An aerial photograph of a residential area. In the center, there is a large, multi-story government housing complex with several interconnected blocks. Surrounding this complex are various other buildings, including smaller houses and larger structures, along with roads and green spaces. The overall scene depicts a dense urban or suburban environment.

A THEMATIC HISTORY OF  
**GOVERNMENT HOUSING**  
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
FINAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2014  
CLARE MENCK HISTORIAN

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Clare Menck asserts her moral right to be identified as the author of this work as a whole and in all its parts.

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*Cover Photograph: Bentley Housing Project, including Brownlie Towers, near to completion, November 1970*  
*Source: State Library of Western Australia, Item 263171PD, by courtesy of Aerial Surveys Australia*

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by the Department of Housing (DOH) to provide a framework for considering the heritage value of government housing owned by the Department.

Detailed study was made of annual reports of DOH and its preceding agencies. Extensive secondary sources were consulted to place this analysis in context. The historic narrative that emerged was then examined to identify themes that would highlight areas of importance in the story.

An extensive and diverse history has emerged. Government housing began in the nineteenth century with accommodation for government employees. From 1912 the Workers' Homes Board provided finance schemes to assist low-income workers into home ownership. Depression conditions in the 1930s led to the formation of the McNess Housing Trust to provide homes for the very poor. By the 1940s, Australia was desperately short of housing and as a result the Commonwealth intervened with funding for government rental housing, the beginning of 'public housing'. The State Housing Commission (SHC) replaced the Workers' Homes Board. Large numbers of houses were subsequently constructed in the post-war decade, including whole new suburbs of government housing. These government housing estates continued to be constructed through to the early 1980s. From the mid-1970s, they began to be 'renewed', initially as a way to increase housing densities. In the 1990s, renewal shifted its focus towards reducing government presence and upgrading housing stock for sale, which continues to the present. Instead of government suburbs, new housing was built or purchased to be scattered through residential areas. While rental properties are still provided, government policy has shifted back towards financing low-income home ownership.

Government employees housing, initially somewhat ad hoc and provided by individual agencies, was centralised from the 1960s with the formation of the Government Employees Housing Authority, now part of DOH. Aboriginal housing was initially the responsibility of the Department of Native Welfare. It was segregated and poorly serviced. Once the SHC took over Aboriginal housing in 1972, it began very slowly moving closer to mainstream housing, a process still being refined to the present. Both government employee housing and Aboriginal housing were a significant part of the expansion of government housing into the Northwest, which began in the 1940s and escalated from the mid-1960s.

Government housing began as free-standing family homes. In the post-war years, duplexes and then small groups of flats emerged, as the client base was expanded to include smaller family units and aged persons. From the late 1950s, the rate of medium-density government housing increased and by the late 1960s a small amount of high density housing had even been constructed. However, blocks of flats went out of favour in the mid-1970s and subsequently town houses became more common. As the client base was expanded in the 1980s to include singles, disabled persons and youth, a range of smaller housing options were developed. Community Housing programs also began in this period. In the past decade, high rise has again been tried for some government housing.

Both quantifiable and qualitative themes have been identified for assessing government housing. Quantifiable themes are: construction period, building materials, housing type, building style, client group, location, type of housing assistance and planning approach. Qualitative themes can be grouped as government policy, town planning, design & construction, external influences & events, housing for particular workers, experience of residents, social & community services and SHC's influence on Australian society.

It is recommended that this thematic framework be adopted as the basis for future analysis of government housing's heritage values. Follow-up work is required to identify specific places that demonstrate the key themes identified in this report and to determine a representative sample that best tells the story of government housing in Western Australia.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

In 2014, the Department of Housing (DOH) commissioned this thematic history to provide a framework for considering the heritage value of their housing stock.

