



Western Australia's  
**State**  
**Homelessness**  
**Strategy**

Putting People First

# What has Been Achieved

In May 2002 \$32 million was allocated to the State Homelessness Strategy over four years. However much more than this is being spent on addressing issues that contribute to homelessness. In addition, since 2002 additional funds have been allocated to a number of related initiatives.

The following has been achieved since the Government announced the State Homelessness Strategy:

## Better Options for Housing

- An additional \$10.5 million was provided to the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) to build new housing. \$5m was spent to provide 60 units of accommodation for homeless clients and \$5.5m has been included for special needs funding for up to 71 units to be allocated for people with mental health problems and people leaving prisons.
- To assist low-income people into accommodation, DHW increased Bond Assistance Loan levels in March 2002. Ingoing fees (letting fees and rent in advance) can now be provided on an "as needs" basis.
- To improve the quality of public housing, DHW commenced the construction of 102 durable dwellings in 2002/03 and a further 136 full or partial durable dwellings will commence in 2003/2004.
- DHW received an increase in funding of \$11.8m in the 2004/05 budget. This will provide further investment for new and refurbished housing units in general rental and Aboriginal programs.
- Young People who are in the care of the state will have the support of three new services operated by the Salvation Army Crossroads West, Mission Australia and Wanslea Family Services Inc and funded a total of \$600,000 per year to learn skills and access support to prevent homelessness as they leave long-term care.
- Prisoners and juvenile detainees exiting the justice system with nowhere to live will have supported accommodation for six months to assist in their re-entry back into the community avoiding homelessness and re-offending. Services will be provided in the metropolitan area by Centrecare, Ruah Community Services and Mosaic Family Services, in Bunbury by Agencies for the South West Accommodation, in Albany by Great Southern Community Partnerships, and in Geraldton by the Geraldton Resource Centre. The total funding for this initiative is \$340,000 per year.

## Vulnerability and Transition

- The Western Australian Government established the Homeless Helpline in May 2001 to assist people to find emergency accommodation. The Helpline has received calls from over 5,000 people since its establishment.
- The Department for Community Development provides emergency shelter to around 1,300 people each year through the Crisis Care Unit.
- Since coming to office the Government has established the following crisis accommodation services: The Communicare 'Breathing Space' accommodation service for men in Calista; The Great Mates youth accommodation service in Fremantle; and a new youth accommodation service which will open in Broome later in 2004.
- Five youth accommodation services have been funded a total of \$200,000 per year to support and teach parenting skills to young parents who have been homeless.
- Centrecare and Parkerville Children's Home were funded a total of \$400,000 per year to provide counselling and support to children from families that have experienced homelessness.
- 17 rural and remote women's refuges have received \$25,000 per year each to employ child support workers to lessen the trauma on children who have witnessed domestic violence.
- The Government has established new sobering up facilities in Northbridge, Midland, Wyndham and Geraldton, to reduce the number of people sleeping rough due to substance abuse issues.
- Pilot funding has been provided to Southside Care for a new Home and Community Care (HACC) Service in Armadale. The service, which commenced in April 2004, targets homeless clients, many of whom are Aboriginal people who have not previously received HACC services.
- The Street Doctor program, which provides medical and related services to street-based populations in the inner city area, has been continued and expanded to Fremantle.

## Stability in Housing

- The Department of Housing and Works (DHW) will receive an additional \$3.5 million over four years for the expanded successful Supported Housing Assistance Program which works with Homeswest tenants having difficulty maintaining their accommodation. SHAP services operate in all metropolitan areas and in the following country areas: Albany, Katanning, Narrogin, Bunbury, Busselton, Collie, Mandurah, Geraldton, Meekatharra, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Newman, Broome, Kalgoorlie, Leonora, and Laverton.
- The Homeless Helpline has appointed Ruah Community Services to support homeless people housed through its service.

- The Department for Community Development (DCD) will receive \$3.5 million over four years for new support and advocacy services to assist people in private rental accommodation to maintain their tenancies. Services are based in the Perth metropolitan area, Geraldton, Busselton and Mandurah. One service assists Migrants with accommodation problems.
- 52 financial counselling services around the state shared approximately \$350,000 per year in funding increases.
- The Youth Legal Service and Mission Australia received funds totalling \$115,000 per year to provide financial counselling services to young people.
- Wesley HomeLink, operated by Wesley Mission, Perth was established at a cost of \$250,000 per year to assist people in the metropolitan area who are experiencing a housing crisis to obtain stable accommodation and bypass crisis accommodation.
- The Department of Health is conducting a research project to determine the accommodation support needs of homeless people with mental health conditions.

## Monitoring the State Homelessness Strategy

The Government established a Monitoring Committee to oversee the implementation of the State Homelessness Strategy and report back. The committee has membership from the State Homelessness Taskforce, the Government agencies responsible for the Strategy and the non-Government sector.

