

**Clarke, Pamela**

**Subject:** FW: Outcare Submission: Inquiry into the Adequacy & Future Directions of Social Housing in WA

**Importance:** High

**Attachments:** Outcare Submission to Social Housing Inquiry (WA) 2010.doc

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**From:** Carol Mitchell [mailto:carolmitchell@outcare.com.au]

**Sent:** Thursday, 9 December 2010 4:28 PM

**To:** Standing Committee, Community Development & Justice

**Cc:** petersirr@outcare.com.au

**Subject:** Outcare Submission: Inquiry into the Adequacy & Future Directions of Social Housing in WA

**Importance:** High

To: Dr Brian Gordon, Principal Research Officer

- On behalf of the Outcare Incorporated CEO, Peter Sirr, please find the Outcare submission attached in relation to the Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Social Housing in Western Australia.
- We appreciate the opportunity to forward a submission on this important issue.
- The focus of the Outcare submission is more specifically in relation to those at risk or vulnerable to homelessness, but especially due to juvenile detention or imprisonment.

Kind regards

**Carol L Mitchell**

Policy and Research Officer

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**Leaders and innovators in crime prevention and community safety**

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9 December 2010  
Dr Brian Gordon  
Principal Research Officer  
Community Development and Justice Committee  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

**Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Social Housing  
in Western Australia (WA)**

Dear Brian

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Social Housing in WA, through the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee.

Outcare Incorporated assists our core client group of ex-offenders returning to the community post imprisonment with a throughcare model that includes accommodation.

We also advocate for social and affordable housing for those most at risk or vulnerable to homelessness, but specifically for those who have had contact with the justice and corrective services systems. Given our clients have complex needs, they often fall through the policy and practice gaps of many other service providers.

Outcare welcomes all efforts to seriously tackle homelessness, with particular support for strategies that increase the provision of affordable and sustainable housing throughout the State prioritising those with critical need.

If you would like to discuss any of the details in the submission further, I can be contacted on: 6263 8622.

Yours sincerely



Peter Sirr  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



SUBMISSION TO:

**The Principal Research Officer:** Dr Brian Gordon

Email: [lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Legislative Assembly

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

**Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of  
Social Housing in Western Australia**

(December 2010)

SUBMISSION FROM:

**OUTCARE INCORPORATED**

27 Moore Street, East Perth, WA 6004



CEO: Peter Sirr

Author: Carol L Mitchell

## AN INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

That the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee will examine the issue of social housing and report by 7 April 2011 on:

1. The role of government and the private and the not-for-profit sector in facilitating affordable housing;
2. The effectiveness and appropriateness of social housing allocations in the metropolitan area and regional Western Australia (WA);
3. **The impact of public housing need on specific groups;**
4. The key factors influencing the supply of 'sub-market' affordable housing in WA;
5. The integration of social housing asset management strategies into the larger urban and regional development process;
6. Financing affordable and sustainable social housing;
7. Alternative models for the provision of social housing;
8. Factors facilitating the movement of people from the social housing sector to the private market and home ownership; and
9. Particular housing initiatives needed for regions of rapid growth.

### OUTCARE SUBMISSION FOCUS:

The Outcare submission for the 'Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Social Housing in Western Australia' has focused more specifically on the barriers or gaps in service delivery in relation to social housing impacting upon the re-integration of ex-offenders into the community given several existing reports or other Inquiry submissions address many of the terms of reference in extensive detail. That is, the Outcare submission focus from the Terms of Reference is *the impact of public housing need on specific groups*.

Outcare's response to social (and community) housing needs in WA follows in our submission, but the key need identified for ex-offenders post release from prison given their increased vulnerability to homelessness is summarised below.

**The core recommendation of this submission** is that:

Appropriately supported longer-term accommodation needs for ex-offenders post release be prioritised. Clients need to be case managed in a more holistic sense with a longer-term effective multidisciplinary throughcare model (including transitional accommodation with intersectoral support) that acknowledges many will have very complex needs that may hinder their successful re-integration into the community, as well as their family and friends networks.