Under the Government Heritage Property Disposal Process (GHPDP), DOH is required to refer properties to the Heritage Council of WA (HCWA) if they are proposed for demolition, disposal, or significant development, and meet one of three criteria: (1) they are over sixty years old, (2) they are on an existing heritage list, or (3) they display evidence of potential significance for aesthetic, historic, social or scientific value, rarity or representativeness.

As an increasing number of DOH properties are over sixty years old, the first criterion is regularly met, but insufficient information has been available to determine the potential value of places referred to HCWA.

The purpose of this report is to provide information that can be used in considering DOH referrals. It is also intended to identify themes that may clarify which places have 'potential significance' under the third GHPDP criterion.

### 2.2 HOW THE REPORT IS ARRANGED

This report is arranged as a reference document. It is anticipated very few people will read it end-to-end. For those requiring a quick orientation to the story of government housing, a historical overview begins the report ([Section 3](#)). It also links themes to each chapter.

Information in the narrative sections is arranged chronologically overall. Chronological sections mostly do not have precise start and end dates but on the whole after World War Two cover about ten years from the middle of one decade to the middle of the next. Although aligning with calendar decades would be neater, this would create artificial divisions, as on the whole major themes have run across decade ends. However, any partitioning of periods is imprecise, as the scale of DOH operations means different themes have different chronological 'break' points.

Themes that emerge strongly in a particular period have been given sub-sections within the chapter for that period (for example, Housing for Industry in the 1940s-1950s chapter; Housing for the Elderly in the 1950s-1960s chapter). Information on these themes continues within their subheadings even if it goes beyond the chronology of the main chapter, as in both these examples.

Four separate chapters have also been included for themes that run across the majority of the history: Aboriginal Housing, Government Employee Housing, Northwest Housing and Country Housing.

A subject index is provided ([Section 23](#)) to allow searching for themes that appear across periods and in different sections.

A timeline of some aspects of the history is included in graphical form at [Section 4.1](#).

Analysis of DOH's property holdings as at 31 May 2014 is summarised at the end of each chapter. It is included in detail at [Section 24.6](#). As this section contains confidential information it has been omitted from the copy of the report that is publically available. Readers wishing to access this detailed information should contact DOH for permission.

## 2.3 KEY THEMES

This story of government housing covers over one hundred years of Western Australian history. It covers both rental and home purchase schemes; includes housing for a diverse range of clients such as families, elderly persons, youth, individuals with disabilities, singles, and the homeless; outlines one hundred years of changes to design and materials; and, addresses many waves of changing government policies and planning philosophies. As such, a very large number of themes have been identified as relevant.

Eight 'quantifiable' themes have been identified as first-instance ways to compare and assess DOH properties: construction period, building materials, housing type, building style, client group, location, type of housing assistance and planning approach.

The Australian Heritage Council's (AHC) extensive thematic framework has also been considered. Seventy-five existing themes were identified as relevant and another 31 specific to this project added to the AHC list. These have been sorted into eight thematic groups: government policy, town planning, design & construction, external influences & events, housing for particular workers, experience of residents, social & community services and SHC's influence on Australian society.

The Heritage Council's (HCWA) themes have also been considered. Forty-five are identified as in some way relevant to the history of government housing, which amounts to almost all the HCWA themes.

Relevant AHC themes, including the 31 additions, are noted in the Historical Overview ([Section 3](#)) at the start of each section. They are listed in their thematic groups at [Section 5.2](#).

Both AHC and HCWA themes are listed in more detail in the Appendices at [Section 24.5](#).

## 2.4 METHODOLOGY

The research was undertaken by Clare Menck, Historian, in 2014. The main primary source was the annual reports of DOH and its preceding agencies. Secondary sources were then consulted to provide context, alternate viewpoints and more detail, and a comprehensive narrative was produced.

The narrative was then assessed in the context of existing AHC and HCWA thematic frameworks. Several themes specific to DOH history were also added.

