

## Changes to Public Housing in NSW

Is this the reshaping or the mis-shaping the public housing system ?

***On the 27th April News South Wales Department of Housing announced a plan for some far-reaching changes to public housing and began their implementation in July 2005.***

A comprehensible overview of the plan is available at

[www.housing.nse.gov.au/news\\_publications/ReshapingPublicHousing/index.htm](http://www.housing.nse.gov.au/news_publications/ReshapingPublicHousing/index.htm)

The changes include:

- ⇒ Ending security of tenure - all new tenants will sign fixed term agreements
- ⇒ Eligibility criteria for new tenants
- ⇒ Raising rents to 30% of income (up from 25%) to commence in November 2005
- ⇒ Making public housing tenants responsible for paying for their water usage
- ⇒ Further concentrating disadvantaged people in rationed public housings system

Shelter NSW along with NSWCOSS and the NSW Tenants Union have rejected the changes, saying it "is a further step towards public housing becoming a marginalised housing option and does nothing to address the bigger challenge to expanding the provision of housing to those ineligible for social housing assistance". The National Shelter network share the concerns about the changes and makes the additional points;

The new rent setting policy exacerbates a poverty trap, and will discourage public housing tenants from finding employment. Tenants may lose their homes if their incomes increase. For many people, secure affordable public housing is what enable, them to improve their circumstances. **Security of tenure is what makes public housing more suitable than private rental for many low-income and disadvantaged people.** When they are evicted they are back to square one. This reform also means the department forgoes higher rents paid by tenants who work.

- ⇒ Fixed term leases will create a churning of tenants in between private rental, public housing and homelessness, as well as putting more demands on welfare services (like SAAP) to assist tenants being evicted from public housing at the end of their fixed term leases.
- ⇒ Insecurity of tenure will discourage people from putting down roots in their neighborhoods and contributing to community life and building social capital.
- ⇒ The changes, combined with the virtual non-growth situation in the supply of social housing over the next 10 years (only 1,500 extra dwellings), will put more focus on the private rental market as the potential source of affordable and secure housing for low-income people, although private rental is where most low income people live in housing stress. It is unlikely that the providers of private rental housing will meet the challenges without government assistance.

Notwithstanding its concerns about the changes, Shelter NSW has agreed to join a Reshaping Public Housing Reference Group, an advisory body being established by the Department of Housing to get advice from peak non government organisations on implementation issues. For more information go to the Shelter NSW site [www.sheternsw.org.au](http://www.sheternsw.org.au)

### comment

*In Tasmania the public housing system is already tightly targeted to those most in need on fixed incomes. While maintenance and property costs are escalating, causing the gap between cost of providing the housing and revenue collected from rents to widen. Thus requiring increasing levels of subsidies which the states are reluctant to meet.*

*The changes to the NSW public housing are a guide in what to avoid as Tasmania prepares for Stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy.*



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## Recommended Web Reading

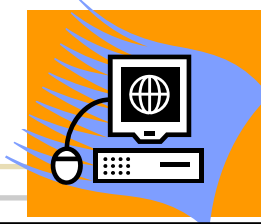
**The National Affordable Housing Conference** (21-22 June Sydney) has some excellent papers that are now available on the web— [www.housing.nsw.gov.au/nahc](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/nahc)

**The NSW Housing Federation** earlier this year facilitated a seminar— *Working effectively with private sector interests* see [www.communityhousing.org.au](http://www.communityhousing.org.au)

**Reminder** that the National Community Housing Forum are calling for entries into the **National Awards for Excellence in Community Housing Awards**—for more details go to [www.nchf.org.au](http://www.nchf.org.au) Entries close on the 12th September 2005

### Public Land Agencies in Australia: The key to positive planning?

This paper reviews past and present context for public land development in Australia. A key challenge is how social considerations can be met in a contemporary land development context [www.gu.edu.au/centre/urp](http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/urp)



If you do not have access to the internet and would like a copy of a document, please contact Shelter on (03) 6224 5488 and we will gladly provide the document for you.

## Affordable Housing Strategy Review

Stage 1 of the Affordable Housing Strategy is currently under review in preparation for Stage 2, which will begin in December 2005. In July Shelter emailed to members a copy of the terms of the review, the background information and the survey to ensure members were informed. Shelter Tas and many members have participated in the review via surveys and focus groups. Shelter looks forward to viewing the Final Report and to a strong commitment by the State Government to funding Stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy, see [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/agency/pro/affordablehousing/Stage1Review.php](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/agency/pro/affordablehousing/Stage1Review.php)

Shelter has also been active in the Master Partner Consultative Group and the Performance Evaluation of Stage one of the of the **Master Partner Project**. The Final Report is due for completion this month with the Government to make an announcement later in the year.

*Community Housing Guide to Benchmarks  
for Determining Market Rents - 2005*

Community Housing Federation  
of Australia (CHFA)



This is a useful guide for community housing providers. It will help community organisations to work out what rents can be charged while still retaining their GST free charitable status. A copy of the guide is enclosed with this mail out. See [www.chfa.com.au](http://www.chfa.com.au)

*A reminder that  
you are invited to*

## Tasmanian Stakeholders Roundtable



Partnering with the private sector

Exploring options for Community Housing

Will this give us more affordable housing?

NCHF



10.00 am to 3.00 pm Friday 19th August 2005 Hadley Hotel 34 Murray St Hobart

RSVP by phone or email by Tuesday 16th August 2005 — **Please note places are strictly limited**

Enquires to: [pc@shelertas.org.au](mailto:pc@shelertas.org.au) or call Shelter on: 6224 5488 for agenda go to [www.shelter.org.au](http://www.shelter.org.au)

Organised by Shelter Tasmania & The National Community Housing Forum

Supported by Housing Tasmania.