



CREATING ROOM IN THE BOOM CAMPAIGN
RELIEVING THE WA HOUSING CRISIS

Background Brief Overview and Recommendations

The low availability and high cost of private rent, high house prices combined with a scarcity of social housing in WA is severely impacting people on low incomes who are increasingly facing difficulty in accessing and maintaining secure, affordable and appropriate accommodation.

The dominant levers available to assist people to access and maintain both home-ownership and rental housing are under commonwealth jurisdiction and the commonwealth also funds the major proportion of homelessness services and social housing. The commonwealth responsibilities are the tax system as it applies to income tax, capital gains tax, and income from investment, the income support program – Centrelink and Commonwealth Rent Allowance, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

This paper focuses only on state and local government actions, and during the 11 years from 1997 - 2007 under the previous commonwealth government's policy environment, funding for health, community, human services and public infrastructure were severely restricted and in many cases reduced in real terms. Over this period the WA State Government maintained and occasionally increased its own funding to services in some areas.

Unfortunately, too often, an increase in state government funds to human services is delivered too little too late, and usually when negative media attention, a crisis or humanitarian tragedy has occurred. Despite the sector repeatedly and continuously calling for better responses, multiple commissioned reports and investigations, the WA government has failed to deliver social and community investment in equal proportion to its investment in resources and financial sectors and Western Australia has many un-implemented strategies and plans and a lack of basic community infrastructure to support the current economy and population needs.



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The CRiB campaign has identified four primary areas requiring immediate action:

1. **A significant shortage of social housing;**
2. **Large numbers of people in housing affordability stress**
3. **Lack of tenants rights**
4. **Funding shortage for homelessness services and staff**

Under these 4 themes the CRiB Campaign group recommends the Government of Western Australia:

Address Social Housing Shortage

- Increase the provision of public and community housing toward a proportionate target of 6% of all residential housing stock to be achieved in 2020
- Increase the provision of psychiatric supported accommodation for people with severe and persistent mental illness – an estimated 1,500 additional metropolitan and rural permanent and flexible supported places are required to house people with mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Increase the provision of disability housing both for people with physical and intellectual disabilities in the care of ageing parents and for younger people with spinal and other severe and permanent injuries

Respond to Housing Affordability Stress

- Increase the provision and range of Private Rental Loan, Subsidy or Grants Schemes to enable people at risk of losing their rental housing due to affordability issues and rental arrears to access assistance to maintain their housing
- Increase the number of short-term, crisis and transitional places for people who are homeless due to rental affordability and low vacancy rates but who require no other assistance
- Explore the implementation of an authorised and approved 'Social Landlords Register' for private landlords and private citizens to offer rental homes, rooms or other facilities to low-income or otherwise disadvantaged consumers unable to access housing in the mainstream private rental market
- Together with the Commonwealth, explore improved provision of income support and rent allowance for low income housing consumers in the private market
- Extend current expansionary policies for the community housing sector
- Fast track urban infill and brown site redevelopment projects for affordable housing including increasing density and diversity of dwelling types



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- Encourage implementation of the Rental Affordability Scheme by facilitating partnerships with community housing providers, local governments and financial investors
- Encourage development of current undeveloped, titled and serviced urban land focusing on dwelling construction on transport routes and in regional centres
- Legislate for a minimum 10% proportion of affordable rental housing in all new residential development
- Remove the LandCorp policy to maximise immediate financial gain from the sale of crown land and instead reserve land for building social housing now and into the future.

Provide Tenants Rights

- Improve consumer protections for people accessing private rental and living in boarding houses and hostels
- Deliver legislative protection against excessive rent increases
- Deliver legislative protection against residential tenant databases
- End no-cause evictions
- Remove option fees
- Bring Boarders and Lodgers under the Residential Tenancies Act

Deliver Increased Funding to Homelessness and Related Services

- Increase funding to the non-government sector to enable parity with equivalent roles in the government sector
- Increase funding to the non-government sector to enable services to meet current demand, reduce service waiting lists and waiting times
- Increase the provision of transitional or ongoing case management, support, financial and advocacy services for young people leaving state care to help them access and maintain housing
- Increase the provision of transitional or ongoing case management, support, financial and advocacy services for young people leaving corrections facilities to help them access and maintain housing

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Conclusion

- To achieve a 6% proportion of social housing the state government needs to fund and build at least an additional 2,000 dwelling units (\$435.5 million in 08/09) per year until 2020.
- To identify and respond effectively to the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness the state government needs to develop and implement a common uniform data set applied across all government and non-government sectors, with alignment of service regions and appropriate placement of service outlets to meet local and regional needs.
- To facilitate holistic and collaborative responses to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness the state government needs to develop and implement a mandatory homeless response protocol to ensure the delivery of a range of essential supports from every identified public agency.

The Creating Room in the Boom Campaign Committee strongly encourages the Government of Western Australia to deliver the benefits of the current economic windfall in Western Australia to all people but particularly those most affected by fixed and low incomes and other risk indicators of social exclusion.

