



Putting People First

AGENCY DRUG AND ALCOHOL ACTION PLAN

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND WORKS

2003 – 2005

Foreword by the Director General for Department of Housing and Works

The Department recognises that it has a role in assisting people to overcome drug and alcohol dependence and must be flexible and adapt to changes in treatment strategies and methods. The Department recognises the majority of its tenants and bond assistance clients are low-income recipients and some clients have significant social problems that impact on their tenancies in both public and private housing. The Department's response must focus on assisting tenants while also responding to the needs of those without housing. These issues were identified in the State Homelessness Taskforce Report that highlighted the need for better housing options and stability in housing.

For tenants in occupation the Department must provide sufficient support and a stable home environment from where they can access specific drug and alcohol programs. Tenancy support programs such as the Supported Housing Assistance Program and the Indigenous Families Program identify problems affecting tenancies and endeavour to assist the tenant to resolve the problem or alternately assist the tenant to access suitable treatment or support programs. Other initiatives such as the Family and Domestic Violence policy assist families where substance use may manifest into violence. This policy enables victims of Domestic Violence to remove themselves from the situation and access safe long term accommodation.

For persons with drug and alcohol issues who don't have stable accommodation the ability to access treatment and successfully resolve their substance use is limited. It is therefore necessary for the Department to operate housing programs that enable these clients to access accommodation.

The Department has a range of programs, which enable low income and special needs clients to obtain housing. This includes subsidised public housing, bond assistance for private rental accommodation, community housing and home loans.

The Department operates the Homeless HelpLine, which assists homeless people into immediate accommodation. The HelpLine was established to help those sleeping rough on the streets of Perth to access housing and reengage with the community. Many of these people have multiple problems of which substance use is common.

Housing options available through the HelpLine include lodging houses, bedsit accommodation, refuges, crisis accommodation, private rental as well as mainstream public housing. In all instances those without a roof over their head will be assisted to access some form of accommodation.

Through the Crisis Accommodation Program, refuge and other crisis accommodation is provided to a range of clients including families, single mothers and single men and women with substance use problems.

By assisting those who have drug and alcohol issues to access stable housing the Department is removing impediments faced by these clients when seeking to reengage with their families and the community.

The Department will continue to work collaboratively with Government and non-government agencies to assist people suffering substance abuse and to target those groups in our community who have been identified as most in need. The Department is committed to work with these agencies to assist in areas identified and will work with groups such as indigenous people and communities, families, youth and children, regional and remote areas and people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems.

GREG JOYCE
DIRECTOR GENERAL

May 2003

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
Prevention and Early Intervention.....	5
INTRODUCTION	7
Background.....	7
Links to broad Social Policy.....	8
Links to Area Drug and Alcohol Plans	10
AGENCY CONTEXT	11
Agency Overview.....	11
Agency Mission.....	11
Agency Objectives.....	11
Broad Policy Directions	11
PRIORITY ACTIONS.....	12
Key Strategy Area: Prevention and Early Intervention.....	13
EMERGING POLICY ISSUES	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department is committed to working with both Government and non-government agencies to assist people to address their substance use problems and will continue to support the Drug and Alcohol strategies.

For tenants in occupation the Department must provide sufficient support and a stable home environment from where they can access programs to assist with their problems. Tenancy support programs such as the Supported Housing Assistance Program and the Indigenous Families Program identify problems affecting tenancies and endeavour to assist the tenant to resolve the problem or alternately assist tenants to access suitable treatment or support programs. The Supported Housing Assistance Program has had its funding increased by \$.5m in 2002/03 and will have a further increase of \$.5m in 2003/04. This funding will include assisting those clients being housed through the Homeless Helpline and those referred by other agencies who have been identified with multiple problems which includes alcohol and other drugs.

Where persons with alcohol and other drugs issues don't have stable accommodation and this limits their the ability to access treatment to successfully resolve these problems, they will be assisted by the Department through many of the programs currently in place and new initiatives that are now being progressed. The Department acknowledges it has an obligation to operate housing programs that enables these clients to access accommodation.

