



# State Budget Submission 2005-2006

Shelter Tasmania is an independent community organisation committed to the principle of accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing for every person and the elimination of homelessness

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## Introduction

The right to affordable and appropriate housing is essential in laying the foundations for a fairer, more just Tasmania. Shelter welcomes that the first goal of Tasmania Together is to *'ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communications, and health and community services'*. Shelter has been working with Housing Tasmania to develop benchmark recommendations for Tasmania Together on housing affordability, in particular with relation to housing stress and home ownership affordability. These benchmarks, if adopted, would give clearer guidance in structuring future budget submissions from Shelter and other housing related bodies. For the majority of Tasmanians a secure and affordable home is a given. Shelter is concerned about those Tasmanians who don't have such security and find that on low incomes they live in "after housing cost poverty" or cannot access housing of their own at all.

The level of equity of housing provision is one of the tests of the well-being of any society. The importance of health and well-being for Tasmanians is a dominant and supported theme throughout Tasmania Together. Housing is fundamental to people's health and well-being, and ability to participate in the economic and social life of the community. Public policies and programs that seek to ensure adequate and equitable access to affordable, appropriate and secure housing are a critical part of broader strategies to reduce poverty, improve living standards, and create sustainable communities. Communities, and their governments, cannot realise broader social policy goals without a solid performance in the area of housing.

There are many barriers for those on low incomes to gain access to the private rental market. It's just too expensive, or housing stock is just not there. The market's inability to respond to this need only serves to emphasise the particularly fundamental importance of public and community housing. Social housing is one of the few structural mechanisms or levers that governments can utilize to reduce poverty and broader social and economic inequalities. One consequence of inequality and high housing costs is a noticeable increase in the numbers of homeless people.

Housing also plays an important role in facilitating access to employment, social, and other services. It is vital that the State Government continues to support and adequately fund stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy. As well, it should provide mechanisms to protect low-income housing consumers and build the capacity of the community sector to enable it to take on a greater role in the provision of affordable housing.

To this end, Shelter, as the peak body for those on low incomes and community sector housing providers, calls on the State Government to consider the recommendations put forward in this document. Shelter would like the opportunity to speak to the Budget Sub-Committee regarding the issues and recommendations made in the submission.

## About Shelter

Shelter Tasmania has existed as the peak body for housing and housing related issues in Tasmania since 1975. In that time, Shelter has played a leading role in the development of the social housing sector and ensuring that both government and community hear and respond to the housing needs and experiences of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians. While the work of Shelter has adapted to changing times, its fundamental purpose - to promote a fair, just and equitable housing system for all - has not changed and will not change.

Shelter represents organisations from a range of housing and supported accommodation services, tenant groups, community organisations and individuals interested in housing. The Council of Homeless Persons Tasmania is a subcommittee of Shelter.

Shelter aims to provide an effective Tasmanian voice on housing and related issues by fulfilling the following objectives:

- To promote and maintain the right of every person to access affordable, safe and secure long term housing that they identify as appropriate to their needs.
- To promote and maintain the right of every person to housing of a quality which enhances people's health, well-being, dignity and life opportunities.
- To promote the benefits of public and community housing in the community and across all levels of government.
- To publish, research, collect and disseminate information on matters relating to the provision of housing, particularly for people on low to moderate incomes.
- To create opportunities to support, establish, resource and co-ordinate non-government organisations and agencies with similar interests and objectives to the Association.
- To promote opportunities for members of the community to access housing provision free from discrimination due to age, gender, ethnicity, health status or disability.
- To promote and support consumer and community participation in decision making in relation to their housing and to promote access to avenues of appeal across all housing tenures.
- To provide a structure that enables the members to inform policy development in a manner that is consistent with the objectives and visions of the association and also reflects the needs of homeless people and people who live in poverty or on low incomes.
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## ***Shelter's Expanded Role***

In preparation for this budget submission Shelter Tasmania utilised a range of consultation strategies that reflect the changes that Shelter has implemented over the past 2 years. In 2002-3 Shelter changed its constitution and governance structure. Firstly, Shelter added objectives to its constitution to include homelessness and the needs of homeless people. The management of Shelter then changed to a statewide management committee that meets regularly in the centre of the State. By 2003-4 Shelter had doubled and extended the range of its membership and it now has an active management committee of 12.