A State Homelessness Strategy website: [www.homeless.dhwwa.gov.au](http://www.homeless.dhwwa.gov.au) was established and quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy are placed on it. Performance Indicators have also been developed and the first report against the indicators as at 30 June 2003 has been placed on the website.

Independent consultants were contracted in late 2003 to conduct an evaluation of the implementation. The consultants, Estill and Associates, found the implementation of the Government's initiatives in response to the State Homelessness Taskforce recommendations has been both satisfactory and timely in the majority of cases. The evaluation report is available on the website.

## What support is available for people who are homeless or have accommodation problems?

### The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funds 127 services across the State to provide crisis and transitional accommodation and support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including as a result of domestic violence. Contact numbers for SAAP services are listed on the web at [www.fcs.wa.gov.au/\\_content/saap/default.htm](http://www.fcs.wa.gov.au/_content/saap/default.htm) or by phoning one of the crisis numbers listed below.

### If you have nowhere to stay tonight

For emergency assistance contact: The Homeless Helpline on 1800 065 892 or after hours: Crisis Care tel 9223 111 1800 199 008 STD – country only, or Salvo Careline tel 9227 8655

### If you need help to find housing

Homeswest can assist with Bond Loans to access private rental accommodation. Phone 9222 4666 for the location of your nearest Homeswest office.

Wesley HomeLink can assist people who are experiencing a housing crisis to identify and secure private rental accommodation.

Referrals are from other Government and non-Government agencies only, phone 9212 1926.

### If you are having money problems

If you have debt problems, can't pay bills, are being hassled by finance companies, or are behind in payments, you can contact the Financial Counsellors Resource Project on 9221 9411 for the location of your nearest Financial Counselling Service.

### If you might lose your house

If you are a Homeswest Tenant contact your local Homeswest office. It can refer tenants to Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP) services around the state. If you are at risk of losing your private rental accommodation the following services are available:

### Metropolitan Area:

- Multicultural Housing Advocacy Service tel 9328 2699
- Ruah Tenancy Support (South East Metro) tel 9493 7305
- Centrecare Support and Advocacy Service (North East Metro) tel 9440 0400
- Supporting Tenancies, Anglicare Rockingham – STAR tel 9527 5322

### Country Services:

- WestAus Accommodation Advocacy Support – Peel tel 9582 9920
- Capes Accommodation Support and Advocacy – Busselton, Margaret River and Dunsborough tel 9752 2855
- Geraldton Resource Centre – Geraldton, Greenough tel 9964 3533.

### Accommodation assistance for people with disabilities

The Disability Services Commission provides and funds a range of accommodation support services for people who are deemed a priority via an assessment panel process. In addition, though not a formal accommodation provider, staff from the State-wide Local Area Coordination program can assist people to identify their needs and explore a range of formal and informal accommodation support options. Phone 1800 998 214 for the location of your nearest local office (or [www.dsc.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au)).

# Western Australia's State Homelessness Strategy

## Putting People First



Dr Geoff Gallop  
PREMIER

The Government is pleased to report on the work undertaken over the last three years to address homelessness in our community.

In alignment with its commitment to addressing homelessness in the Western Australian community, the Government moved quickly to establish the State Homelessness Taskforce within a few months of its election in February 2001.



Sheila M'Hale MLA  
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By January 2002 the Taskforce had presented its report: State Homelessness Taskforce – Addressing Homelessness in Western Australia containing 68 recommendations for strategies to prevent homelessness and improve the service system's response to homeless people.

### Definition of Homelessness

The Taskforce used what is now a widely accepted definition of homelessness that includes three categories:

- Primary – those that are sleeping rough or without a roof
- Secondary – those in stop gap accommodation such as crisis housing or staying with friends or relatives; and
- Tertiary – those living in insecure or unsafe accommodation such as caravan parks or rooming houses

The Taskforce findings confirmed that the causes of homelessness are multiple and include domestic violence, family conflict, mental illness, alcohol and other drug use, and financial difficulties.

In May 2002 the Government of Western Australia announced its strategy in response to the Taskforce report in the document, the Government Response to the State Homelessness Taskforce – 'Putting People

First' and the Premier, the Hon Geoff Gallop, MLA announced funding of \$32 million over four years to tackle homelessness and social exclusion.

With leadership from the Ministers for Community Development and Housing and Works, the Strategy is a whole-of-Government response, which addresses the causes of homelessness and puts in place new and innovative services to prevent homelessness, and assist people who have been homeless to a better life.

The new services build on existing strategies which address homelessness such as the *Commonwealth/State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)* which funds crisis and transitional accommodation services for homeless people and victims of domestic violence; the *Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement* which provides funds for the provision of public housing; and the Department of Housing and Works *Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP)* which supports people at risk of losing their public housing tenancies.

The Government response has three themes:

- Better options for Housing – improve access to affordable housing
- Vulnerability and Transition – assist people through important transitions from institutions and other situations; and
- Stability in Housing – provide services to keep people housed

The State Homelessness Strategy has positioned the State in the forefront of work against disadvantage and homelessness.



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