away from city services and often into housing of a lesser standard and/or size. With a public housing waiting list of 25,000, and community housing organisations closing their long waiting lists, it is evident that low income renters are facing increasing rents in the private rental market. It is these people who often spend more than 50% of their income on rent.



sheltershortz

### Inside this Issue:

<i>Commonwealth Funding</i>	2
<i>Housing News Updates</i>	3
<i>Stimulus for Public and Social Housing</i>	3
<i>Diary of a House Hunter</i>	4
<i>What Does Social Inclusion Really Mean??</i>	6
<i>Telling Norman's Story—Updated</i>	8
<i>Mental Health Housing Crisis</i>	10
<i>Low Income Help</i>	11
<i>Homeless Connect: Homelessness, Health &amp; Housing Expo</i>	12
<i>ASHRA Update</i>	13
<i>Across My Desk</i>	14
<i>Recent Publications</i>	14
<i>Meet Our New Student—Penny Ogden</i>	15
<i>Sharehouse Toolkit</i>	15
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	16



# Commonwealth Funding by Gary Wilson

In December 2008, Gary Wilson gathered the following information (and accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, or otherwise, of the content):

The NAHA has NOT been signed off – there are still negotiations to work through. It does contain significant new funds, more than SA’s forward estimates.

The NAHA will provide:

NRAS	\$600m nationally
Housing Affordability Fund	\$500m
Social Housing	\$400m
Homelessness funds	\$800M
Indigenous Remote Housing	\$1,920m over 10 years

The Indigenous remote housing is at least a 10 year program, which means there can be major on-going capital spending and procurement. There can now be employment and training programs for Indigenous people; in fact, there is more employment in tenancy management and maintenance than there is in construction.

SA has an Affordable Housing Innovations Fund, that has \$25m available to be used, and it CAN be in combination with NRAS funds to get more housing outcomes. SA should get 300 homes from that, including 100 for high needs. SA will receive \$30m more under the social housing funding to spend by June 2010. SA is making a case for what happens beyond that date. (ALL of this was determined before the Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> Stimulus Package was announced.)

NRAS will not always deliver housing for people with high needs, so the AHIF can ensure that there are more high needs homes. By putting in AHIU funds and having some equity in the projects, it gives more security for participating organisations when the NRAS subsidies end after 10 years. In SA, ALL the 422 NRAS allocations for Round 1 went to NGO’s. Housing SA hopes there will be some private developers expressing interest for Round 2. If they come in, they will become a type of social landlord, and the scheme will produce more housing.

The NAHA is a combination of CSHA and SAAP funding, so by itself, there is no new funding in it. The NAHA funding will be an attached Schedule to the Agreement.

However, there is new funding for homelessness, to grow service responses, but it will NOT mean growing the SAAP accommodation. In fact, SAAP will no longer exist as a separate program. The White Paper is about prevention, and pathways.

“Matching funding” as a concept is gone, except for the “Place to Call Home” component. “Matching” was about inputs, and the NAHA is about outcomes. The TOTAL funding package (ALL the boxes below) received from the Commonwealth.

NAHA = “current” CSHA + SAAP	+ new Social Housing funds	+ Homeless- ness funds	+ Remote Indigenous funds
------------------------------------	--	---------------------------------	------------------------------------

In terms of the land audit, SA does not want the Commonwealth to release their land on their own – SA would prefer that land for affordable housing NOT be specifically identified, but that there should be some in all new developments (SA has inclusionary zoning), so that all land releases are into planned integrated communities.

The Affordable Housing Innovations Unit was breaking new ground in its partnerships over the last 3 years, and is essentially building new practices. The legal agreements took longer than expected, as there were no precedents. Now it should only take 18 months or less from the time funding is allocated (in a partnership) to when residents can move in. Shelter hopes to soon have a list of allocations, government contributions, and where projects are up to in the process for each house. Some homes are now occupied and there have been official openings nearly every month.



## Update on Other Topics

The Ladder Foyer at Port Adelaide heavily involves the AFL and while there is a service model or style of service the Government would like to see in place, the management and running of the Foyer will be put out to tender in 2009.

---

Details of the Common Ground project in Port Augusta are not known at this point.

---

The State Government has developed a Safe Tracks program, with transitional housing for Aboriginal “travellers” in Ceduna and Port Augusta. Another one is being developed in Coober Pedy and ideally there should be one in the Adelaide metro area. Jay Weatherill made the announcement in Oct 2007, asking for the Commonwealth to put up \$9m in matching funds. Apparently some of the Homelessness and Remote Indigenous Housing funds may be able to be used for this, with negotiations to be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009. It is recognised that the right service model will have to be carefully implemented, particularly in a metropolitan Adelaide facility.