Shelter's budget submission for 2005-6 reflects the issues raised by the membership and endorsed by the management committee with recommendations on both housing and homelessness. These are also adapted from the Shelter Housing Platform.

## **1. Affordable Housing Strategy Tasmania 2004-8**

Shelter's last two budget submissions (2002-3, 2003-4) called for an Affordable Housing Strategy for Tasmania.

"The challenge is to increase the supply of affordable housing so lower-income people are not excluded from effective opportunities for economic and social participation. Shelter **repeats its recommendation from last year** that the Tasmanian Government should initiate a Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy.

It is vital to bring housing policy into view, so that its effects in all areas can be discerned and an overall, whole-of-government approach developed.

To do this, it is necessary to develop a broad strategy. It is also necessary to do it with the understanding and commitment of the entire community, through consultation with all levels of government, housing consumers, housing advocacy bodies, the housing industry and community groups."

Therefore, when Premier Jim Bacon announced the Affordable Housing Strategy 2004-8 for Tasmania in December 2003, the much anticipated Strategy was applauded by Shelter for its breadth and commitment of real funding dollars. The strategy recognised the important role affordable and appropriate housing plays in maintaining people's health and well-being. Housing is the base that allows people the access to life opportunities such as education and employment.

The key housing pressures recognised in establish the Affordable Housing Strategy which Shelter has outlined in previous budget submissions still remain. Members input repeat the call for more affordable housing on the ground as demand for social housing remains high and the private rental market becomes even less affordable. Shelter calls on the State Government to allocate a substantial amount of funding to continue the ground-breaking work of the Strategy. We still need to increase the supply of affordable housing through ongoing construction and capital acquisition, to catch up from the lost years where housing was under funded.

### **Recommendation**

**The State Government to fund Stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy to the sum of \$60 million (over and above current CSHA level) to continue its initiatives and to expand the supply of affordable housing across Tasmania.**

**That funding for the continuation of the Affordable Housing Strategy be allocated in part of fully from the revenue collected from stamp duty.**

## **2. Social Housing**

### **Increase the Supply of Social Housing.**

Recent research prepared for the National Summit on Housing Affordability held in June 2004 (Anne Harding, Ben Phillips and Simon Kelly Paper 2004-2, The State of Affordable Housing [www.natsem.canberra.edu.au](http://www.natsem.canberra.edu.au)) shows that after Queensland, Tasmania, at 10.6 per cent, faced the second highest risk for families and singles facing housing stress in the private rental market i.e. as of June 2004 26,000 Tasmania where still in housing stress. More than ever, Tasmania needs to maintain a strong social housing system.

According to the Tasmanian Bilateral Agreement 2004-8, there are currently 11,500 public housing stocks, which is equivalent to 6% of total housing stock. It is stated in the Affordable Housing Strategy that a core of 10,000 social housing stocks will be maintained. Shelter supports the retention of social housing stock, and strongly opposes the reduction in numbers.

The decline in public housing stock can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the increased emphasis on 'targeting' since the early 1990s i.e. a focus on the most disadvantaged people. Targeting has increased tenancy management costs, requiring a change of focus from housing supply to provision of support, and reduced rental revenues, but has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in funding.

Secondly, contributing to the decline in social housing is the fall in funding from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. To compound this problem with funding, Housing Tasmania is also servicing existing debt to the Commonwealth of \$273 million with repayments of \$19.9 per year, which in effect takes nearly all of the base funding that the Commonwealth contributes each year.

### **Recommendation**

**Maintain social housing at least 6% of total proportion of Tasmanian housing stock, with 'one for one' replacement of social housing stock.**

Shelter is aware that the Tasmanian Bilateral Commonwealth State Housing Agreement 2002-2008 states the need to reduce workforce disincentives for social housing tenants are to be developed. On this topic Shelter has consulted with members, public housing tenant groups and interstate public housing bodies. It was agreed that the current rental policy of increasing rent when tenants enter employment is a disincentive to work. Tenants commented on the need to have a catch up time to pay debts and that often work is casual and part time only. In NSW the Department of Housing have adopted a policy of freezing rent when people first enter employment for 3 months. NSW tenant groups also noted that this policy needs to be advertised more widely so all tenants are aware of it.

