Western Australia is a prosperous state, however, many of our citizens do not share in the benefits many of us take for granted. Homelessness affects an estimated 13,000 people in our state including men, women, young people and children. The Western Australian Government is committed to responding in new and sustainable ways to give people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, the opportunity to move beyond the immediate crisis and into long term sustainable housing.

Homelessness is a serious community issue, often caused by complex, interrelated personal, social and economic factors. Family and relationship breakdown, mental illness, domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse and disability may lead to homelessness. Coupled with a shortage of affordable housing and unemployment, homelessness may become entrenched.

It is important people experiencing homelessness are supported to address the range of issues contributing to their homelessness and this requires an integrated approach.

This State Plan provides a framework for communities to work together to address homelessness. Partnerships between government agencies and community organisations are the most effective way to help people get their lives back on track and regain the dignity that comes with having a place to call home.

The Western Australian Council on Homelessness has been instrumental in developing this plan and the Council will support the development of regional plans throughout the state. I invite you to be part of this process, working together to ensure people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness will have access to housing and support to establish a home and a place in the community through an integrated homelessness service system.

Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC
MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION
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Over the past decade Western Australia has experienced rapid economic growth. However, not all have benefited from the opportunities of a strong economy. Safe and secure shelter and support is vital to human wellbeing, yet in Western Australia on the last census night in 2006, approximately 13,000 people were homeless.

Without access to permanent safe accommodation and support, people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience poor health, inadequate schooling/education, violence, prolonged unemployment and social isolation. Responding to homelessness is fundamentally linked to housing however, it is also much more than this. It also involves providing support to meet health, employment, social and personal needs.

The Western Australian community services sector, government and specialist homelessness services have been working for many years to support homeless people. It is now timely to reflect on these responses to homelessness, to build on this work and improve the outcomes.

The State Plan identifies an important vision to address homelessness and represents a commitment and renewed focus on intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Western Australia.

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 Western Australian Council on Homelessness has been instrumental in developing the vision, outcomes, guiding principles, action areas and commitment outlined in the State Plan. The Council is made up of community services sector and academic representatives with ex-officio members from key State and Commonwealth government departments. The Council supports the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the new National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) focussing on the three key strategies of:

- Early intervention and prevention;
- A better integrated service system; and
- Breaking the cycle of homelessness.
Homelessness Data
ABS Census 2006: Counting the Homelessness

- In WA, 13,391 are homeless on any one night with 6,720 people from across the metropolitan area.
- 2,392 people are sleeping rough across WA.
- 11% are Aboriginal people.
- In 2008-09, 11,100 people and 8,200 accompanying children received support and accommodation from WA specialist homelessness services.
- 3,200 young people aged 15-25 years received support and accommodation from WA specialist homelessness services in 2008-09.

The joint Commonwealth/State National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) aspirational objective is that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation. The outcome for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, is to achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion. This will be achieved through assisting people who are homeless to secure and sustain their tenancies and to assist in moving from crisis accommodation or primary homelessness to sustainable accommodation.

The joint Commonwealth/State National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) will contribute to the following outcomes:

- Fewer people will become homeless and fewer will sleep rough;
- Fewer people will become homeless more than once;
- People at risk of experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain their education, employment or training participation; and
- People at risk of experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services with improved access to sustainable housing.

NPAH commits to working towards achieving by 2013:

- A decrease of 7% in the number of people who are homeless;
- A decrease of a third in the number of Aboriginal people who are homeless; and
- A decrease of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough.
2.0 VISION

The guiding principles and action areas outlined in the State Plan work towards achieving the following vision:

Western Australia will have an integrated homelessness service system where people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, have access to housing and support to establish a home and a place in the community.

3.0 INTEGRATED SERVICE SYSTEM

The diagram below maps out a holistic service system that builds on the strengths of existing services and moves towards a fully integrated homelessness response in Western Australia.
4.0 OUTCOMES

The State Plan builds on the NAHA and NPAH and contributes to the following outcomes;

**Early intervention**
1. Services intervene early to help sustain housing and prevent homelessness.

2. Homelessness risk factors are assessed and identified early across a broad range of agencies and services.

**Better integrated service system**
3. ‘No wrong door’ - any entry point will be the right entry point for people who are homeless to be assessed, receive and/or linked to appropriate assistance.

4. People are proactively connected to mainstream and allied services.

5. Specialist homelessness services, government departments, mainstream services and the broader community services sector are integrated and work together to address homelessness.

**Breaking the cycle**
6. Specialist homelessness and mainstream services provide an integrated response to homelessness to move people out of crisis into long term sustainable accommodation.

7. People are supported to access and sustain long term housing and to connect and participate in their community so fewer people remain in or re-enter homelessness.
There are four guiding principles to support service delivery.