---

The Commonwealth earlier this year signed a \$25m housing deal with Aboriginal communities in the APY lands. Part of the deal was that to get the funds, the elders had to agree to lease the land to the SA Housing Minister. This has been agreed to in 2 of the 3 communities. The Indigenous Remote Housing funding from the Commonwealth will be in addition to this, and should provide about 200 new homes and 200 upgrades. Housing SA will do the procurement and housing management. A particular southern N.T. model may be used.

---

### **Stimulus for Public and Social Housing**

On Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> the Prime Minister announced an economic stimulus package that would include \$600 million for public and social housing. That means SA will be able to purchase or build 1,500 new homes. About ¾ of those will become the property of “preferred provider” Community Housing Organisations, with no debentures.

This funding will keep the residential construction industry busy, and will begin to address the undersupply of rental housing in SA. In addition, it will provide the asset base for some Community Housing Organisations to borrow against and to grow, providing more rental accommodation.



# Diary of a House Hunter Part 1

by Margo Johnson, Sector Development Officer

*This article is the first in a four part series and examines the process of buying your first home and some of the issues that can and do arise. The series is written from my own personal perspective, with tips and suggestions regarding lessons learned at the conclusion.*

I have rented for the past 25 years, so after securing my first *real* job I began contacting HomeStart on a regular basis to find out if I was eligible to buy a home and to discuss my options. I began to attend financial information sessions and forums, subscribed to a number of real estate sites and read everything I could get my hands on regarding home ownership. There is a certain amount of security in renting: if I didn't like the landlord or the price, I felt I had the freedom to choose something else. But with homeownership I was concerned that if I had a problem with the financial institution, it would cost me a great deal to choose something else. HomeStart was my first choice and I didn't really give other forms of finance more than a second thought; I had heard Gary Storkey speak at forums and I felt really comfortable that HomeStart was about getting low income earners into home ownership. Each time I would speak with a consultant, there was something new to think about and a new amount that I needed to save up for due, to steadily increasing house prices. Trying to save money while I had a credit card debt seemed ridiculous to me, so my first task was to reduce that debt before I could even begin to think about saving up the deposit. Yet as house prices climbed, so did the deposit I would need to save for and the idea of ever being able to buy my own home appeared unachievable. Even with the First Home Owners Grant of \$7,000 I still needed an additional \$3,000 minimum of my own savings.

Then in July 2008, I received a letter stating that the First Home Owners Grant had a bonus of \$4,000 taking it to a total of \$11,000! This meant I would be able to look at purchasing immediately, so I made arrangements the next day to have an interview with HomeStart. The Loan Consultant explained the options available to me and I decided to go with the Graduate Loan as it would allow me to borrow 100% of the purchase price. The Loan Consultant also told me the amount I was able to borrow: \$180,000. I was now able to start looking and even put a bid on a house!

Never having bought anything larger than a car before, I drew up a wish list of items I needed and wanted to have in my house. Through my years of searching real estate sites, I realised I would probably be unable to have many of the *wants* with the budget I was working with, but I knew there would be some things that I absolutely had to have: like a large yard - as a mad keen gardener and someone who spends an inordinate amount of time outside, having a large yard topped my list. I also wanted to have a freestanding dwelling. Having rented for so many years, one of the things I most looked forward to with home ownership was having some personal space and not hearing every time the neighbours flushed their toilet or had a row! And my final need was a bathroom with a separate toilet. Having shared one bathroom with sons (who contrary to popular belief spend more time in the bathroom than daughters) I felt a separated bathroom would save my relationship with them. Also important was being close to public transport and shops/amenities.

Armed with this list and a tight budget helped enormously in the search for my first home. Now instead of entering in vague search requests into search engines, (and wasting time looking at properties I could never afford or in areas I could never realistically move to) I was able to limit my search significantly. This meant I only had a handful of properties to choose from and this saved a lot of time on weekends going to open inspections.

I fell in love with the second property I looked at on my first weekend of searching! It met all of my criteria except the separate toilet, and as an added bonus it had a number of fruit trees and a jacaranda (one of my favourite trees!). However, I hesitated putting a bid on it because everything I had read about home purchasing suggested that you should take your time and not rush into anything. It wasn't until a week later that I called to put a bid on the property and of course by that time, someone had beaten me to it.

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Diary of a House Hunter (cont.)

Disappointed by this and keen to be more aggressive in my search, I found another property that also met my criteria and promptly put a bid on it. The property was currently tenanted and when I asked if the tenant had a fixed or periodic lease, the agent didn't seem to know but assured me that they would find out. (This was quite common during my search and one agent even told me in front of the tenant that I shouldn't worry because they could 'get rid of them!'). I was eventually told that the tenant had a fixed lease until February 2009. After discussing this with the Loan Consultant from HomeStart, I was advised that they would consider allowing me to take out a home loan with a tenant and I went into the real estate agent's office to formalise the bid *subject to inspection*.