### **Recommendation**

**Housing Tasmania introduce a policy of a 3 month rent freeze for public housing for public housing tenants when they gain employment, and to include a tenants' awareness campaign.**

**This should then be extended to community housing tenants in consultation with community housing providers.**

Currently the Private Rent Support Scheme (PRSS) – i.e. bond and removal assistance - is only available to low income people entering the private rental market. As part of the Affordable Housing Strategy this scheme was extended so that more households were eligible and bond assistance was increased. Shelter has consulted with Housing Tasmania on this issue arguing that people on low income entering community housing should also be eligible for this assistance and not be placed at a disadvantage. This will become even more important in the future as more community housing option become available.

### **Recommendation.**

**The Private Rental Support Scheme (PRSS) is extended to cover people on low income who have access to community housing.**

## **3. Enhanced capacity of the Community Sector**

*Shelter aims to foster the development of community housing as a viable, affordable and secure housing option for all people in housing need.*

The State government has recognised that in order to create a new housing system and achieve many of the stated objectives of the Affordable Housing Strategy, it needs to work collaboratively with all sectors. The Strategy has also acknowledged the importance of supporting peak and advocacy bodies. Shelter has strongly advocated for, and supports the immediate focus of, stage one of the Strategy, *to build the necessary skills, capacity and infrastructure that will position the Tasmanian affordable housing system for a more diverse range of housing responses in the future.*

Shelter is participating on the Affordable Housing Strategy Reference Group and the majority of the working groups that form part of the implementation program. Shelter advocates that it is crucial to develop and sustain a strong community housing sector in Tasmania. But first, the Tasmanian community sector needs to have in place the necessary infrastructure to build that capacity, so it can realistically increase the housing options for Tasmanians.

Shelter is well placed to work collaboratively with Housing Tasmania to build the necessary capacity across the community sector to develop and maintain community housing options. Shelter has strong links and is recognised by the national community housing bodies as the community housing peak body for Tasmania. Our membership covers the range of community housing providers in Tasmania. They include Housing Associations, Housing Co-ops and a range of community tenancy providers. Shelter has hosted community-housing consultations for both the Community Housing Federation of Australia and the National Community Housing Forum.

Shelter has developed - through our governance, membership, office facilities and communication system - a solid base to now expand our role into a community housing resourcing body. On 1st July 2004 Shelter Tasmania launched its new web page [www.shelertas.org.au](http://www.shelertas.org.au) The new format will allow members and the wider

community to access a range of information on affordable housing and homelessness. Last year Shelter applied for a small grant from the State Government to produce a Statewide emergency accommodation register. The success of the web site is shown in its usage. 'New Visits' represent new visitors who have never accessed the site before and 'Hits' represent the usage of the site.

<b>Month</b>	<b>New Visits</b>	<b>Hits</b>
<a href="#">July 2004</a>	454	3,805
<a href="#">August 2004</a>	403	3,411
<a href="#">September 2004</a>	443	4,109
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>11,325</b>

The table show that within only 3 months the Shelter web site has had 1,300 new visitors and well over 11,000 hits of usage. Shelter will build on the success of the web site to include information on community housing.

Shelter sees the training of the community sector to be a priority. We need to assess what skills are already in the sector and then determine the process to improve skills. Shelter has had preliminary talks with TAFE Tasmania regarding improving skills in tenancy, asset and financial management, legislation, governance and strategic management.

Shelter Tasmania has also worked with the National Community Housing Forum on National Community Housing Standards to promote the importance of the standards and accreditation for community housing. We now need extra resources to take this work forward. Shelter is the only housing peak in this state and, just like the Affordable Housing Strategy, our representative role encompasses a wide range of housing and homelessness services and consumers.

#### **Recommendation**

**Shelter Tasmania to be funded, in consultation with Housing Tasmania, to extend its capacity to include the role of a community housing resourcing body. This would allow Shelter to undertake the following:**

- **Skills audit of the community sector.**
- **Shelter to consult and compile the training needs of the community sector in relation to tenancy management.**
- **Build on the Shelter web site comprehensive information on community housing in Tasmania.**
- **Introduce standards and accreditation**
- **Develop appropriate learning materials.**
- **Work with TAFE to deliver an accredited training module.**

## **4. An Effective Private Rental System**

One in five Australians live in private rental accommodation. While private rental housing has historically been a transitional tenure – a stepping stone towards home ownership - this is changing. Due to choice or necessity, 40% of private renters have now rented for more than ten years (M.Wullff & C.Maher 1998) It is of concern, therefore, that the private rental market suffers from major shortcomings for low-income consumers.