5.1 PEOPLE CENTRED

There is a need to put people first and provide support that is responsive to an individual’s changing needs. The concept of wrap around services will be central to bring together a variety of different responses to meet the complexity of needs experienced by the individual homeless person. Using this approach will build a system that is focused on positive outcomes for individuals.

5.2 LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership at all levels is required to ensure good outcomes for those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. All stakeholders including government, community, business and individuals have a role to play in responding to homelessness.

The Department for Child Protection is the lead government department responsible for funding specialist homelessness services and is working closely with other government departments, community organisations and mainstream services to bring together effective responses.

5.3 PARTNERSHIP AND INTEGRATION

The aim of an integrated service system is to build stronger partnerships between different agencies, service sectors and mainstream services to provide a coordinated response to ensure people are assisted in a consistent and timely way. This involves a ‘no wrong doors’ approach to assist people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, to access the appropriate support and referrals regardless of their initial point of contact with the service system.

5.4 FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

A service system that is continually improving provides responsive, timely, efficient and effective services and removes barriers that keep people in homelessness. It is also important to build a strong evidence base to inform how responsive and flexible service systems make a difference.

To complement good relationships and partnerships, individuals, services and departments involved need to be flexible. This flexibility should encompass and encourage innovation to create a climate of continuous improvement and responsiveness to people’s unique needs, including Aboriginal people and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.
The following action areas aim to assist people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, to access and sustain housing, address underlying needs which exclude them from the community and prevent future episodes of homelessness.

It is not just the role of specialist homelessness services to address homelessness. To be successful, a variety of services and sectors have a role to play, including mainstream and allied services, government and community services.

6.1 RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS

Addressing homelessness requires linkages to a range of housing options and the provision of appropriate support in order to meet the needs of the individual and ensure sustainable outcomes.

Housing providers, including public housing, community housing and the private sector where possible, should intervene early to assist people to maintain their existing housing. In some cases, services will support people to return to, or continue to live, in the family home, with other family members or friends or as a member of another household.

6.2 EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is essential that mainstream services and specialist homelessness services work together to ensure a seamless pathway into employment, education and training. This is aimed at supporting people to move on after homelessness to actively participate in their community and build their own stable economic future.

6.3 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Engaging with mainstream health services can improve underlying health related issues that often result in housing arrangements breaking down. Effective early intervention and prevention is reliant on easy access to mainstream services, including hospitals and medical services, drug and alcohol, mental health, and counselling services.

6.4 CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

A sense of belonging and connection with a community can build both resilience and a support network for individuals and prevent the continuing cycle of homelessness. It is important for services to actively support people to participate in their community and reconnect with family and friends where possible.
The outcomes, guiding principles and action areas outlined in the State Plan will occur alongside a number of other developments that are underway in Western Australia.

### 7.1 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 2009, the Western Australian State Government released two strategic housing reports:

- *More Than A Roof and Four Walls* which was produced by the Social Housing Taskforce; and

- *Housing 2020: Future Directions for Affordable Housing* which provided an initial blueprint for a State Affordable Housing Strategy.

*Housing 2020* suggested potential directions for system change including public housing reform, promoting growth through sectors such as community housing, increasing land and housing options, and improving support and transition incentives. These broad reform areas are now being explored through the development of a State Affordable Housing Strategy.

The Strategy will detail a range of actions to increase housing options for those on low and moderate incomes. It will also reflect the directions of the NPAH WA Implementation Plan, particularly the need for effective, integrated services to respond to and reduce homelessness.

### HOUSING

The proposed direction for addressing the affordable housing challenge over the next decade is primarily centred on adopting a AAA approach where future housing solutions are:

- **Appropriate** (to individual circumstances)
- **Available** (where and when they are needed)
- **Affordable** (within the means of low-to-moderate income earners)

### 7.2 SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

There are many non government specialist homelessness agencies at the forefront of delivering services to people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. Some agencies have already commenced reshaping and reforming how they respond to better meet the needs of people accessing their services. This includes developing improved assessment frameworks and integrated responses to maximise outcomes for people.
7.3 MENTAL HEALTH

In March 2010, the Western Australian Mental Health Commission was established with a focus on improving services for people with a mental illness and their families. The establishment of the Commission is a key step in creating a modern effective mental health system that puts people living with mental illness at its centre and has a clear focus on recovery. The new Mental Health Commission will also actively involve mental health consumers and carers in the planning and delivery of mental health services. This focus on mental health will enable the State to have dedicated and tailored services that will provide the best possible choices available for people with a mental illness.

The Mental Health Commission is seeking feedback on the WA Mental Health Towards 2020: Consultation Paper. This feedback will further inform the development of the strategic vision and policy for mental health and provide a blueprint for mental health priorities and reform in WA over the next decade.

7.4 FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support services play an important role in improving outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals. There is a range of services available through Local, State and Commonwealth Governments and the community providing intensive family support and counselling, homelessness services, family and domestic violence intervention, services for young people and parenting support.

