A Call for Contributions
The December 2012 edition of Parity

Responding to Homelessness in Western Australia

This edition of Parity is sponsored by the Government of Western Australia’s Department for Child Protection.

Introduction

All those involved in responding to homelessness in Western Australia are invited to contribute to the upcoming December 2012, ‘Responding to Homelessness in Western Australia’ Edition of Parity. Parity is the national publication of the Council to Homeless Persons and is the national homelessness publication in Australia. (Please visit: www.chp.org.au/parity)

One aim of this publication is to develop a comprehensive and detailed resource for all those working in the homelessness, social housing and related welfare sectors that examines and discusses all aspects of homelessness and the response to homelessness in Western Australia.

An equally important aim is to provide all those involved in the response to homelessness in Western Australia the opportunity to actively participate in this project and contribute to the publication. All voices need to be heard.

A Framework for Discussion: Responding to Homelessness in Western Australia

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the development of current homelessness policies and programs. A crucial part providing this context will be outline the development of homelessness per se in Western Australia as well as the development of the understandings of homelessness and most importantly, the development of policy and program responses to homelessness.

This is much more than mere background information. Current policies are built on the bones of previous policies and it is crucial to set out how these policy responses evolved and changed over time.

For example, it is equally important to understand the origins and the development of Specialist Homeless Services (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program - SAAP) in Western Australia as it is to appreciate the impact and changes brought about by introduction of the Western Australia Government’s State Homelessness Plan 2010-2013 ‘Opening Doors to Address Homelessness’.

Western Australia has a history of ‘developing its own road’ and likewise, a strong record of program and service system innovation to respond to the specific and particular historical and geographical imperatives that have shaped the Western Australian response to homelessness.
Chapter 1: Homelessness in Western Australia

The aim of this chapter would be to map out the nature, character, structure and forms of homelessness in Western Australia. This chapter could look at empirical issues like enumeration, the character and make-up of the homeless population, the location of those experiencing homelessness and base line issues like demographics and any other information required to understand the size, nature, character and composition of the homeless population in Western Australia. This chapter will also seek to examine and discuss the specific, if not unique, character of homelessness in Western Australia, particularly the impact of remote, rural and regional issues and the impact of the differences in issues experienced by ‘town’ and ‘country’.

Chapter 2: The Policy Framework

The aim of this chapter is to build on the information and context provided by the Introduction and Chapter 1 and to look in depth at the policy and program responses developed and being implemented under the Western Australia Homelessness Implementation Plan for the Homelessness National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness between the Commonwealth and Western Australian Government and through the Western Australia Government’s State Homelessness Plan 2010-2013 ‘Opening Doors to Address Homelessness’. The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive picture of where the response to homelessness in Western Australia is NOW.

The Western Australian State Plan provides the overarching framework for communities to work together to address homelessness. The State Plan outlines the outcomes and key principles for implementing an improved integrated approach to homelessness and aims to bring all relevant agencies and services to work together to open doors and improve circumstances for people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. It also identifies the action areas to support flexible and responsive services for people when they are homeless and to prevent people from slipping back into homelessness.

The chapter will include an overview of the State Plan and update on the development of the Regional Plans.

Chapter 3: Program, Service and Practice Responses

The aim of this chapter would be to examine, program, service and practice responses to homelessness in Western Australia and in particular to provide an opportunity for all those operating at the coalface to share their expertise and the benefits of their experience.

What are some examples of ‘best practice’ in responding to homelessness? Similarly, there should be opportunity for all those working for holistic and integrated program and service delivery models to have their say.

Both inner urban, metropolitan, outer-metropolitan, regional and rural services and programs will be included to make sure that practice examples are representative of the whole state. These could take the form of exemplars or snap-shots of good practice.

At the same time, relevant examples of both policy and practice and in particular insights from evaluations and the critiques of policy, programs and aspects of practice should be included.

Chapter 4: Consumer and Client Input

The primary purpose of this chapter would be to provide an opportunity for people who are or have been homeless, and in particular people who are or have been clients or users of services, to have their say about the response to homelessness in Western Australia and the experience of seeking and receiving homelessness assistance.

There are a number of ways this input will be sought and these should all be pursued.

Chapter 5: Key Themes and Issues in Western Australia

The aim of this chapter is to provide the opportunity and the scope for the discussion of a number of key issues that underpin and influence both the development of homelessness in Western Australia and in particular the policy and program responses to it.

These are not presented here in any order or hierarchy of importance. This list of themes and issues is not exclusive or comprehensive. Potential contributors wishing to discuss other themes and issues they believe relevant to the response to homelessness in Western Australia should do so.
• **Aboriginal Homelessness**
No discussion of the response to homelessness in Western Australia would be complete without examining and addressing the response to the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal people who experience homelessness. The differences in urban and rural responses need to be incorporated into this discussion as do the differences in regional responses.

• **Public Space Issues**
The increasing development and implementation of legislation by local government in particular has a dramatic impact on the lives and welfare of people who are homeless, especially those sleeping rough. What is the state of play with regard to these legislative restrictions?

• **Family and Domestic Violence**
Family and Domestic Violence is a major contributor to homelessness for women and children. There are differences in responses between regional, remote and metropolitan areas. With the addition of new service models and a close partnership with the WA Police, this section provides the opportunity to discuss what these changes might have for women and children.

• **Accompanying Children**
In the new Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, children are now recorded as clients in their own right. This section provides an opportunity to reflect on the issues for accompanying children, and showcase some of the responses by Specialist Homelessness Services.

• **Youth Homelessness**
Youth Homelessness has always had a predominant place in the public discourse on homelessness particularly in Western Australia.
It is important to dedicate a section of the magazine to youth issues.

• **Affordable Housing**
While affordable housing is a national issue it takes on specific guises in Western Australia. The pattern of economic development and in particular the more recent resource booms have created patterns of displacement and specific housing and affordable housing issues not prevalent elsewhere.

• **Town and Country**
Homelessness in Western Australia is far from homogeneous and nowhere in Australia do metropolitan and rural/regional differences and distinctions play such a significant role in both the character of homelessness and the responses to it.
This section is intended to provide an opportunity to examine and discuss this divide.

**Conclusion: Where to From Here?**
The aim of this chapter will be to examine and discuss the successes and learnings from, as well as the progress of the implementation of the State Plan to Address Homelessness ‘Opening Doors’ and in particular the implementation and review of the Regional Plans.
This chapter poses the questions: What is (still) to be done? and Where to from here?

**Contribution to the ‘Responding to Homeless in Western Australia’ edition of Parity.**
If you are at all interested in the possibility of contributing to this publication, please contact Noel Murray, Parity Editor parity@chp.org.au and leave your contact details so you can be put on the mailing list for this project. Please let me know if you are interested in participating in and contributing to this discussion.
Most articles in Parity are either single page (900 words) or double page, (up to 1800) words.

**Deadline**
All contributions must be received by **Friday November 2nd**

**Submitting to Parity**
All contributions should be submitted by email to parity@chp.org.au as a Word attachment. If you require comment or feedback on drafts, please send them well before the deadline if possible.