## ***The Need for Minimum Standards***

The absence of minimum standards of accommodation in the private rental sector poses a real risk to the health and safety of a significant number of tenants, particularly those on lower incomes. Shelter Tasmania believes that specific minimum standards regarding both tenancy management and the physical condition of rental properties should be developed to protect tenants.

Many tenants live in premises that are in a state of disrepair, and tenant workers around the state commonly deal with premises that are substandard.

Too often "cheap" rent and substandard conditions go hand in hand, and it is unacceptable that the already inadequate supply of accommodation at the lower end of the market should be particularly subject to such conditions.

Uniform provisions would help to enable a stricter enforcement of standards, and would contribute towards improved living conditions for tenants. The basic right of tenants to appropriate living standards must not be ignored.

Ability to enforce such standards is also crucial if these standards are to successfully translate from legislation to practice. Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading must be empowered to enforce standards through specific legislative provisions.

A Private Landlord Consortium is one of the initiatives for the Affordable Housing Strategy and its viability is currently being researched. If this consortium is developed minimum standards could be implemented as a way of safeguarding consumer protection and setting best practice.

### **Recommendations**

**That a State Wide housing standards code, be developed in consultation with building industry bodies, local government and non-government tenant organisations, be incorporated in Tasmanian legislation.**

**That the code covers heating, fixtures, power, water, fire regulations, plumbing, security, mold and other concerns essential to habitable living standards.**

**That the Residential Commission be empowered to:**

- **issue orders to landlords to comply with these standards, and to specify a time period;**
- **order that a landlord be liable for relocation costs if these are incurred by a tenant whilst the housing standard code is enforced.**

**That it be a criminal offence to offer a sub-standard dwelling for rental.**

## ***Establishment of a Rental Bond Board***

In previous submissions in 2002-3 and 2003-4 Shelter has called on the State Government to establish a Rental Bond Board for Tasmania. As this has not been established yet we repeat that call.

Research by Anglicare has identified the return of bond to low-income private

renters as a substantial problem. They found almost every participant in this research had experienced difficulties in getting their bonds back when they left a residence. While undoubtedly there are many cases where there is just cause to retain bond money, a strong theme in the narratives of those interviewed was their sense of vulnerability and powerlessness. Many faced difficulties in finding new accommodation, many were being forced to leave because the property was being sold and many faced real financial hardship as a result of leaving their current residence. The following comments from focus group participants highlight the barriers

Shelter Tasmania believes that a number of important housing objectives can be addressed simultaneously and efficiently by the establishment of a Rental Bond Board along the lines of other States and Territories. Bond Boards have been operating very successfully in New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. The Tenant Union data show that complaints about the retention of bond money greatly exceed the numbers received for decision by the Residential Tenancy Commissioner. With a neutral third party holding the bonds we believe far fewer complaints and withholding of bonds would occur. An important point to be acknowledged is that the bond money belongs to the tenant and there is no requirement from the property owner to deposit the monies elsewhere. This often leads to the perception by the property owner that the money is their money, making the return of the bond contentious. The bond board, by having a clear process in place, would stop the inefficiencies of the current system.

A Rental Bond Board acts as a repository of all bonds paid by tenants in the private rental market. This centralising of the system would have the added benefit of being in a position to collect essential data on the private rental market. For example: actual numbers of rental properties, rental amounts paid, and location of rental properties. This information would be integral to the effective planning for future housing policy in Tasmania. This type of substantive information is not collected on such a broad scale anywhere in Tasmania at present. The Board can invest bonds with interest being used to support a range of initiatives depending on the amount of monies generated.

Such an agency has a number of advantages:

- Rules for the depositing of bonds and the processes used for returning bonds are consistently applied. Experienced staff are able to help property owners, real estate agents and tenants alike in understanding the processes involved.
- As a result, tenants can be assured that an independent third party holds their monies safely. The current practices with respect to bonds — characterised by arbitrariness and delays in the return of bonds — would be replaced by consistently fair and transparent procedures.
- Interest on bonds — negligible for any single property owner but significant across the private rental market — can be used for a variety of housing strategy initiatives.
- A benefit of this type of system is that all private rental tenants regardless of income will be treated fairly and consistency.