Thankfully there is a two day cooling off period to give you time to organise an architectural and/or pest report. This time also allowed me to think about what it would be like to pay a mortgage on the new home and the rent on my current residence and any agent fees I would incur with the tenant for five months before I was able to move in. I realised I would find this extremely stressful and rang the agent to withdraw my bid.

A few weeks later the agent from the first home I looked at, rang me to let me know the property was again available. I arranged to attend the next open inspection and took one of my sons and his partner along to get another opinion. We all agreed the house had lots of potential and I put a bid on the property immediately.

### Important tips:

There are heaps of sites to help you when searching for a home to purchase. Here are just a few:

[www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au) is excellent for both home purchase and rental. You are also able to download a free suburb profile to help you in your search, and to get a better understanding of your suburb(s) of interest.

**Do your research:** there are a number of opportunities to attend free (and worthwhile) information sessions regarding home ownership/renovations/financial issues. Planning for your future will save lots of time and take some of the stress out of the biggest purchase of your life.

Getting your finances in order (and learning to be honest to yourself about your expenses) before you purchase a home can take a lot of the stress out of the process.

[www.startdreams.com.au](http://www.startdreams.com.au) is a great site to learn more about your money, how you spend and how you can realise your own dreams – whether it's a holiday, a car or a home.

Free housing seminars are available at HomeStart on a range of areas, including women, graduates, seniors and more. Go to [www.homestart.com.au](http://www.homestart.com.au) for more information.

Archicentre is the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects and offers a range of information for home buyers. Archicentre offers free information sessions (see page 16 for more details) and a variety of resources can be downloaded from their website. Go to [www.archicentre.com.au](http://www.archicentre.com.au)



# What Does Social Inclusion Really Mean ???

By Cate Jones, Project Officer

I know what I mean by 'social inclusion' – but do you know what I mean, and do I know what you mean? And I know what I mean by 'capacity building' – but do you know what I mean, and do I know what you mean? It seems to me that we live in a society where terms like 'social inclusion' are used often to cloud, reduce and flatten complex issues rather than honestly tackle them, even in the knowledge we may make a mistake.

I am reading the Federal Governments 'Social Inclusion Principles' document from the website of the Social Inclusion Board. It is littered with terminology that most of us have heard and read before. Terms head each section, like – 'Developing Tailored Services', followed by descriptive paragraphs that read:

“Deep, intensive interventions tailored at an individual, family or community level are one way to support those experiencing deep and complex social exclusion, by helping them tackle their actual problems.”

I reflect on the 'tailored services' for people who are lining up in Centrelink queues all over Australia; services designed to help them tackle their own problems simply don't exist. I think about the 'deep intensive interventions' that have definitely not been tailored to suit the homeless people who come into the Shelter office, or the 'deep intervention' Canberra is offering Housing SA so that it is 'deeply' free to start providing housing. We are then informed that “Successfully overcoming social exclusion may also involve learning to change deeply held attitudes and behaviours”, which is very true – but I would like to inform the Social Inclusion Board that it cuts both ways. Just like the fact that there is nothing mutual about the Howard initiative called 'mutual obligation'; deeply held economic, punishing approaches to poverty, unemployment and disadvantage need to change too. It is worth considering that for many unemployed and poverty stricken individuals and families, simply surviving each day, managing to put food on the table, is probably forefront in their lives.

It is also stated that we need to focus on “Overcoming the fragmentation of service systems for people at high risk of social exclusion” and this is another patent truth, but when organisations are competing for funding for programs and services, some choose to protect their own turf rather than refer a client on to another more appropriate service. Organisations are absolutely aware that the on-going funding of their programs depends on successful outcomes and that any evaluation of these programs must reflect this. This dependency on 'satisfying' government to ensure that funding continues can compromise a service and an evaluation of it.

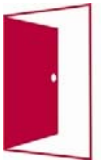
I totally agree with the statement below:

“Identifying the root causes of disadvantage and the connections between different types of disadvantage allows interventions to be designed to prevent the occurrence of problems and provide more effective support to those who are vulnerable before the disadvantage becomes entrenched.”

But I haven't seen a lot of services that take a holistic approach from the bottom to the top. I have seen services that are holistic in delivery but that is usually because workers on the ground often don't let management know what they really do and how they do it. Essentially, holistic service delivery requires that particular program criteria sometimes be overlooked by those who work at the coal-face.

If “Policies and programs should be focused on long-term sustainable improvement” why do so many programs only receive funding for a year or eighteen months? It is only “by offering socially

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Social Inclusion (cont.)

excluded people a pathway through their disadvantage that we will enable them to self-manage through life course events.” What on-going funding exists that truly does see the socially excluded able to cope with the adversities that come with poverty and the hardship exclusions creates, because if readers know of any, I’m happy to stand corrected.