The Department has a range of programs, which enable low income and special needs clients to obtain housing. This includes subsidised public housing, bond assistance for private rental accommodation, community housing and home loans.

The Department through the Homeless Helpline will continue assist those identified being homeless by offering them accommodation including lodging houses, bedsit accommodation, refuges, crisis accommodation, private rental as well as mainstream public housing.

Prevention and Early Intervention

The Department will continue to participate and work with agencies in the following:

- Aboriginal Cyclical Offending Program
⇒ *Provides a collaborative approach aimed at reducing the cycle for offending*
- Priority Housing, Exit Point Housing and Bond Assistance
⇒ *Protocols developed with aims to improve pathways on access for public housing*
- Supported Housing Assistance Program
⇒ *Provides support to tenants who are experiencing difficulties in their tenancy*

- Management Support Program
 - ⇒ *Upgrade accommodation, training and employment opportunities*
- Absentee Tenant Minimum Rent Policy
 - ⇒ *Reduces the rent for the tenant/s whilst under going treatment/rehabilitation*
- Indigenous Families program
 - ⇒ *Coordination and facilitation across Government agencies in the case management of Aboriginal families and individuals*
- Accommodation provided for prisoners exiting the prison system
 - ⇒ *Provision of 65 units of accommodation for persons exiting the prison system and suffering mental illness*
- Crisis Accommodation Program
 - ⇒ *Providing housing stock for temporary housing for the homeless or clients in immediate crisis*
- Transitional Housing Program
 - ⇒ *Utilising the services of community organisations to undertake headleasing to provide extensive support to tenants to maintain their tenancy*
- Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service (ATSS)
 - ⇒ *The ATSS provides tenancy support to current and prospective tenants. This service provides culturally appropriate support across a range of issues including but not restricted to completing forms, obtaining references and understanding tenants rights and obligations.*
- Stronger Families
 - ⇒ *Program assisting families through Safer WA and involves intersectorial collaboration in dealing with families having problems in the community.*
- Youth Externally Supported Housing Program (YES) and Fremantle Regional External Supported Housing Program (FRESH)
 - ⇒ *Provides the housing with DCD providing the SAAP support for permanent long term housing for homeless young people and specifically targets homeless youth between the ages of 15 and 17.*
- Governments response to the Gordon Enquiry
 - ⇒ *Improved coordination and collaboration by Government service providers.*
- Homelessness Taskforce
 - ⇒ *Homeless Helpline puts homeless people in contact with available accommodation options*
- Early Years Taskforce
 - ⇒ *Coordinated development across government targeting parents and children aged 0-8 years.*
- Staff Training and Exchange Training on Policy with other Government and non-government agencies.
 - ⇒ *Coordinated approach to staff and policy training in relation to public housing with other agencies.*

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The development of the Department of Housing and Works drug and alcohol plan represents a significant step towards a more integrated response to drug and alcohol issues in this State. A Key State Government commitment to 'Deliver a Better Government' has underpinned the implementation of more cohesive and integrated Government policy, enabling greater coordination and integration of services. This commitment has also been embraced by the Western Australian community through the WA Community Drug Summit, which has demanded more than a 'siloed' response from Government.

The response to the Summit, called 'Putting People First', reflected an ideological shift in responding to drug and alcohol related problems by primarily treating them as a health and social issue, rather than a criminal or justice issue. Furthermore, Government recognised the importance of a more seamless system of care for those in need, and a more coordinated response from the many agencies and individuals involved. This approach was spearheaded by the development of *'Putting People First' The Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategy, 2002 - 2005*.

The WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy provides a framework for all key stakeholders. It builds on the priorities of the WA Community Drug Summit, and provides a clear commitment to target attention towards the unmet needs of a number of priority groups in our community, namely children and young people, families, Indigenous people and communities, people from regional, rural and remote communities, and people with co-occurring mental health and drug use problems.

The approach outlined in the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategy is hinged on pragmatism and is consistent with the directions of the National Drug Strategy. The priority areas for action, which are based on the National Framework and the WA Community Drug Summit, include Prevention and Early Intervention, Treatment and Support, and Law, Justice and Enforcement.

