

Legislative Council



MEDIA RELEASE

27 November 2012

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS Petition Number 137: Emergency Accommodation for the Homeless

On the 2011 Census night, it was estimated that 9,592 people in Western Australia were homeless.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs tabled its 28th report in the Legislative Council today. The report is a response to Petition Number 137, tabled on 27 September 2011. The petition requests that the Legislative Council urge the Government of Western Australia to provide more emergency accommodation for citizens found to be in lack of adequate shelter and to take the steps necessary to increase the supply of affordable housing to which these people can transfer when leaving emergency accommodation.

The causes of homelessness are complex, interrelated and multi-dimensional. As such, strategies designed to reduce homelessness must be holistic. For example, emergency homelessness services are just a first step to addressing homelessness.

Providers of accommodation and services to the homeless have indicated to the Committee that the “*housing affordability crisis*” in this state is forcing people who have not previously been homeless or at risk of homelessness to access specialist homelessness services, either to maintain their current housing arrangements or find new accommodation. These providers were of the view that current initiatives were having a positive effect but more needs to be done.

The Committee agreed with the tenor of the petition and made the following recommendations:

1. The Committee recommends that the Government work with homelessness accommodation and service providers to address the instances of unmet need identified by these providers.

2. The Committee recommends that the Government, as a matter of urgency, establish a centralised referral service for people presenting with homelessness issues. This service should feature real-time updating and be accessible by all members of the public, including people seeking homelessness accommodation and services, specialist homelessness accommodation and service providers, relevant government departments and hospitals.
3. The Committee recommends that the Government, as a matter of urgency, either provide or source the full range of affordable and homelessness accommodation which is suitable for housing families.
4. The Committee recommends that, for every initiative designed to address homelessness in Western Australia and for which the Government has a role, the Government provide the Parliament with the following information:
 - (a) A short description of each initiative.
 - (b) Whether the initiative is being funded by the State Government, Federal Government and/or the private sector.
 - (c) The individual amounts being contributed by each source of funding for each initiative.
 - (d) The timeframe for each initiative.
 - (e) The types of people targeted by each initiative.
 - (f) The anticipated outcomes of each initiative in meaningful terms, such as the number of people, and groups of people, who could be housed by an accommodation project and the types and quantities of homelessness accommodation it would provide.
 - (g) The anticipated net effect of each initiative in meaningful terms.

A copy of the report can be obtained from the Committee Clerk (details below) or viewed on the Parliament's website (www.parliament.wa.gov.au).

For media inquiries, contact the Chair of the Committee, Hon Brian Ellis MLC, on 9222 7890 (Parliament House), 9923 9211 (Electorate Office) or 0429 082 332 (Mobile).

Other inquiries should be addressed to Mr Mark Warner, Committee Clerk, on 9222 7410 or mwarner@parliament.wa.gov.au.