For Indigenous people, who are the most researched peoples in the world, (in fact, so studied, researched and analysed that, for Indigenous people, the term research has negative connotations), the news of yet another ‘new’ program about to be implemented often receives a cynical response. Compounded with being over-researched, is that Aboriginal people have observed a multitude of policies, programs, research projects and evaluations, all supposedly designed to improve conditions for their people, come and then go. Programs that seem to be working well suddenly lose their funding and others take their place. Largely, decisions about these programs or services are made without consultation with the Aboriginal community, or they are made in consultation with individuals who have related agendas. It is not surprising that Aboriginal people are mistrustful of ‘new’ initiatives, the ‘newest’ service and it is not in the least surprising that they don’t believe they are listened to when it is claimed, time and time again, that all of these initiatives have been developed ‘in consultation’. It is interesting that in relationship to consultation with Aboriginal communities about program funding one of the Aspirations involved in the Government’s Social Inclusion Principles is outlined in this statement.

“A greater voice, combined with greater responsibility - Governments and other organisations giving people a say in what services they need and how they work, and people taking responsibility to make the best use of the opportunities available. Achieving social inclusion depends on the active involvement of the entire community. Providing opportunities for citizens and communities to identify their needs and give feedback about the design and delivery of policies and programs will be important.”

According to Tom Calma, Australia’s Race Discrimination Commissioner, “Encourage ambiguity and you confuse and divide a society”. I believe we are possibly living in one of the most ambiguous societies ever. On one hand, we have very vaguely defined terms, such as, social inclusion dominating political strategy and sounding engaging. On the other hand, more and more we see the disadvantaged in society genuinely suffering. The meaning coded in the rhetoric surrounding social inclusion may seem beneficial; however it is not difficult, when we look at the reality of disadvantage and poverty, to be aware of a great division between the politics of rhetoric and many people’s everyday experience.

## Shelter SA is on the Move!!

We will soon be moving to  
Unit 44, 81 Carrington Street Adelaide

More details to come!



## Telling Norman's Story (Update)

by Margo Johnson, Sector Development Officer

*This interview is part of a series of housing stories we wish to present to Shelter members in order to explore the impact of government policies and agendas on South Australians. These interviews seek to explore the participants' housing experiences, how they understand, negotiate and respond to situations they are confronted with. Wherever possible we will present updates to our readers on the people in our stories, where they are now and how they are going. Norman's housing story, as a single parent of a daughter, was featured in the May and July 2006 editions of Sheltershortz. Norman's daughter Jade was also interviewed and featured in the June 2007 edition of Sheltershortz.*

*In light of the recent release of *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* and to provide our readers with an update on where are they now, I recently caught up with Norman to chat about how things are going for him since we last spoke with him.*

Briefly, Norman became homeless in 2001 in a regional town after his 15 year old daughter, Jade, left home. This event sparked a whole series of events: his income reduced as he was no longer eligible for the Sole Parent Pension and he was unable to afford the rent and lost his home. Everyone in the town thought the worst of him and coupled with his own guilt about losing his daughter, he began to drink heavily. He moved to Adelaide and was homeless for the next three years, moving in and out of boarding houses and sleeping rough. Norman also started to experience anxiety attacks which left him paralysed with fear and unable to get on public transport.

One night while sleeping rough, he was woken by the sounds of firemen putting out a bin that had been set on fire. Norman felt scared and made a conscious decision to turn his life around. He 'wanted everything back that he had lost', 'wanted to be part of something' and 'be on the same par as everyone else'. From that point onwards Norman aggressively started to rebuild his life - asking questions, and asking for help. After a couple of false starts with counselors, he eventually met one who told him that he would take him on, 'but if you come to your appointment drunk – don't bother coming back'. This was the first time Norman had been set limits to his behavior with consequences; previously other counselors had asked him what he was going to do about his drinking. This frustrated Norman no end, as he believed he was going to counselling for them to tell him how.

A fellow roommate at a Stabilisation Unit first told him about the Big Issue as a way of earning money. A couple of months later he approached the Magdalene Centre and signed on to become a vendor. Norman received the Newstart Allowance but was not active (this meant he was too ill to work and did not have to apply for x amount of jobs each fortnight). In 2005 Norman had an assessment at CRS (Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service) and negotiated to do Certificate II in Community Services via correspondence, with CRS paying for the course. After completing four units, Norman was a witness to an horrific murder and couldn't focus on his studies so withdrew from the course. At the same time, Norman became a Board member of Homelessness SA, actively contributing to meetings and events which in turn helped to build his confidence.