The Department for Child Protection, in partnership with the community services sector, will facilitate the development of family support hubs - involving service alliances and common entry points - across metropolitan and regional areas. Family support hubs will connect families and individuals at risk or in crisis, to specialised services that work with vulnerable children, individuals and families. The family support hubs aim to provide a common entry point to deliver a holistic and networked approach to children, individuals and families at risk or experiencing a crisis including those who are homeless.

The ‘no wrong door’ philosophy will be a key element of the family support hubs and the emphasis will be on supporting clients to access the most appropriate service as soon as possible.

FAMILY SUPPORT

In order to better integrate and coordinate the wide range of family support services, the Department for Child Protection, together with the Community Sector Roundtable, Child Safety Directors’ Group and Community Services Sector agencies have developed www.whereto.org.au.

www.whereto.org.au provides a contemporary model of access to family support services, and reflects the virtual nature of the family support hub model. The website and telephone service will provide a central point of entry, ensuring earlier and easier access which will ultimately result in better outcomes for children and families.
8.1 REGIONAL PLANS

The diversity of Western Australia and the unique issues across the regions require customised approaches. Regional plans will be developed across Western Australia to implement an integrated service system responding to homelessness at a local level. The various mainstream and allied services, government departments, community service sector agencies and specialist homelessness services will be invited to contribute to the reform of the system in line with the principles and outcomes set out in the State Plan.

Individual agencies and workers will be encouraged to identify ways their own agencies and work practices can contribute to the reform agenda. Service users will also be invited to contribute their experiences and ideas to the reform agenda. Each region will be encouraged to develop suitable strategies for consumer participation and comment.

The Western Australian Council on Homelessness will be convening regional seminars with senior government officers and local stakeholders to facilitate the development of regional plans.

Key elements in the development of regional plans
- Identify specialist homelessness and mainstream services available in your local region.
- Identify how local areas will achieve integrated services.
- Identify lead and partner agencies.

8.2 FUNDING AND CONTRACTING

Specialist homelessness services are currently funded through the NAHA and, commencing in 2010, new funding has been made available through the NPAH. The new NPAH funding complements and builds on the work of existing NAHA specialist homelessness services.

Around 110 new non-government sector homelessness workers around the State will support people with a variety of needs. This includes people who are sleeping rough, people needing assistance to find and maintain accommodation, or assistance to maintain their private tenancy and avoid eviction and possible homelessness. At least 11% of people assisted will be Aboriginal.

Contract arrangements will be streamlined to ensure flexible innovative responses are easily implemented, and services are not overburdened by red tape and onerous reporting requirements. In addition, flexible brokerage funding has been incorporated for new NPAH services to respond better to individual client needs and to facilitate an integrated approach between specialist homelessness services and mainstream agencies.

8.3 GOVERNANCE AND LEVERAGING CHANGE

The Western Australian Council on Homelessness plays an important role and is responsible for providing advice and support on the NPAH initiatives, contributing to the development and implementation of the State and regional plans, and supporting initiatives that prevent, reduce and end homelessness.
Government agencies are involved in the implementation of the NPAH and are working together to improve services and better integrate with specialist homelessness services. The State government departments involved in addressing homelessness include:

- Department for Child Protection;
- Department of Housing;
- Mental Health Commission;
- Drug and Alcohol Office;
- Department of Corrective Services; and
- Western Australia Police.

As the lead agency, the Department for Child Protection is working collaboratively with key departments and mainstream services to promote an integrated, seamless response for people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. For example, the Departments of Housing and Child Protection have worked together to develop processes to ensure that the allocation of properties is linked with support services provided through the NPAH. The WA Police and the Department for Child Protection have also worked side by side with domestic violence services to ensure referral and information processes are shared to maximise the safety of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Australian Government departments, such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), administer a number of programs for homeless families and young people, and those at risk of homelessness, and work at a national level to reform and improve connections between services. Centrelink aims to ensure people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, are identified early and receive timely responses.

The State Government and the community services sector have already begun work to bring about reforms to the response to homelessness. Reform across specialist homelessness services, mainstream and allied services, government and the community services sector offers real opportunities for change and significant improvement to alter the lives of people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

### 8.4 LEARNING AND PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE

In Western Australia, there are a number of non-government specialist homelessness services and mainstream government services providing innovative responses and achieving outstanding results. It’s important that quality services are acknowledged and their work is promoted as best practice examples both as learning opportunities for others and to reward their efforts.

Promoting best practice and sharing learning will be facilitated through program forums to provide an opportunity to develop and share ideas. The forums will also act as a focus for training, professional learning and development for services and staff.