Two key features of this new approach are the development of both *Agency* Drug and Alcohol Action Plans, and *Area* Drug and Alcohol Plans. Agency plans provide the basis for development of specific agency and sectorial contribution to drug response, for the first time clearly outlining the contribution and directions of key Government Departments in overall drug and alcohol strategy. Area Planning is both an important process of community engagement, and a means of targeting action to local need. While Area Plans are necessarily broader in scope than the activities of Government, the resultant documents should support and complement each other, and therefore should be read in parallel. Put simply, Agency Plans provide, a basis and mechanism for Area Plans through 'top-down' support of the central authority, and Area Plans provide a vehicle for Agency action at the local level.

The Drug Summit emphasised the need for stable housing, supported housing and accommodation options for clients exiting prison, rehabilitation and crisis accommodation.

LINKS TO BROAD SOCIAL POLICY

The impact of drug and alcohol use on the human service sector is well documented. The police and justice sectors have reported figures that up to 80% of their work is drug and alcohol related. The Health sector reports that up to 30% of hospital admissions, and up to two-thirds of mental health conditions are also closely associated with drug and alcohol use.

The Department for Community Development reports that approximately 70% of Care and Protection Applications made to the Children's Court during 2000 involved parental drug and alcohol use in combination with factors such as family violence, mental illness and poverty, including homelessness. Other figures suggest that up to around 50% of marital breakdown is related to drug and alcohol use. Clearly, all human sector agencies have an investment in ensuring effective responses to drug and alcohol harm.

Yet drug and alcohol use and associated harms do not occur in isolation. New research clearly shows that drug and alcohol-related risk and harm share common causal pathways with a range of other social problems, including crime, welfare dependency, physical and mental ill-health, and even school and work performance and participation. Drug and alcohol use and related harm is but one part of the complexity of the human condition, not the root cause of all social ills. But when present, drug and alcohol use problems can exacerbate and complicate these other issues, such that an effective and combined response to drug use becomes essential, and can achieve solid improvements and gains. Drug use treatment and prevention has been shown to achieve up to an \$7 return on every \$1 invested¹.

Drug and alcohol issues affect the entire community and have significant health, social and economic impacts on all West Australians. The annual cost of alcohol and other drugs to the Australian community has been estimated for 1998/99 at \$34.4 billion (includes tobacco at a total cost of \$21.1 billion) by Collins and Lapsley².

The need now is to develop cross-sectoral responses that can capture the depth of people and their needs.

This is illustrated by a number of recent Government inquiries into serious health, social and economic problems in Western Australia that have all identified common themes. The inquiries and major themes include:

¹ National Institute of Drug Abuse 2000, Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research Based Guide, Bethesda Maryland. National Institute of Health. NIH Publication No-00-4180

² Collins, D., & Lapsley, H. (2003). *New estimates of the social costs of drug abuse in Australia*. Paper presented to the *International Research Symposium – Preventing substance use, risky use and harm: What is evidence-based policy?* National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Fremantle 24-27 February, 2003.

1. The State Government 'Response to the findings of the Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities' (Gordon Inquiry):
 - *Significantly the Report found that violence and child abuse are grave social problems that are endemic in many Aboriginal communities.*
 - *The report recommended the need to shift from planning within individual agencies to planning that is sector wide and responds to each community's need for integrated service provision.*
2. The Government's Response to the Report of the Homelessness Taskforce 'Putting People First' May 2002:
 - *The combined resources of the social sector, together with the continuing input of the community, are essential in tackling this social issue.*
 - *The social, economic and health issues associated with the risk of being homeless include, but are not limited to; family conflict, mental illness, family violence, and problematic alcohol and other drug use.*
3. The Early Years Taskforce: The Government established the Early Years Taskforce to develop an 'early years strategy' aimed at improving the wellbeing of young children aged 0-8:
 - *The Strategy is to be based on strong cooperation between State and Local Government service agencies and non-government service providers and a high degree of consultation and engagement with local communities.*
 - *In keeping with the social determinants model, the Early Years Strategy aims to improve outcomes for children.*
4. The Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians:
 - *The agreement commits the parties to work together to build a new and just relationship between the Aboriginal people of WA and the government of WA.*
 - *The shared objective is to negotiate a new approach in Aboriginal affairs policy and administration in WA based on regional agreements.*
 - *The partnership framework aims to enhance negotiated outcomes that protect and respect the inherent rights of Aboriginal people and to significantly improve the health, education, living standards, and wealth of Aboriginal people.*