The urgent need for longer-term support to prisoners post-release is probably summed up best by Eileen Baldry (2007) in her paper, 'Recidivism and the role of social factors post-release' where she stated that:

*Ex-prisoners are over-represented in all forms of homelessness and homeless persons are more likely to be imprisoned than those with housing.*

**OUTCARE INCORPORATED: WA'S MAJOR NON GOVERNMENT PROVIDER  
OF CRIME PREVENTION SERVICES**

Outcare Incorporated is the major non-government provider of crime prevention services in Western Australia through the provision of rehabilitative and supportive services for offenders, ex-offenders and their families. Established in the early 1960's, Outcare has grown into an award winning and well respected not-for-profit organisation.

Outcare takes a holistic approach to community safety and crime prevention by offering a broad range of education, intervention and reform programs aimed at reducing the re-offending rate (recidivism) of people in conflict with the law/justice system and supporting their successful rehabilitation and re-integration into the community. This leads to improved community safety and lower costs associated with the justice system (reducing crime and its associated costs).

Outcare's core services include: Accommodation; Community Support and Re-entry Services; Workforce Development and Training; Family Support Centres; Health Services; and Youth Services. Outcare looks to the future, not at the past. It is about creating a new beginning for people and a new beginning for the community of Western Australia (WA). Outcare further supports families and friends of those in prison through the Outcare sponsored Prison Chat website ([www.prisonchatau.com](http://www.prisonchatau.com)).

The Outcare Accommodation team helps ex-offenders access crisis, medium and long term accommodation upon release from prison depending on their individual need. They are further assisted by the Community Support and Re-entry team who assist with the re-integration of ex-offenders into the community and into their family and friends networks; This includes a new collaborative service that provides more specific support to offenders with an intellectual disability. Workforce Development and Training provides many services to further support ex-offenders, such as through mentoring and life-skills programs, the Indigenous Employment Program and others as required.

The Outcare Family Support Centres operate at six of the WA prisons. These are run by professional, qualified staff who provide vital services to the families of prisoners, including emotional support; assistance with understanding the prison system; childcare; providing emergency relief monies; and information/referral to other support agencies. The Health Service staff members provide support via a throughcare model that includes counselling and support to those with blood borne viruses. The Outcare Youth Service facilitates empowering youth programs with collaborative partnerships with other service providers that provide skills for young offenders to reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

One of Outcare's Patrons', the Most Reverend Barry Hickey, Catholic Archbishop of Perth stated in the 2010 Annual Report that *"there is no need for Western Australia to have one of the highest rates of incarceration in Australia if government and society were to creatively address the many social issues such as poverty, lack of accommodation, disadvantage and mental health that takes people into a downward spiral of imprisonment and recidivism. Locking people up is not the answer to these problems but reflects a poverty of ideas"*.

Our submission outlines some of the service delivery gaps in relation to social housing in WA for our core client group and outlines some of the barriers to post-release accommodation for ex-offenders. Recommendations for prioritising those with special

need (including those vulnerable or at risk of homelessness) are also provided, but more specifically, to better support ex-offenders post incarceration.

### **Definitions**

#### **Homelessness:**

This may refer to primary or direct homelessness such as those 'living rough', squatting or living in parks; Secondary homelessness such as living in crisis or temporary accommodation or 'couch surfing'; or Tertiary homelessness such as sub-standard boarding type accommodation over the medium to longer terms.

#### **Social Housing:**

The Social Housing Taskforce (WA) defined social housing as government subsidised accommodation for people on low to moderate incomes.

#### **Affordable Housing:**

The Taskforce broadened the focus to also include affordable housing which they defined as housing that is adequate in standard and location for lower to middle income households but does not place the households into housing stress.

