Opening doors to affordable inner city housing

WA leads the way at the National Housing Conference

Competition inspires creative interpretations of home

Artist’s impression of the One on Aberdeen Street development
Opening doors to affordable inner city housing

The commencement of construction on the new 168-unit One on Aberdeen development in the heart of Perth is demonstrating how the Department is leveraging public-private partnerships to provide more affordable housing for Western Australians.

At the sod-turning ceremony, Director General Grahame Searle said the project would deliver high quality, affordable housing to support the state’s Affordable Housing Strategy of providing a minimum of 20,000 new homes by 2020.

Mr Searle said One on Aberdeen was significant as affordable housing in the inner city was in great demand, and the development had already proven very popular.

“A total of 156 units have already been pre-committed before construction began, and in light of recent market conditions, this is an excellent outcome,” he said.

“This affordable development will help increase the number of residents and key workers in the inner city and help to inject greater vibrancy and activity in the CBD.

“One on Aberdeen will be well-situated to Perth’s City Link project - allowing tenants easy access to improved connectivity, public transport, increased residential, retail and commercial opportunities and public open spaces.

“This partnership with Diploma Properties represents an innovative departure from how the Department has done business in the past.

“Rather than secure a capital expenditure allocation from the State Government, the Department, using its land, underwrote the building and helped to de-risk the project. This then allowed Diploma to secure debt and equity finance for the construction of the building,” Mr Searle said.

“The Department understood the challenges faced by the private sector and has been innovatively working with Diploma throughout every step of the process.

“From a piece of land worth around $6 million, the Department and its partner will deliver a $73 million commercial/residential project in a prime inner city location.

“This represents excellent value for the taxpayer and a wonderful opportunity for our private sector partner, Diploma.”

Halls Creek seniors enjoy brand new homes

Despite being pension-age, some of the residents of the Department’s recently rebuilt Lumboo Pensioner Village in Halls Creek have never had a real home.

Some of the elderly Aboriginal people who have moved into the village lived in outlying communities, and for others the ‘long grass’ was home.

Commenting on the opening of the new development, Mel Croke, who was Regional Manager of Halls Creek before relocating to Fremantle recently, said the new facility was a cause for celebration.

“Some of the pensioners who were originally housed at Lumboo Pensioner Village were moved due to plumbing and drainage problems,” Ms Croke said.

“With funding from the Commonwealth’s Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, the Department was able to demolish the old units and completely rebuild the site with 22 beautiful new units.”

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WA leads the way at the National Housing Conference in Brisbane

The Queensland Government has announced that it plans to adopt elements of the Disruptive Behaviour Strategy developed by the Department of Housing in Western Australia. The news was reported in the Courier Mail as the 7th National Housing Conference kicked off in Brisbane late last year.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) and the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works co-hosted the conference, held from 30 October to 2 November at the Brisbane Convention Centre.

Opening the conference, then Queensland Housing Minister, Bruce Flegg, said he had recently visited WA and been impressed with some of the state’s initiatives, a view he and other delegates reiterated several times over the course of the conference.

At a breakfast later in the week a representative of tenant advocate group National Shelter acknowledged “WA’s innovative role in land development and joint venture” while discussing the sustainability of old funding models for public housing.

The Department’s General Manager of Service Delivery, Steve Parry, said the unsustainability of traditional public housing funding models emerged as a major sub-theme of the conference.

“It is really great to see that some of the original tenants have been able to move back in.”

The new village consists of 14 pensioner units as well as six units for singles and two caretaker units.

Four residents of the original village moved back into the new complex. The rest of the units were tenanted from the Department’s wait list.

At the opening of the village recently, tenants who have never had a home of their own were very appreciative and happy to be in their ‘own place’.

“The project presented some unique challenges throughout the construction phase, and the logistics of managing a project of this size in a remote location like Halls Creek provided a few headaches as well,” said Patricia Hedges, Project Manager for the construction of the development.

“We were able to successfully overcome these challenges though, and the Department has produced an outstanding facility that has really benefitted the local community.”

For this development, the Department ensured that the site layout worked around rather than disturbed the existing mature trees on the site.