LINKS TO AREA DRUG AND ALCOHOL PLANS

The Area Drug and Alcohol Planning process has demonstrated the need for cooperation across Government and non-Government agencies and the Department recognises that it has a role in assisting people overcome drug and alcohol substance issues. The Department will continue to monitor and assess policies and programs whilst working collaboratively with all agencies to assist people suffering from alcohol and substance use to ensure the needs of tenants and bond assistance clients is met while also responding to the needs of those without housing.

AGENCY CONTEXT

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Department of Housing and Works is an organisation representing all of the State Government's housing and works functions. The Department covers:

- Homeswest
- Bond Assistance
- Community Housing
- Aboriginal Housing
- Government Employees Housing Authority
- Country Housing Authority
- Keystart Home Loan Schemes
- The development and sale of Landstart land in Western Australia.
- The Office of Housing Policy.
- Asset Management Services
- Government Projects

The Department has 39,000 rental properties throughout Western Australia and approximately 12,000 applicants for rental housing.

AGENCY MISSION

To provide housing for Western Australians who cannot otherwise afford their own home by arranging affordable home finance, rental housing and land.

AGENCY OBJECTIVES

Our programs are aim at low-income home-buyers and renters, disadvantaged groups, people with special need and other government agencies.

BROAD POLICY DIRECTIONS

Addressing homelessness

Continuing to provide long term affordable housing options for rental clients

Increasing home ownership

Urban renewal

Providing quality land for homebuilders

Asset Management Services (AMS) delivers and manages non-residential buildings and infrastructure assets across the State.

Provides a wide range of services to facilitate the State Government's Capital Works and Maintenance Programs, ensuring probity, value for money and the management of risk.

To manage the planning and development of significant capital projects on behalf of Government.

Improving the housing outcomes for all Aboriginal people in Western Australia

Assist in providing stable accommodation to all West Australians

Addressing recommendations as addressed in the Homelessness Taskforce and the Gordon Enquiry.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Key themes identified include:

Prevention: Community Capacity building; Locally designed and relevant programs; Parenting skills development; Coordinated activity; Community education; Workforce development; Environmental strategies; Targeting high needs groups; Early drug use intervention; Social and life skills development; Targeted strategies to address alcohol related harm

Resources and Funding: address 'Silo' funding models; Flexible funding with local controls; Equity of funding issues

Coordination of Services: Integrated AOD and Mental health service models; Enhance agency awareness of services; Need for common clinical framework available.

Psychiatric comorbidity: Integrated service models; Professional development; Community education

Access and Equity: Remote area access; After hours access; Indigenous cultural security; improved Housing options

Treatment and Support Services: Improve Psychiatric Comorbidity response; Develop professional knowledge of addiction processes; Fairer distribution of resources; Health system development (including GPs); Follow up drug counselling and support

KEY STRATEGY AREA: PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Action Issue	Target Group/s	Action	Other key stakeholders	Area	Implementation Timeline
Aboriginal Cyclical Offending Program	Aboriginal people	Provides a collaborative approach aimed at reducing the cycle of Aboriginal offending, funded across Government. DHW contribution \$22,000 pa.	DOJ	Geraldton and Midland	Ongoing
Priority housing, Exit point housing and Bond Assistance	Families, couples and singles	DHW and RUAH – Inreach an agency of RUAH Services have developed a protocol with aims to improve pathways in order to access DHW accommodation for people with serious and persistent mental illness and problematic substance and alcohol abuse.	RUAH - Inreach	Metropolitan area	December 2001
Supported Housing Assistance Program	Couples, Families and singles, tenants at risk of losing their rental property	Provides support to tenants who experience difficulty in resolving problems that are impacting on their tenancy. Funding of \$1.7m pa currently rising to \$2.2m in 2003/04	Mission Australia Anglicare Centrecare	Metropolitan Area and six country regions	Ongoing
Management Support program	Aboriginal families in remote communities	Upgrade accommodation, training and employment opportunities. Provide training for residents to be employed in the management and maintenance of housing stock. Increase housing skills and employment opportunities. Reduce tenant caused damage.	ATSIC Dept. of Education & Training	Remote Aboriginal Communities Northwest/ Goldfields	Ongoing