The Taskforce also outlined an affordable housing continuum for WA that contains diverse housing options for households depending on their needs. These include crisis accommodation, public and community housing, affordable private rental and affordable home ownership.

### **Significant Background Documents on Homelessness in Australia:**

- **'Which Way Home?' A New Approach to Homelessness (May 2008).** **The Green Paper** stated *'Reducing homelessness is everyone's responsibility'*. In the summary, within 'a reformed homelessness service model' (p 4) it outlined:  
*Our aim is that contact with crisis services, offer a swift and secure **gateway** into safe, appropriate accommodation; and a **pathway** to the longer-term goals of personal security, self development, and social and economic participation.*
- **'The Road Home' – A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (September 2008).** Referred to as **the White Paper**: The Australian Government's policy for addressing homelessness. The submissions received following the Green Paper, but stated in The Road Home 'urged the government to develop a new, whole-of-government approach that would':
  - *demonstrate national leadership*
  - *focus strongly on prevention and early intervention*
  - *provide support for homeless Australians that leads to increased economic and social participation*
  - *encourage closer collaboration between services used by people vulnerable to homelessness*
  - *increase access to safe, affordable housing linked to appropriate support services*
  - *recognise the complexity of homelessness and address the needs of different groups within the homeless population, including families with children, young people, Indigenous people, older adults and women and children leaving domestic or family violence.*

- **'Housing the Homeless'** – Report on the Inquiry into Homelessness Legislation (November 2009) outlined 15 recommendations to influence a new legislative framework to address homelessness nationally. Within the Foreword, Annette Ellis MP, the Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth stated:
 

*The current government has set ambitious targets to half homelessness by 2020 and to offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers. This will be achieved by a significant boost in spending on homelessness, new agreements with the states and territories and an overhaul of the legislative framework that shapes the public response to homelessness.*

#### **Significant Background Documents on Social and Affordable Housing in Australia:**

- **'More than a Roof and Four Walls' – Social Housing Taskforce** (Final Report June 2009). Within the Social Housing Taskforce Final Report, 'More than a Roof and Four Walls' (June 2009), Outcare was the only non-government agency identified within Appendix 3: List of Support Services for Social Housing Tenants in WA. The service provided was outlined as: *Support for persons with criminal convictions (to) re-enter the community. Services include helping recently discharged offenders, including youths, access crisis, medium and long term accommodation.*
- **WA Government's Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability** (April 2008) stated within Social Housing (p 11) that:
 

*The growing relationship between traditional public housing and the Community Housing sector is central to the future provision of low-cost housing in WA. Community housing is housing provided through not-for-profit organisations, local government authorities and church groups. It has already become an effective mechanism in the provision of housing assistance to many low income Western Australians with special needs and is poised to have a significant impact on affordable housing provision throughout the State in the next five to ten years.*
- **National Affordable Housing Agreement** (commenced January 2009) including National Partnerships on Homelessness, Social Housing and Remote Indigenous Housing. These are the implementation mechanisms outlined to support the National approach to reducing homelessness.
- **Working Together to Reduce Homelessness – Homelessness in Western Australia.** Specific strategies to support 'New work through the national Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Homelessness' are further outlined within the Implementation Plan; including for many groups vulnerable to homelessness.
- **'Housing 2020' Statement – Future Directions for Affordable Housing** (2009) outlines (p 10): *The aspirational goal of providing 20,000 new affordable housing dwellings by 2020 – largely outside the public housing system...to help people climb out of housing stress and migrate into sustainable options. This will deliver four key outcomes:*
  1. *A public housing system that helps people when they need it for the agreed duration of their need*
  2. *Maximum community and market-based solutions to the affordable housing challenge*

3. *More effective outcomes from the land and planning system for people on low-to-moderate incomes*
4. *Specific needs addressed from homelessness to home ownership.*

**The impact of public housing need on specific groups:**

Within the Executive Summary for 'The Road Home' (p viii), the following statements were made in relation to homelessness:

*'Homelessness includes people who are living rough, as well as people staying in temporary, unstable or substandard accommodation. Many people who are homeless cycle between homelessness and marginal housing. People are staying in crisis accommodation for longer because they have nowhere else to go. Homelessness is not just a housing problem. Homelessness has many drivers and causes, including the shortage of affordable housing, long term unemployment, mental health issues, substance abuse and family and relationship breakdown.'*

Three strategies were identified to respond to homelessness (p ix):

1. **Turning off the tap:** services will intervene early to prevent homelessness
2. **Improving and expanding services:** services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation and end homelessness for their clients
3. **Breaking the cycle:** people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

Within the 2020 Statement – Future Directions for Affordable Housing (2009), it states (p 3): *The future direction proposes a AAA response with both demand and supply side reforms. That is,*

*It is primarily centred on adopting a AAA approach where future housing solutions are:*

*Appropriate (to individual circumstances)*

*Available (where and when needed)*

*Affordable (within the means of low-to-moderate income earners).*

**Outcare Priorities and Recommendations:**

Outcare is supportive of these future directions and strategies with the prioritising of those most at risk or vulnerable to homelessness, and those who continually fall through the policy and service provision gaps for many government and community based organisations being paramount.

Given Outcare's core business is to effectively support offenders, ex-offenders and their families, this submission highlights the more specific challenges many may face in relation to accessing and maintaining appropriate accommodation post-release. Offenders and their families often fall through the policy and service provision gaps for many government departments and for other community service providers given a more comprehensive and whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach is currently more rhetoric than practice.

Outcare advocates for best practice throughcare models that aim *"to reduce re-offending with the continuous, co-ordinated and integrated management of offenders...The post-release aspect of throughcare requires that justice and human service agencies co-*

*operate and co-ordinate their activities prior to release, during transition and for some period after release to assess and assist persons with multiple needs” (Baldry 2007).*

**Recommendation:**

*Timely and culturally appropriate multidisciplinary supports to accommodate ex-offenders post-release:* Outcare recommends timely and culturally appropriate multidisciplinary supports to effectively accommodate ex-offenders over the longer term where possible. It is only with such supports that re-offending rates and recidivism can seriously be reduced, thereby increasing safety for the whole community. It also needs to be acknowledged that many ex-offenders have very complex needs:

“Disadvantaged groups of people form a disproportionate number of the defendants coming before the courts and ending up in (the) prison system. Intellectual disability, mental illness, acquired brain injury, drug dependency, *homelessness*, dual diagnosis and a history of abuse are all factors that can contribute to over-representation in the prison system. These factors may also overlap, with entrenched poverty the common thread that binds these experiences together” (NCOSS, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

**Barriers to post-release accommodation for ex-offenders:**

- Ex-offenders are a high risk group for varying forms of homelessness
- SAAP providers are reluctant to house ex-offenders (many interviews needed)
- Private accommodation providers are reluctant to house ex-offenders
- Realtor ‘black lists’ for many ex-offenders/ex-prisoners (discrimination on the basis of a criminal history or imprisonment)
- Those imprisoned for six months or more who were housed in a single occupant dwelling lose their Homeswest accommodation
- Those imprisoned who are non-responsive to an offer of public housing (don’t or can’t respond due to imprisonment) go to the end of the accommodation waiting list (commonly several years long – irrespective of where they were on the list)
- Very limited low cost accommodation available upon release
- Imprisonment/incarceration may have resulted in loss of the family home and/or bankruptcy (especially when the main income earner is in prison)
- History of unstable or insecure living arrangements prior to incarceration (homelessness/living rough)
- General housing crisis
- High general rental costs and increasing utilities costs
- Pre-release or post-release accommodation may be overcrowded (particular challenge for many Aboriginal families; especially for children/youth with children themselves)
- Employment prospects are adversely affected without stable accommodation
- Many ex-offenders lack the identification needed post-release for accommodation (and employment) services
- Lack of stable rental history – difficulties getting references for alternative accommodation
- Credit rating unlikely to be current
- Limited or no income to pay for security bond or rent in advance

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<sup>1</sup> NCOS (2007). A Fairer NSW: Bold Solutions and Real Results. Council of Social Service of NSW. 2007 State Election Policy.