In 2007, Norman read an advertisement in the paper about the \$3,000 study vouchers that were available to those wishing to do Certificate II. Norman applied and got Recognition of Prior Learning for the subjects he had completed, and he finished Certificate II in Community Services. During this year, Norman became his mother's carer, as she was suffering from mild dementia. After 12 months, his mother was able to go into an aged care facility and his income had to be reassessed again by Centrelink. Norman wanted to continue his studies and applied for Certificate III in Community Services. He was also put on the waiting list for a Personal Support Program support worker, as he felt he needed assistance navigating these systems. Because of Norman's extra-curricula activities, which included being a senior vendor at The Big Issue, a Board Member of Homelessness SA, and his involvement in events such as the Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo, Norman was offered the chance to be fast tracked into Certificate IV full time. However, Norman was told that if

(Continued on page 9)



## Telling Norman's Story (cont.)

he studied full time he would also have to look for 12 jobs per fortnight. While Norman wanted to continue his studies; the idea of working at such a fast pace without supports (he was still waiting for a PSP worker at this stage) was too much and Norman began to get anxiety attacks again. Once Norman decided to do Certificate III the attacks subsided. Just before he completed Certificate III Norman was allocated a PSP worker after waiting 18 months. In late 2008, Norman was invited to apply for a position as a Boarding House Worker, which he was successful in gaining, and after completing the induction and three months probation has just been offered a full time position.

Norman and his daughter Jade have reconciled in 2004 and he is the proud granddad of two beautiful young boys.

Through his sustained involvement with The Big Issue, Homelessness SA, Shelter SA, and his work on the Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo, Norman has developed an extensive support network that he can go to for support and advice. Holidays can be tough though – “When studies have finished and offices close up, I wouldn't have anyone to talk to if I didn't have The Big Issue to sell.”

Norman is now looking forward to getting his drivers license back and 'upgrade his living conditions... everything I have was donated, nothing matches'. Norman is now excited about his future - he plans to do more study after he has settled into his job more and is also quitting The Big Issue and becoming a mentor to the new vendors. And you can't wipe the smile off his face!

*As Norman's story illustrates, the struggle to rebuild your life after becoming homeless is extremely tough and can take years. What is so impressive about Norman's story is the extent to which he actively pursued his goals, often without any supports. Homelessness, in Norman's case, meant loss of possessions, loss of drivers licence, loss of friends and family, declining health and perhaps most importantly, loss of self confidence. Each step forward was tenuous and took an enormous amount of courage. Norman's involvement in organisations such as The Big Issue and attending activities at the Magdalene Centre were integral to his rebuilding of self confidence, giving him a sense of accomplishment and community. The importance of these social and community based programs cannot be over stated; they are as crucial as rehabilitation facilities and counselling and education and training, as they complement the work of the other.*

*Norman's story also illustrates the need for clearer and consistent pathways out of homelessness. While Norman was able to access a variety of services with his initial homelessness concerns (i.e. drug and alcohol supports, detox and rehabilitation, counselling) and boarding house accommodation, there were considerable setbacks as he pushed to access education and employment. Norman waited eighteen months for a PSP support worker that may have been able to negotiate on his behalf for access to courses that were delivered in a manner appropriate to Norman's needs. Fast tracking students may be perceived as a reward for outstanding ability, but in Norman's example, the stress of losing control, and feeling pushed into something he had little confidence in, brought on extreme panic attacks that undermined the little confidence he had. This would suggest there are significant gaps in supporting those who have experienced homelessness after their initial and immediate concerns have been addressed.*

*Homelessness is never simply about the lack of accommodation. Vulnerable groups experience poor health and lack of community 'belonging', as well as the more obvious loss of possessions and no place to call their own. To address these needs we need to fund the sector with the capacity to access or offer informal social programs throughout the year. All the success in the world can be undermined by a four week holiday period, with no-one to talk to and no social outings. Norman understands this only too well and has begun offering support to others who have had similar experiences.*

**NB At the time of writing, Norman was successful in gaining his Learners Permit!**



# Mental Health Housing Crisis

**Transcript of Radio National Program Perspectives, 13 March 2008**

**By Margaret Springgay, Executive Director, Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia**

I want you to picture Ted - a 51-year-old man who has suffered with schizophrenia for more than half his life. He weighs only 52 kilos because of his increasing delusional episodes and reluctance to eat properly, despite the help of his sister and 81-year-old mother, who have cared for him for years. He desperately needs supported community accommodation, but the only hostels available are a few overcrowded houses where up to five people share one room. There is no privacy, and the environment is dismal for someone like Ted, who already suffers from anxiety and depression as part of his illness.

In desperation, Ted's sister wrote to me after she had exhausted every avenue to find suitable housing for her brother. She had nowhere else to turn. Shamefully, there are hundreds of thousands of people like Ted in Australia for whom the fundamental human right to a safe and secure environment in which to live is unattainable.

Since the deinstitutionalization of people with a mental illness began more than 40 years ago, state and federal governments collectively have failed to develop adequate supported accommodation programs to enable people with severe mental illness to live with dignity in the community. The consequence of this failure is an overrepresentation of people with a mental illness living on the streets or in sub-standard housing, such as boarding houses.