“Our Landscape Manager, Wayne Reid, used innovative landscaping ideas to enhance the development for residents,” Ms Hedges said.

“Plants have been used to create a seasonal supply of bush food for residents and visitors to enjoy for a long time to come.”
The Department of Housing has celebrated its centenary year during 2012 with a number of activities and events taking place throughout the state. One such activity was the What Home Means to Me children’s competition which was run state-wide.

Manager of Communications and Marketing, John Liston, said that the competition encouraged tenants’ children to explore the reasons why home is important to them and to creatively reflect their interpretation through a drawing, painting, poem, video or song.

“We were very pleased with the quality of entries across the three age categories,” he said.

“Entries were received from across the state with the theme of family very strong through all entries.

“The winners really showed judges the importance of home and having a safe place to live with their family.”

Joint winners of the 5-7 year old category were Olivia Valvve of Canning Vale and Sienna Geraghty of Denmark. Winner of the 8-11 year old category was Stacey Lavis from Nollamara, and winner of the 12-17 year old category was Brayden English from Wanneroo.

Olivia Valvve was presented her prize by Cannington Regional Manager Sally Farnham. She was delighted to receive her prize of a Nintendo Wii and excited about setting it up when she got home.

Ms Farnham said that it was great to be given the opportunity to interact positively with someone that the Department has helped.

“It was great to meet Olivia and her family and see the smile on her face when I presented her with her prize,” she said.

Ken Carter, Regional Manager, Great Southern, made the trip from Albany to Denmark to present Sienna Geraghty her prize. Mr Carter said that Sienna and her older sisters were delighted with the prize and were excited to compete against each other on the Wii.

“Sienna was very shy at first, though very polite, but became more at ease during our visit,” he said.

“Donna, her mum, was really pleased to see us present the Wii first prize with the framed drawing, poem and certificate.”

John Pynes, Mirrabooka Regional Manager, was lucky to have two prize winners in his region – Stacey Lavis and Brayden English.

“I am really pleased that the Department gave tenants’ children an opportunity to be involved in a great competition,” Mr Pynes said.

“It really highlights the importance of housing and it is great to see that the young winners recognise this.

“The winning entries were really heartfelt and it was great to have an opportunity to meet the families and hear their stories.”

The goal of delivering more affordable housing in the Pilbara has taken a major step forward with the commencement of civil works at the Osprey subdivision in South Hedland.

The Department of Housing project will produce 366 lots for housing within the urban zoned portion of the 165-hectare Osprey site.

Department of Housing Executive Director Land and Housing Construction, Tony DeBarro, said there had already been significant progress made on the development.

“Stage one will deliver 111 lots to help ease the critical housing shortage in Hedland and planning is under way to make another 255 lots available.

“Additional lots are planned for the rural portion of the site, which is currently subject to rezoning,” Mr DeBarro said.

The Osprey subdivision will deliver a number of affordable housing outcomes, including public rental housing, as well as land and home purchase opportunities. It is anticipated that lots in stage one of the project will be released for sale ‘off the plan’ in early 2013.
There has been strong interest from small businesses in the Department’s registrations of interest (ROI) process for service worker accommodation in Hedland.

A total of 350 applications were received during the first round of registrations as part of the Hedland 125 House Service Worker Intervention Package, announced last June.

The ROI invited small businesses operating in Hedland to apply for accommodation for their employees. Businesses that were eligible for the housing were verified and approved by an Allocation Committee consisting of key stakeholders from the Port Hedland community.

A panel beating firm was the first small business in South Hedland to be allocated a Department of Housing property for one of its employees in September 2012.

A total of 54 businesses now have their service worker staff accommodated in a range of two, three and four bedroom dwellings in South Hedland,” Department of Housing Executive Director Housing Programs Peter Lonsdale said.

“The Department has contracted with community housing growth provider Foundation Housing to manage a total of 125 properties that will be delivered under this program by early 2013.”

Local businesses that missed out on registering their interest in the first round of applications were given a second chance to apply with the ROI closing on 7 December last year.