Absentee Tenant Minimum Rent policy	All tenants in public housing	\$714,500 provided in 2002/03 To assist tenant's who are required to enter supported accommodation i.e. specific rehabilitation program, respite, outpatient treatment. Where they are required to pay rent or lodgings to another organisation will have their rent reduced to \$10.00 per week or if there are other family members the rental subsidy reassessed on their income only.		Statewide	March 2003
Indigenous Families Program	Aboriginal families, couple and singles	Support the coordination and facilitation across Government Agencies to better case manage the needs of aboriginal families and individuals. To support families and individuals with a history of difficulties managing tenancies. Funded across Government, DHW contribution \$55,000 pa.	DCD	Statewide	Ongoing
65 units of accommodation	Clients exiting the prison system	Provide accommodation to clients exiting the prison system and suffering mental illness. Funding \$5.5.	DOJ	Metropolitan	2003
Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP)	Women and children, youth and the homeless	CAP accommodation is temporary, dealing directly with people who are homeless or in immediate crisis. Provides temporary shelter whilst long term accommodation is sought.	DCD and various community agencies	Statewide	Ongoing

Transitional Housing Program	Aboriginal Families, Couples and Singles	The Department utilises the services of community organisations prepared to undertake headleasing of Homeswest properties to provide extensive support to tenants to maintain their tenancy. No specific funding however properties are rented on a peppercorn rental representing approximate rental income of \$3,500 foregone per year per property.	Various community agencies & DCD	Statewide	Ongoing
Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service	Aboriginal families, couple and singles	Provides support to current tenants and prospective tenants in providing culturally appropriate support in relation to tenancy matters. Funding 2002/03 \$300,000.	Community agencies	Statewide	Ongoing
Stronger Families	Families	Presenting with multiple problems funded across Government by participating agencies DHW \$40,000 2002/03	DCD, DOH, DOJ, DPC,DOE	Albany and Midland	Ongoing
Youth Externally Supported Housing Program (YES) & (FRESH)	Youth	Providing permanent long term housing for homeless young people and specifically targets youth between 15 and 17. Tenants are provided with ongoing support and assistance, where necessary to enable them to live independently and to successfully maintain the tenancy.	Anglicare Fremantle Regional External Housing DCD	North Metro and South East Metro	Ongoing

Gordon Enquiry	Aboriginal Families and Children	The Department is participating in the whole of government approach on this enquiry and recommendations, and in the provision of service and accommodation for government employees in remote communities	Across Government	Statewide	Ongoing
Early Years Taskforce	Children, Parents and Communities	Across government coordinated response to working with local communities in both metropolitan and regional WA in response to meeting the need of parents and children 0-8 years	DoH, DIA, DSC, DET, DLGRD, DCD, Local government bodies, local communities	Local communities statewide	Interagency forums have been held in 6 localities to look at the probable engagement of local communities
Homelessness Taskforce	Families, Couples and Singles	Aims to provide support to homeless people to enable them to maintain a successful long-term tenancy. This service ties in with Salvation Army crisis line to provide a 24 hour helpline for people who are without shelter	DCD	Metro based but assists Statewide	Ongoing

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

There are a number of issues that have been identified through this collaborative approach to Drug and Alcohol Action Plan and the Department will continue work with both Government and non-government agencies to assist with policy issues identified with the associated use of drug and alcohol.

In addition, the Department will continue to monitor its policies and review programs to ensure it addresses a range of social issues including drug and alcohol issues.

The Department acknowledges the importance of accommodation as a protective life factor, and will develop in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol office a Memorandum of Understanding that will assist mutual clients to maintain their tenancies.