It's been a long time since the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission first warned that the lack of supported accommodation is the single largest obstacle to recovery and effective rehabilitation for people with a mental illness. Worldwide research and experience confirms this. One of the most well-known examples is the 2001 New York/New York study, which developed 4,679 community-based permanent housing units for homeless people with a mental illness. The impact was significant: when pre- and post-intervention data was examined, it revealed marked reductions in use of hospital and correctional facilities. The annual cost of service use per homeless person involved in the program fell from more than \$40,000 to just \$16,000. The New York/New York initiative not only greatly improved the lives of many marginalized people with a mental illness; it was a sound investment of public resources.

Despite these lessons, the housing crisis for people with mental illness in Australia continues, along with a paucity of programs providing the support they need. Every Australian state has unmet social housing needs. The need has been recognized by the Prime Minister who has pledged funds to address the homeless in Australia, a huge number of whom have severe mental illness.

The need for housing with support was rated the biggest issue in the latest national survey conducted by Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia last year. Those who responded included people with a mental illness, their carers and health professionals. Housing was seen as more critical than other key issues such as appropriate employment and social security services, education and the need for greater investment in mental health research.

Australia has a failed social housing policy. The Mental Illness Fellowship Australia urges the Commonwealth to specifically build the resources to address the deficit in housing stock and support services for people with a mental illness.

Too often health policy omits to look at the vital supports people need to maintain their health.

*(Continued on page 11)*



## Mental Health Housing Crisis (cont.)

As this government has acknowledged, health policy is not just about hospital beds; we must look at the social underpinnings that contribute to meeting the fundamental needs of people with social disadvantage.

It is a sad and frustrating reality that when good people in all spheres of political life hold serious issues at arms length in order to escape from the moral imperative to do something, we end up with failed social policy.

I'm glad to report that Ted's sister found suitable supported accommodation for her brother. Yet, the lack of long-term solutions for thousands of others continues. What we most need now is for the state and federal governments to stop blaming one another, face up to past failures and prioritize social housing for people with a mental illness - for the sake of Ted and others like him.

---

### Low Income Help Seeking pensioners for grocery voucher disbursement

A number of our networks have promoted the pensioner grocery voucher disbursement over the past few weeks (see details below). It is important to note that South Australian pensioners are able to apply. However, Nicki from Combined Pensioners and Superannuants of NSW has advised us that there is a waiting list of several months. For more information, call CPSA on 1800 451 488 or visit [www.cpsa.org.au](http://www.cpsa.org.au)

Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW Inc (CPSA) operates a program by which donations are converted to grocery vouchers and distributed to pensioners in need across Australia. CPSA continues to receive these donations, but applications for grocery vouchers have dropped off a little, with the disbursement of the senior bonus. CPSA does not discriminate according to pension type, and would love to have any pensioners contact them so they can assist them.

For pensioners to receive a supermarket grocery voucher, please send the following information to CPSA, Level 9, 28 Foveaux St, Surry Hills NSW 2010: Pensioner's name, address and telephone number; a photocopy of the pension card (just the front – no signature required). Please also inform which supermarket chains are in the pensioner's area (so that they can be sent a card that they can use).



## Homeless Connect: Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo by Margo Johnson, Sector Development Officer

The Evaluation of the 2008 Homeless Connect: Homelessness, Health and Housing Expo is now complete and reports have been distributed to all participating service providers and significant others. The 2008 event had the largest contingent of stallholders in the event's history with over 45 services involved. Well done Adelaide!

One of the unique features of the HHH Expo has been to use the event as an opportunity to involve people at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness wherever possible; for example the majority of performers at the Adelaide event have been involved in musical programs offered at day centres and mental health facilities. These involvements provide opportunities to people who are doing it tough to showcase their skills and talents and to get involved in local and relevant community activities. Equally important, these involvements provide the broader community with opportunities to look beyond a person experiencing homelessness and to see the whole person.

The financial support provided by Adelaide City Council for the 2008 event has enabled the development and production of a DVD to better promote the event and to recruit additional support. But Shelter SA wanted to do more than just produce a DVD! In collaboration with Aboriginal Family Support Services and James Maiden (of Maiden Films and Street Soccer fame!) a three day workshop was held for Aboriginal young people involved in the AFSS Independent Living Skills Program, with the aim of training up a film crew for the Homeless Connect event.

Areas covered in the documentary workshop ranged from concept to post production, creative script writing, story development, practical skills in camera operation and photographic techniques. Over the course of the workshop the young people had plenty of *hands on* opportunities, producing three separate films of their own! An added benefit to the workshop has been that students are eligible to obtain SACE points. The three young people that made up the film crew exhibited a high degree of professionalism and respect to the participants of the event, and people were happy and relaxed speaking with the interviewers. Amazing job Jess, Kimberley and Melissa!!