### National Quality Framework

The Commonwealth, States and Territories are working together to progress the development of a National Quality Framework to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by improving the quality and integration of services they receive. A National Quality Framework will provide a platform for services to deliver an improved and more integrated service response to people with greater national consistency. This will assist people who are homeless to get the help and support they need when they need it which will improve their long term outcomes.
An evaluation framework has been developed for the WA NPAH to collect data and monitor progress. The Hierarchy of Intended Outcomes in Appendix 1 offers a guide for both monitoring and evaluation. Elements of the evaluation include:

- Quantitative and qualitative data and reports from service providers, including case studies to identify outcomes achieved and how services are making a difference;
- Exit interviews as part of case management; and
- Annual satisfaction surveys to obtain feedback from people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

Improved data collection and reporting systems are being developed at both Commonwealth and State levels to help better understand the support provided and outcomes achieved for people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

All Western Australian initiatives will be independently evaluated to identify outcomes achieved. Learning from the evaluations will be circulated throughout the sector to improve responses to homelessness and develop further initiatives.

**KEY MILESTONES**

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<tr>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>State Plan Finalised</td>
<td>Regional Plans Implemented</td>
<td>Regional Plans Reviewed</td>
<td>Revision of State and Regional Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Plans Commenced</td>
<td>NPAH Evaluation Finalised</td>
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<td>NPAH Evaluation Commenced</td>
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## APPENDIX 1: HIERARCHY OF INTENDED OUTCOMES – NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ultimate Outcome</strong></th>
<th>Homelessness reduced by 7% Indigenous homelessness reduced by 33%</th>
<th>Former homeless people integrated into the community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Clients are stably accommodated</td>
<td>Clients are coping with mainstream support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate Impact</strong></td>
<td>Clients suitably accommodated</td>
<td>Clients suitably supported to deal with personal and tenancy issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outputs</strong></td>
<td>Housing / accommodation sourced as required</td>
<td>Clients linked to specialist and mainstream services related to tenancy management issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>Public and private tenancy support services operating in selected areas of metropolitan, rural and remote WA</td>
<td>Intensive support provided to 33 social housing tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inputs / Enablers</strong></td>
<td>33 social housing properties purchased or constructed by Department of Housing</td>
<td>Foyer development by Department of Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Ultimate Outcome:**
  - Homelessness reduced by 7% Indigenous homelessness reduced by 33%
  - Former homeless people integrated into the community

- **Intermediate Outcomes:**
  - Clients are stably accommodated
  - Clients are coping with mainstream support
  - Clients engaged in education, training or employment

- **Immediate Impact:**
  - Clients suitably accommodated
  - Clients suitably supported to deal with personal and tenancy issues
  - Clients engaged in education, training, employment or actively looking for work

- **Outputs:**
  - Housing / accommodation sourced as required
  - Clients linked to specialist and mainstream services related to tenancy management issues
  - Clients linked to specialist and mainstream services related to mental health and drug & alcohol issues
  - Clients linked to legal services

- **Activities:**
  - Public and private tenancy support services operating in selected areas of metropolitan, rural and remote WA
  - Intensive support provided to 33 social housing tenants
  - Foyer model operating for young people at risk
  - Program for young women leaving the care of the CEO operating in the metropolitan area
  - Homelessness accommodation support workers operating in all regions

- **Inputs / Enablers:**
  - 33 social housing properties purchased or constructed by Department of Housing
  - Foyer development by Department of Housing
  - Contracts let and monitored by Department for Child Protection
  - Brokerage funds
  - Education, training and employment services
  - Mental health, drug and alcohol services
  - Legal services, including tenancy advice and domestic violence legal services
  - Conditions in the public and private rental market
USEFUL LINKS

NPAH Western Australian Implementation Plan www.childprotection.wa.gov.au
Further information on the NAHA and NPAH Agreements www.coag.gov.au

Family Support Hubs www.whereto.org.au
Department for Child Protection www.childprotection.wa.gov.au
Department of Housing www.housing.wa.gov.au
Mental Health Commission www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au
Department of Corrective Services www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au
Drug and Alcohol Office www.dao.health.wa.gov.au
Office of the Public Advocate www.publicadvocate.wa.gov.au
Lotterywest www.lotterywest.wa.gov.au

Putting the Public First: Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes. Economic Audit Committee Report October 2009 www.dtf.wa.gov.au
National Quality Framework to Support Quality Services for People Experiencing Homelessness www.fahcsia.gov.au
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare www.aihw.gov.au
Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au

Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services of WA www.womenscouncil.com.au
Community Housing Coalition of WA www.communityhousing.com.au
Youth Affairs Council Western Australia www.yacwa.org.au
Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc (WACOSS) www.wacoss.org.au
Shelter WA www.shelterwa.org.au
Tenants Advice Service www.taswa.org.au

Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia www.financialcounsellors.org
Hardship Utilities Grants Scheme Email: HUGS2@dcp.wa.gov.au
Homelessness Australia www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au