A small allocation of funds would be required to establish the operation of the Board, and in particular to conduct a public education program to ensure that property owners, estate agents and tenants were familiar with the new procedures. The Board would quickly move to a position of financial independence, even in current low interest-rate environments.

It is anticipated that some property owners and estate agents would initially oppose the establishment of a Rental Bond Board, but it must be remembered that the Real Estate Industry prior to the introduction of the Residential Tenancy Act (1997) supported the establishment of a bond board.

#### ***Recommendations***

- **That the Tasmanian Government allocate funds for the establishment of a Rental Bond Board for the purpose of consolidating and regulating the collection and disbursement of private bonds.**
- **That the Tasmanian Government amends relevant legislation to empower the Rental Bond Board to require all private bonds to be paid into a Board account through existing Tasmanian Service Centres.**
- **That a public education program be initiated so that all parties are aware of the operation of the Board.**

### ***An Independent Housing Tribunal***

Currently in Tasmania we have a variety of mechanisms that have been established to deal with different areas of disputes concerning tenancies. In existence are the Housing Review Committee, Residential Tenancy Commissioner and the Magistrate's Court.

The Housing Review Committee only concerns itself with Housing Division tenants. Its role is to review decisions made by housing staff with a view to ensuring that correct policies and procedures have been followed. This panel does not consider any other issue.

The tenant is required to complete a written form. Any member of the committee may contact the tenant for further information but this is not a requirement.

The Residential Tenancy Commissioner makes determinations with respect to disputes over the non-return of tenants' bond monies. This is again a paper-based argument. Tenants who dispute the amount of bond returned must complete a form and forward a fee.

Both of these approaches fail to provide tenants with the ability to discuss their case, and they do not afford natural justice.

The Magistrates Court, Small Claims Division hears all other disputes, from requests for repairs to Notices to Terminate agreements.

#### **Recommendation**

- **A single tribunal is established to hear all disputes arising from tenancies, be it public or private rental.**
- **Such a tribunal is to allow for natural justice and is not reliant on a paper-based argument.**

## 5. Home Ownership

Shelter Tasmania believes that many people on low incomes, like society as a whole aspire, to own their own home; therefore it should be a realistically achievable goal. When people enter home purchase they are entitled to full disclosure of the contact into which they are entering.

Shelter supports the Tasmanian Law Reform position that recommends that more information should be made available about properties on the market before a purchase takes place.

### **Recommendation**

**That the State Government introduces vendor disclosure laws that require those selling a property to make certain information available to potential purchasers. These documents include:**

- **A copy of the proposed contract;**
- **A certificate of title and details of any easement and covenants;**
- **A certificate from local government detailing the key aspects of the property**

**And**

- **A signed statement by the vendor detailing any relevant matters that needs to be drawn to the attention of the purchaser.**

## 6. An Improved Planning System

Planning systems are extremely important in ensuring good land use and efficient housing development. However, a wide range of inconsistencies makes it difficult to plan new housing supply, and the range and amount of fees and charges work against affordability. Statewide consistent standards can add to certainty, improve transparency and contain the politicisation of planning processes

### **Recommendation**

**The State Government to establish a mechanism for reforming, modernising and standardising planning systems to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability.**

### **New ways to increase the provision of affordable housing**

Research and overseas practices suggest there are possible planning regulations that assist in increasing affordable housing. Developer contributions and zoning requirements have been implemented to compel developers to contribute to affordable housing. Shelter also believes that Governments - especially State and Local - should have clear policies around the sale of Government land and buildings, to ensure that developers contribute to affordable housing. This can be by requiring that new residential developments contain a proportion of affordable housing or contribute to an affordable housing fund.

For instance, with the near conclusion of the Wapping Implementation Project, it would be timely to renew the outcomes of the project in respect to its origins in the Better Cities Program, in which social justice and affordable housing were major objectives.

More demonstration projects are needed to increase the range and type of affordable housing in Tasmania. This could be promoted by Housing Tasmania in consultation with architects, local government and the non profit sector. Seed grants could be made available to develop and assess the feasibility of a project or model. Then loans at zero or low interest rates could be made available to increase the partners' capacity to deliver affordable housing, the loan then to be repaid at project completion.