- Government agencies currently not providing timely financial assistance for initial rental support to bridge this gap or provide a deposit for accommodation services
- Homeswest currently have more villas and houses available for families rather than single occupant units (with one or two bedrooms)
- Limited means to earn an income – may need emergency financial relief
- May be released from prison with existing fines or debt
- Difficulties budgeting (limited numeracy)
- If have accommodation post-release, may have difficulties getting utilities connected until old debts are repaid
- Changes to the expected release date could preclude committing to appropriate accommodation when available
- Existing health challenges may further stigmatise (co-morbidity/dual diagnoses such as addictions with a mental health problem or intellectual disability)
- Institutionalisation may result from imprisonment limiting individual decision-making, problem solving and life skills (could include low literacy and numeracy)
- Poverty, social disadvantage, exclusion and isolation is the post-release reality for many ex-offenders (especially when family and friends networks are limited or no longer available)
- Challenges accessing multiple services post-release

**Other priority target groups and strategies:**

As outlined within 'The Road Home' (p v) there is a great need to:

*recognise the complexity of homelessness and address the needs of different groups within the homeless population, including families with children, young people, Indigenous people, older adults and women and children leaving domestic or family violence.*

Outcare supports such targeting and endorses the whole-of-government, whole-of-community focus to reduce homelessness and to provide timely, culturally appropriate and effective support structures to improve social and affordable housing along a continuum from social and affordable housing to home ownership (when appropriate). However, Outcare also recommends that more specific supports are required with early intervention for some other at risk or vulnerable groups within our community.

**Recommendation:**

*Early intervention for children and youth in out-of-home care and juvenile justice system:*

In addition to those groups identified within the homeless population in The Road Home as requiring special attention due to their complex needs, Outcare recommends prevention and early intervention strategies more specifically focusing on children and youth who are in out-of-home care, within the juvenile justice system or those with a primary carer who has been or is currently imprisoned.

**Recommendation:**

*Prioritise the most vulnerable or 'at risk' of homelessness:* Prevention and early intervention strategies need to prioritise the most vulnerable or those most at risk of homelessness, prioritising children or youth such as:

- those already 'living rough' or in other forms of homelessness
- youth within the juvenile justice system
- those on care and protection orders (Child Protection)
- those in out of home care (such as foster, ward of the State and other supported residential accommodation)

- those living with the consequences of abuse, violence and neglect or overcrowding
- those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage (especially for Indigenous children/youth having children themselves)
- those with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), especially newly arrived or Humanitarian entrants (mainly those who have experienced or witnessed torture and trauma)
- those with complex physical and/or intellectual disabilities (including acquired brain injury such as from Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)
- those with co-morbidity/dual diagnoses such as alcohol and other drug addictions and mental health challenges such as anxiety disorders, psychoses or depression
- those with intergenerational poverty, homelessness and/or overcrowding needs
- those children and youth with the primary carer or guardian with complex physical and mental health needs

According to *Mission Australia's Snap Shot 2010*, 'Hearing directly from vulnerable young Australians':