The completed version of the DVD will be available to view from the Shelter SA website shortly [www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au) and if you would like to order a copy, please contact Margo on 8221 6488 or email [margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au](mailto:margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au)





# ASHRA Update

One of the first achievements of the ASHRA network was the development of the ASHRA Multicultural Directory. The first edition was published in July 2007 to provide support to the variety of people working with new arrivals as they settle in South Australia. 500 copies were printed and distributed to our networks in both metropolitan and regional areas and the directory was also available for download from the Shelter SA website. Demand for the directory has been overwhelming: we ran out of the hard copy version in the first six months and have received nearly two and a half thousand requests for the electronic version from our website alone.

The second edition is now well underway, with plans for release during Refugee Week: June 14-20, 2009 (provided we are successful with funding applications). Letters are currently being sent out to our network to confirm contact details and to ensure accuracy and relevance of information. If you would like to include or suggest a service or activity operating anywhere in South Australia, please let us know – topic areas include: Emergency Services, Ageing, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Groups in SA and Nationally, Education and Training (including cultural awareness training), Employment, Families, Financial, Funding and Grants, Health and Wellbeing, Housing, Language, Legal, Media, Museums, Recreation and Sporting, Region and Rural, Religion, Settlement in general, Youth, and new this year: Women's Groups.

This South Australian specific resource can be used in a variety of ways, for example:

- For those with ageing parents wanting culturally and linguistically appropriate aged care and support
- Services wishing to engage with language specific groups and communities
- Students wishing to volunteer or complete a work placement in the culturally and linguistically diverse field
- Support staff and volunteers working with new arrivals in the first five years of settlement
- Services wishing to offer cultural awareness training to their staff
- And much more!

For these reasons, we encourage all organisations offering a service or activity that can assist in the settlement process (from language specific driving lessons to hair braiding, from health services to informal English classes) to let us know so that it can be included. As the ASHRA Network has identified, too often new arrivals miss out on services simply because they or their support workers are unaware of available supports. Greater promotion of services and activities will ensure greater utilisation of available resources and ease the settlement process.

Please contact Margo on 8221 6488 or email: [margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au](mailto:margo.johnson@sheltersa.asn.au) for more information. To download the invitation to be included in the Directory, go to [www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au).

## ASHRA Meeting Dates for 2009

27<sup>th</sup> February      30<sup>th</sup> April  
 25<sup>th</sup> June            27<sup>th</sup> August  
 29<sup>th</sup> October

All meetings are held in the Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide. Whether new arrivals are your core business or you are an individual with a voluntary role, you are welcome to attend our bi-monthly meetings.

*We look forward to seeing you there!*



## Across My Desk



To give our readers a better idea of the types of activities we are involved in, the kinds of inquiries we receive each week, and to promote greater accountability to our members, we thought it would be useful to feature some of these queries in **Across My Desk**. As some of our responses will show, we may not always know the answer, or there is often more than one answer – either way, we will always do everything in our power to get the most accurate and up to date information to any queries we receive. Readers are also encouraged to contribute, especially if you think we didn't get it right or would like to suggest an alternative.

### Question:

**I am homeless and I have found a vacant Housing SA property and I plan to squat in it. I have heard that it is really difficult to evict someone who is squatting. Is this true?**

### Answer:

In this current affordable housing crisis it is hardly surprising to hear queries such as this. According to the ABS, there are 7962 people who are homeless in South Australia and there are any number of vacant properties across the state. Housing SA alone has many vacant properties at any given time waiting for demolition or renovation, not to mention vacant office buildings and warehouses.

Squatting may seem attractive in this economic environment, however Shelter SA do not recommend squatting as a viable alternative for a number of reasons:

1. **You can be charged with an offence** (go to [www.legislation.sa.gov.au/index.aspx](http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/index.aspx) and go to Summary Offence Act 1953, then scroll down to 17-Being on premises for a unlawful purpose and 17A-Trespassers on premises). Serious fines and/or imprisonment can apply!
2. **You can be evicted.** Depending on the circumstances, the owner and/or the police can physically remove you from the premises (not a pleasant experience).
3. **Think about why the property is vacant in the first place.** Many of the Housing SA properties, for example, are vacant awaiting demolition. This often means properties have not been maintained for a period of time and could be unsafe. While squatting may resolve your immediate need for shelter, what about your own safety?
4. And if you are on the Housing SA waiting list, **why would you want to create problems for your potential landlord?** Squatting will not move you up the list any faster.

For more information about squatting go to [www.squatspace.com](http://www.squatspace.com) for information specific to NSW. The laws are a bit different in SA!