### **Recommendations**

**That the State Government and Local Government Authorities undertake a statewide audit to identify government (Local, State and Commonwealth) owned land/buildings that have the potential for re/development into affordable housing, especially in inner city areas.**

**The State Government to continue funding through the Affordable Housing Strategy for a range of demonstration projects such as shop top accommodation.**

**Examine models to implement developer contributions to increase affordable housing. Suggestions include:**

- **Investigate requirements to strongly encourage developers to make some provision for affordable housing. This can be done via a zoning requirement to include a proportion of low cost housing in residential development, or with incentives such as allowing higher density than is usual, especially in the inner city;**
- **Sale of government inner city land requires the developer to provide a proportion of that development to affordable housing;**

**Or**

- **If a developer has removed affordable private rental stock they could be required to contribute to, replace or retain low rent stock.**

## **7. Responses to Homelessness**

*Shelter aims to provide a structure that enables members to inform policy development that is constituent with the organisations objectives and also reflects the needs of homeless people and people who live in poverty or on low incomes.*

Shelter's membership consists of a range of homelessness services, including crisis accommodation, transition housing and support services.

At the time of the 2001 census, it was estimated that 2,415 people were homeless in Tasmania. This figure is up by 400 from the 1996 census. Another way to measure homelessness is expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population. In 2001 the rate for Tasmania was 52 per 10,000; in 1996 it was 43 per 10,000.

Of the 2,415 people homeless in Tasmania on census night in 2001, only 314 people (13%) were staying in services funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). SAAP is jointly funded by Commonwealth and State Governments to provide funds for crisis services to homeless people around the country. A further 11% were in boarding houses,

66% staying with friends/relatives and 10% in impoverished dwellings. It is estimated that up to 1,200 requests for SAAP services in Tasmania could not be met during 2002-2003. (source [www.shelertas.org.au/homelessness](http://www.shelertas.org.au/homelessness))

### **The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in Tasmania**

SAAP is a Commonwealth and State cost-shared program with the Commonwealth's contribution being 57.3% and the State's contribution being 42.7%. The aim of SAAP is to:

- Provide transitional supported accommodation and a range of related support services in order to help people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence.

The goals of SAAP are to:

- Resolve crisis
- Re-establish family links where appropriate
- Re-establish the capacity of clients to live independently

SAAP is governed by:

- The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994
- A Memorandum of Understanding agreed between Community Services Ministers in relation to the SAAP 2000 – 2005. The MOU establishes the policy emphasis for SAAP IV (2000 – 2005) and provides national leadership, strategic vision and funding certainty for the program for this period.
- A Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and Tasmania, which provides the legal and administrative framework, State and Commonwealth, agreed priorities, directions and funding.
- An Accountability Framework that includes key performance indicators and provides the basis for performance appraisal.

The current bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmania expires on 30 June 2005. As per the terms of this agreement, the Commonwealth Government has commenced an evaluation of SAAP IV.

The National Evaluation of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme IV was tabled to Community Services Ministers in June 2004. The Evaluation collated the results from consultations with key stakeholders, data and other key reports. In challenges for the future the central issue was that SAAP, on its own, could or should not be expected to do it all, with the vast array of issues that make up homelessness.

It is important, therefore, that in identifying drivers of homelessness, both ends of the continuum must be considered. Not only is it imperative to examine the paths to homelessness, but also the ways in which factors inhibiting the path out of homelessness can be address. The evaluation highlighted the lack of a coherent whole-of-government approach to addressing the structural factors that contribute to homelessness, at the policy and programmatic level, and of addressing the complex needs of individuals.

To this end, several States and Territories are developing or have developed a Homelessness Strategy to address the complexity of issues. Tasmania is yet to develop such a strategy.

Shelter's members identified several gaps across the state in services, including a lack of support and housing options for people with complex needs. They also identified certain household types that, when they are not adequately catered for, are more likely to lead directly to homelessness. High priority needs should be

given to children and carers, and people with severe mental illness. Service members also noted the need for clear direction on who is responsible for these individuals and families, and for clear responses to be put in place.