- Young people who are *homeless*, in out-of-home care or juvenile justice can be vulnerable in a number of areas which are fundamental to wellbeing, including meaningful relationships, educational achievement, *secure housing*, physical and mental wellbeing and financial security;
- A variety of factors can contribute to a young person becoming involved in the juvenile justice system, including substance abuse, poor parental supervision, problems with school or work, poor personal or social skills, *homelessness* and neglect and abuse (Department of Human Services, 2009);
- Young people under out-of-home care orders are '*at risk*' of *homelessness* with 40% of those leaving care not knowing where they will live (McDowall, 2009);
- Homelessness is also a risk factor for becoming involved in the juvenile justice system with a 'growing body of research suggesting that an increasing number of young people are ending up *in remand because they don't have anywhere to live*' (AIHW, 2007);
- In June 2009 there were just over 34,000 children in out-of-home care in Australia, a 9.3% increase since 2008 and a 44% increase over the past four years (AIHW, 2010);
- Out-of-home care is the placement of a child or young person (up to the age of 18) in *alternative accommodation* because they are unable to live with their parents, often because of abuse or neglect (Richardson, 2009);
- Those not experiencing secure and stable care (are) most at risk of outcomes such as low levels of educational attainment, marginal employment, *transitional housing*, poor mental health and lower expectations of the future (Cashmore and Paxman, 2006).

### **Recommendation:**

*Early intervention for ex-offenders is critical post-release:* Given the increased morbidity and mortality rate for many prisoners post-release (AIC, 2006)<sup>2</sup>, and their increased vulnerability to homelessness, ex-offenders require urgent post-release crisis or transitional support. Accommodation options should cover all needs from single occupant units (one or two bedrooms), to villas and houses (for larger families) over the

<sup>2</sup> AIC (2006). Mortality & Morbidity in prisoners after release from prison in WA 1995 – 2003.

longer-term, but with an aim to sustainable housing with long-term rental or home ownership when appropriate.

This need is broadly supported by Recommendation 8 within the Report on the Inquiry into Homelessness, 'Housing the Homeless' (November 2009) which states:

*That the Minister for Housing include provision in new homelessness legislation to give priority access within available resources to services and supports based on an assessment of the needs and vulnerability (p xv).*

**Recommendation:**

*Indigenous people involved with the justice or corrective services system require urgent prioritising for long-term inter-sectoral support, including for accommodation: Given the over-representation of Indigenous people within the criminal, juvenile justice or corrective services system, Indigenous people require urgent prioritising of their needs, not only while incarcerated, but post-release, including for accommodation. This includes providing accommodation that minimises the likelihood of overcrowding, as well as holistic support being prioritised for Indigenous children/youth released from detention who are also parents:*

Krieg (2006)<sup>3</sup> stated:

*It is becoming evident that the first 6–12 months following release from prison is a high risk time. Recent studies in Western Australia showed that released Aboriginal prisoners have an almost 10 times greater risk of death than the general WA population and an almost three times greater risk of death compared with their Aboriginal peers in the community. The main causes of death are suicide, drug and alcohol related events and motor vehicle accidents.*

This need is further supported by Recommendation 2 within the Report on the Inquiry into Homelessness, 'Housing the Homeless' (November 2009) which states:

*That the Minister for Housing include a preamble in new homelessness legislation which:*

- *Acknowledges the individual, socio-economic and structural causes of homelessness, including explicitly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (p xiii).*

**Recommendation:**

*Early identification and support for those living in an unpredictable environment: Those identified to be living in an unpredictable environment such as:*

- frequently changing accommodation/highly mobile;
- changing family household composition; and
- overcrowding

*need to be prioritised to receive timely and culturally appropriate long-term multi-sectoral supports. Crisis and early intervention needs to be prioritised for such community members given an unpredictable environment is a known risk factor or negative social determinant that can result in health compromising behaviours that can further increase the likelihood of homelessness.*

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<sup>3</sup> Krieg, A.S. (2006). Aboriginal Incarceration: Health and Social Impacts. Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) 2006; 184 (10): 534.

**Recommendation:**

*More holistic services with a throughcare model required urgently, especially for youth:* Those identified as vulnerable to homelessness require more timely and effective whole-of-government and whole-of-community services as a matter of urgency, especially with a more seamless throughcare model. Given youth homelessness is a major risk factor for longer term mental health problems, they need to be prioritised. This means that crisis support needs to be followed up with longer-term transitional accommodation (minimum of 12 – 18 months) with effective multidisciplinary supports rather than crisis accommodation only.