“As part of this initiative, the Department will deliver 80 newly constructed dwellings, while 45 dwellings have been provided from existing stock in Hedland to house service workers that may otherwise have been forced to relocate,” Mr Lonsdale said.
Lime Street opens its doors

The $30.6 million Lime Street development in East Perth was recently opened by Premier Colin Barnett and Federal Defence Minister Stephen Smith.

The seven-storey development, to be run by St Bart’s, will provide 148 beds for a wide range of clients including people on the Department of Housing’s wait list, those in crisis, homeless men and seniors. The development is made up of 54 one-bedroom residential units, 12 one-bedroom crisis units, 42 transitional housing beds and a 40-bed aged care facility.

Acting Director Housing Programs, Peter Lonsdale, said that funding for the project has been provided by the State ($22.3 million), Lotterywest ($2.8 million), the Commonwealth ($7.3 million) and St Bart’s ($1 million).

“State funding was allocated through the State Community Housing Investment Program (SCHIP) which allocates funds to community housing projects,” Mr Lonsdale said.

“St Bart’s received an additional $750,000 Jobs Fund Grant for energy saving initiatives including solar panels, wind pods, storm water collection initiatives, window treatments and water saving plumbing devices.”

The development site is owned by the East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA), with St Bart’s entering into a 40-year lease of the site with EPRA at a peppercorn rent.

Project management of the development was undertaken by Appian Group and construction was by the Northerly Group.

Mr Lonsdale said that the Department of Housing had worked successfully with St Bart’s since 1992 through its Community Housing programs.

“In partnership with the Department of Housing, St Bart’s currently manages a total of 184 properties across Perth,” he said.

“Thirty-three of these are provided to those at risk of homelessness under the Crisis Accommodation Program.

“A further 140 properties accommodate people under the Community Disability Housing Program and another 11 properties are provided under the Community Housing Program.

“With the completion of the Lime Street development, St Bart’s accommodation capacity will almost double.”

Mr Lonsdale said that this development is one of many inner-city accommodation options which the Department of Housing is currently working on.

“We are also working with the Salvation Army to provide accommodation for 102 homeless men and with a large consortium of government departments and not-for-profit organisations to build the first purpose built Foyer Project in Leederville,” he said.

“A $16.8 million social housing complex on Newcastle Street, Northbridge, managed by Foundation Housing, has also been recently completed, adding 44 beds for those in need.

“The Department is involved in some really exciting projects in the CBD at the moment which will provide quality accommodation for low income earners close to a range of services including health care, education and employment.”

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Department recognised as top Defence Reserves employer

The Department’s valuable commitment to staff contributing to the nation’s defence has earned it the WA Employer Award in the State Government category at a recent state awards ceremony.

Duncan Mackay, General Manager, Organisational Transformation, said that reservists gave up a lot of their own time in their military service, and the Department made a point of allowing them access to military leave.

The Department’s employees were provided with leave to attend courses, participate in training exercises and become involved in military operations such as the regional assistance mission in the Solomon Islands and the security arrangements for the 2011 CHOGM conference.

New branch catering to customer needs in the northern suburbs

The new Department of Housing office in Joondalup was officially opened in October last year to service the needs of residents in Perth’s growing northern corridor.

Establishing the branch has already enhanced the quality of service given to customers living in the North Metropolitan region.

“The presence in Joondalup will help to address the challenges of a growing population, and meet the increase in demand for services to be located closer to the client base,” the Department of Housing’s Service Delivery Manager Steve Parry said.

“Location was an important factor in finding the right office space and the branch is conveniently positioned within walking distance of public transport.”

Mr Parry said the ease of access to public transport had reduced travel time for customers who previously had to visit the Department’s Mirrabooka office.

The new Joondalup branch provides services to 32 suburbs in the City of Joondalup and City of Wanneroo, as far north as Two Rocks and Butler.

In recognising the significance of the Department’s expansion into Perth’s northern corridor, Mr Parry said he was pleased that local residents now have greater access to the Department’s housing services.

The new office on Wise Street was designed by Christou Design and the fit-out was completed by Oaklane Projects.

Department of Housing staff at the new Joondalup office
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