## Recent Publications

### The Road Home: A National Approach to Homelessness

Available for download from The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website:

[http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/housing/white\\_paper\\_on\\_homelessness.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/housing/white_paper_on_homelessness.htm)

To order a hard copy call 1800 774055 or email:  
[homelessness@nationalmailing.com.au](mailto:homelessness@nationalmailing.com.au)



## Meet Penny Ogden, Our New Student

My name is Penny Ogden and I am currently completing my final year of a Bachelor of Social Science at the University of SA. A prerequisite for completion of my degree is 150 hours of field placement in a field of my choice.

I have chosen to do my placement with Shelter SA as I regard secure, safe and affordable housing as essential to the well being of individuals, families, and therefore the community as a whole.

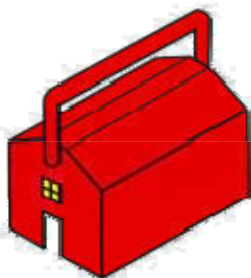
As an older person, I remember a time when housing was not an issue; a time when students were able to commit themselves fully to their studies without the need to work to keep a roof over their heads. I have watched myself and other students struggle and through the reality of rents at unaffordable levels, have needed to prioritise paid work commitments over that of academic achievement. I wonder what impact this is having, and will have, over the standard of graduates within Australia.

I remember when houses were regarded as homes, rather than investments, a time when very few people invested in housing and home ownership was deemed achievable by those on low incomes. I remember when one full time wage was enough to pay the mortgage or rent and sustain a family or single person. Today, two full time incomes are necessary to sustain and maintain something as basic as a safe and secure roof over one's head.

I am wondering how disadvantaged families and individuals are able to maintain the payment of rents which may take between thirty to fifty percent of their weekly income. It concerns me that private renters are faced with archaic tenancy laws which favor the landlord's rights over those of the tenants, laws that were created when housing was affordable and government housing was a viable option for those on low incomes. These laws were created when private rental was generally a short term option and issues relating to privacy and security of tenure were not as relevant as they are today.

Apart from my personal and somewhat limited experience of housing issues, I have heard stories which have horrified me: victims of domestic violence have been advised to return to violent partners as there are no other housing options, increasing numbers of mentally ill people becoming homeless and young people, who cannot afford private rent, having no other option apart from homelessness.

I find it intolerable that after a period of sustained economic growth and prosperity, Australia is unable to adequately and securely house many of its citizens, and that is why I am happy and grateful to do my field placement at Shelter SA.



### Sharehouse Toolkit

The Sharehouse Toolkit is now available for download in pdf format from our website

[www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au)

## Upcoming Events

### ASHRA

February 27, 3pm, Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide

### You Film: Short Film Competition for 12-25's

Applications are now open for young people 12-25 to submit a short film (7-12 minutes in length) with the theme of mental health. This is a great opportunity to showcase your film making skills and at the same time win some awesome prizes, including a cash prize for the winning film. Entries can explore any aspect of mental health, including the personal impact of mental health, as an onlooker of a mental illness or pick a certain theme relating to it, from self harm and resilience to sexuality and relationships. For more information contact: Allan Ball by email [aball@campbelltown.sa.gov.au](mailto:aball@campbelltown.sa.gov.au)

### The Anglicare Housing and Health Expo 2009

21 April 2009, 11am - 2pm, Salisbury Oval, Salisbury

Invitations have recently been distributed for the upcoming Anglicare Housing and Health Expo to be held in the northern suburbs on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 2009. The Anglicare Housing and Health Expo will offer a wide variety of activities such as: information and advice on housing and health related issues and services, health check ups, entertainment and fun activities for residents of all ages from the northern metropolitan area( that includes Salisbury, Tea Tree Gully and Playford Council areas) as well as organisations and services providing a service to these areas. Please contact Beppy Gollan on 8209 5420 or email: [bgollan@anglicare-sa.org.au](mailto:bgollan@anglicare-sa.org.au) for more information.

### Archicentre 2009 Free Seminars

The Archicentre are holding a number of free public seminars in Prospect, Adelaide and Hove covering a variety of topics, including: construction choices, sustainability issues (water and energy), renovating, pests and things to consider when purchasing a home

more information: <http://www.archicentre.com.au/html/seminars.html#sa>

---

## *Want To Use An Article from Sheltershortz?*

You are welcome to reproduce any of the material in this newsletter for your own newsletters, e-zine, or on your website. All we ask is that you include a live link back to our website and the following byline:

*Shelter SA is the peak housing body for South Australia and we believe housing is a basic human right. We work to inform, educate, advocate, connect and respond to issues pertaining to housing, especially for those who are disadvantaged and/or on low incomes. Check out our free resources at [www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au)*



# Shelter SA

Housing: a basic human right

Torrens Building  
220 Victoria Square  
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Phone: 08 8221 6488  
Mobile: 0410 663 225  
Fax: 08 8221 6292

Email: [sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au](mailto:sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au)  
Web: [www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au)

Shelter SA is the 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

**Project Officer:** Cate Jones

**Clerical Officer:** Cheryl Shepley