People who may be the responsibility of several departments, due to the complexity of their needs, slip through the silos of departmental responsibility with an outcome of homelessness.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Tasmania to develop a comprehensive Homelessness Strategy.**
- **The State Government to commit to the funding of SAAP V.**
- **The State Government needs to fund the gap in service delivery for children accompanying adult in crisis situations.**
- **The State Government to fund appropriate sheltered accommodation for carers and children.**
- **The State Government to consult with SAAP service providers to look at ways to increase the amount of supported accommodation for people with mental health conditions.**

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### **1. Affordable Housing Strategy**

**The State Government to fund Stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy to the sum of \$60 million (over and above current CSHA level) to continue its initiatives and to expand the supply of affordable housing across Tasmania.**

**That funding for the continuation of the Affordable Housing Strategy be allocated in part of fully from the revenue collected from stamp duty.**

### **2. Social Housing**

**Maintain social housing at least 6% of total proportion of Tasmanian housing stock, with 'one for one' replacement of social housing stock.**

**Housing Tasmania introduce a policy of a 3 month rent freeze for public housing for public housing tenants when they gain employment, and to include a tenants' awareness campaign.**

**This should then be extended to community housing tenants in consultation with community housing providers.**

**The Private Rental Support Scheme (PRSS) is extended to cover people on low income who have access to community housing.**

### **3. Enhanced capacity of the Community Sector**

**Shelter Tasmania to be funded, in consultation with Housing Tasmania, to extend its capacity to include the role of a community housing resourcing body. This would allow Shelter to undertake the following:**

- **Skills audit of the community sector.**
- **Shelter to consult and compile the training needs of the community sector in relation to tenancy management.**
- **Build on the Shelter web site comprehensive information on community housing in Tasmania.**
- **Introduce standards and accreditation**
- **Develop appropriate learning materials.**
- **Work with TAFE to deliver an accredited training module.**

### **4. An effective Private Rental System**

**That a State Wide housing standards code, be developed in consultation with building industry bodies, local government and non-government tenant organisations, be incorporated in Tasmanian legislation.**

**That the code covers heating, fixtures, power, water, fire regulations, plumbing, security, mould and other concerns essential to habitable living standards.**

**That the Residential Commission be empowered to:**

- **issue orders to landlords to comply with these standards, and to specify a time period;**
- **order that a landlord be liable for relocation costs if these are incurred by a tenant whilst the housing standard code is enforced.**

**That it be a criminal offence to offer a sub-standard dwelling for rental.**

- **That the Tasmanian Government allocate funds for the establishment of a Rental Bond Board for the purpose of consolidating and regulating the collection and disbursement of private bonds.**
- **That the Tasmanian Government amends relevant legislation to empower the Rental Bond Board to require all private bonds to be paid into a Board account through existing Tasmanian Service Centres.**
- **That a public education program be initiated so that all parties are aware of the operation of the Board.**
  
- **A single tribunal is established to hear all disputes arising from tenancies, be it public or private rental.**
  
- **Such a tribunal is to allow for natural justice and is not reliant on a paper-based argument.**

## **5. Home Ownership**

**That the State Government introduces vendor disclosure laws that require those selling a property to make certain information available to potential purchasers. These documents include:**

- **A copy of the proposed contract;**
- **A certificate of title and details of any easement and covenants;**
- **A certificate from local government detailing the key aspects of the property**

**And**

- **A signed statement by the vendor detailing any relevant matters that needs to be drawn to the attention of the purchase**

## **6. An Improved Planning System**

**That the State Government and Local Government Authorities undertake a statewide audit to identify government (Local, State and Commonwealth) owned land/buildings that have the potential for re/development into affordable housing, especially in inner city areas.**

**The State Government to continue funding through the Affordable Housing Strategy for a range of demonstration projects such as shop top accommodation.**

**Examine models to implement developer contributions to increase affordable housing. Suggestions include:**

- **Investigate requirements to strongly encourage developers to make some provision for affordable housing. This can be done via a zoning requirement to include a proportion of low cost housing in residential development, or with incentives such as allowing higher density than is usual, especially in the inner city;**
- **Sale of government inner city land requires the developer to provide a proportion of that development to affordable housing;**

**Or**

- **If a developer has removed affordable private rental stock they could be required to contribute to, replace or retain low rent stock.**

## **7. Homelessness**

- **Tasmania to develop a comprehensive Homelessness Strategy.**
- **The State Government to commit to the funding of SAAP V.**
- **The State Government needs to fund the gap in service delivery for children accompanying adult in crisis situations.**
- **The State Government to fund appropriate sheltered accommodation for carers and children.**
- **The State Government to consult with SAAP service providers to look at ways to increase the amount of supported accommodation for people with mental health conditions**