**Recommendation:**

Long-term inter-sectoral support is critical for those with complex physical and intellectual disabilities with a need to further prioritise those released from detention/prison and other institutionalised accommodation or care given their increased vulnerability to homelessness.

**Recommendation:**

*Remove discriminatory accommodation practices affecting ex-offenders:* Including the current practice of placing those imprisoned who have not responded to an offer of public housing (didn't or can't respond due to incarceration) on the end of the waiting list (irrespective of where they were on the list prior to imprisonment); Realtor 'black lists' for clients with a criminal history or having been imprisoned; Ex-offenders who were living in a single occupant dwelling losing their Homeswest unit if imprisoned for six months or more; and other barriers (or collateral sanctions) identified earlier.

With effective government supports, Outcare could extend assistance to house a family member in Homeswest accommodation of those imprisoned in single occupant dwellings to ensure the property is not lost to the individual while they are incarcerated.

**Recommendation:**

*Early identification and intervention for those living in poverty, excluded or isolated:* Those identified as living in poverty and/or experiencing social, cultural or geographical exclusion or isolation (remote regions), including the various forms of homelessness (primary/direct; secondary and tertiary) need to be prioritised for crisis and early intervention strategies.

*Poverty is one of the most pervasive causes of social disadvantage. Poverty precludes people from having an acceptable standard of living and denies them access to essential goods and activities (QCOSS, 2008)<sup>4</sup>.*

**Recommendation:**

*Social inclusion strategies to be implemented more broadly:* Supports that increase one's sense of belonging, participation and inclusion in a social and health enhancing sense within a community are recommended. Strategies that increase one's personal capacity, capabilities and resilience and that better enable community participation and inclusion should be prioritised.

**Recommendation:**

*Increased crisis accommodation and safe spaces:* Greatly increased provision and availability of crisis accommodation services and safe spaces for children and youth

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<sup>4</sup> QCOSS Policy Position (December 2008). *Poverty and Social Exclusion*.

generally are required. This urgent need is more specifically in regional and remote areas. This will also need to be followed with appropriate transitional housing.

**Recommendation:**

*Prioritise crisis accommodation and safe spaces that meet individual family needs:* Families with children escaping domestic and family violence require safe spaces that provide appropriate emotional support for all members. A particular challenge for many refuges and other crisis accommodation services (especially those with a woman-centred framework) is to house adolescent males with their mothers given many refuges restrict accommodating males above the age of 15 or 16 years. Accessing culturally appropriate crisis accommodation can also be very challenging.

**Recommendation:**

*Provide local solutions to local problems:* There needs to be a greater focus on long-term service provision for those at risk or vulnerable to homelessness that enables and empowers local or community ownership and responsibility of effective programs and services. This is particularly important in remote Aboriginal communities. Culturally appropriate and timely strategies or programs that support those with complex needs (such as for family feuding or family violence) requires improved prioritising to minimise intergenerational affects of violence, incarceration, homelessness or overcrowding.

**Recommendation:**

*The human rights of homeless people need to be acknowledged and prioritised:* Marginalised community members who are vulnerable to homelessness have the right to be respected and valued. This is critical if socially inclusive best practice policies are to be imbedded in socially inclusive practices, such as the right to a safe home. Given ex-offenders/those who have been imprisoned are over-represented in all forms of homelessness, (with many having complex needs) they require specific attention.

**Recommendation:**

*Audit of Government Departments involved in Social Housing re Discriminatory Policies:* To minimise discriminatory practices in Social Housing in WA, the Equal Opportunity Commission (or other appropriate agency) could engage in an audit of all government agencies (in the first instance) for discriminatory policies (and subsequent practice) toward vulnerable/marginalised members of the community.

Considering Outcare's core goals are to effectively support offenders, ex-offenders and their families, this submission unashamedly prioritises their needs, but also acknowledges that the whole community benefits from this focus.