DOH's property database as at 31 May 2014 was, where possible, analysed in response to the historical narrative and summaries of current stock added to the report. Themes that relate to less tangible matters, however, could not be correlated with the database, as relevant information has not been recorded in property lists.

Both DOH and the State Heritage Office (SHO) were given the opportunity to review the document and provided written and verbal feedback, which was incorporated into the final report.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS

A history of government housing in Western Australia must consider both properties used for government rental and those purchased by low-income occupants through the many government-supported home ownership schemes. From the perspective of the Department of Housing dealing with its aging assets, the history of rental properties is paramount. However, a more holistic view of the history of public housing, as would be expected by the State Heritage Office, needs to also consider examples of privately owned properties that were built and/or financed by government housing initiatives. This report has included information on both, but has largely focused on rental properties, particularly in more recent periods.

This report has not considered the government provision of institutional accommodation, such as by the education, health, child welfare or justice departments, as these facilities have at no time been part of the responsibility of DOH or its preceding agencies. The report also excludes Federal government housing initiatives, including housing for Commonwealth employees and much remote Aboriginal housing, unless the programs were administered or jointly funded by the various State housing agencies.

As the report has a heritage focus, it does not provide a detailed organisational history of DOH and its preceding agencies. The social history of the experience of living in government housing has also not been explored in any depth, although this would be a valuable addition to the recorded story of the State. It is recommended that a social history, including oral histories from former tenants, be considered by DOH as a future project.

Archival files of DOH and preceding agencies have on the whole not been accessed. They are very extensive and pursuing detailed research at this level was beyond the scope of this project. It is recommended that these archival records be accessed if further research is required for specific places.

A comprehensive gathering of standard housing plans has not been pursued. Although in many periods the SHC operated with a relatively limited plan set compared with the number of residences erected, these plans changed over time and a full collection would run to many hundreds of plans. Examples included are mostly from SHC annual reports and are likely to be representative examples.

## 2.6 TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this report, 'government housing' includes all government-funded housing administered by the State government.

'Department of Housing' (DOH) is used for discussion of the present. In earlier periods, the name of the agency at that time is used. When speaking of an historic theme or period that covers several agency names, 'State Housing Commission' (SHC) is used, as this was the longest-lasting agency name. Changes in the main housing agency name are listed chronologically at [Section 24.3](#) and key agencies are also included in the thematic timeline at [Section 4.1](#).

A glossary is provided at [Section 24.1](#) for words that may have specific meanings within this history. A list of abbreviations follows at [Section 24.2](#).

## 2.7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### 3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*This chapter provides an overview of the history of state government housing in Western Australia. All information is fully referenced in the more detailed chapters that follow. Section headings in this chapter match later chapter headings. In the electronic document, there are hyperlinks to the relevant chapter. The following themes apply to the entire history and are not repeated at each section:*

*Living in and around Australian homes*

*Living in cities and suburbs*

*Living in the country and rural settlements*

*Financing Australia*

*Making suburbs*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Living in rental accommodation (from 1940s)*

*Caring for workers' dependent children*

*Working in the home*

Housing is a significant aspect of identity at many levels. Personal, family, community and national 'sense of self' both inform and are shaped by the buildings we live within. Our homes are where most of us spend the majority of our lives. A house provides not only shelter but also a place of work, education, production, leisure and social interaction, especially for those who do not leave the house for paid employment, such as pensioners, home-makers and children.

Australia has one of the highest rates of home-ownership in the world. Our culture values home ownership very highly, often at the expense of legitimating alternate housing arrangements, and government policy over many years has provided incentives to continue the cultural emphasis on home ownership. For the past fifty years, around 70% of Australians have been owner-occupants of the homes they dwell in.<sup>1</sup>

Despite high home ownership levels, however, many Australians continue to rent their homes. For some this is a lifestyle choice. For many others it is a financial necessity. Government engagement with provision of housing began with schemes to support home ownership, but developed into also providing government rental accommodation. Through the twentieth century, this rental housing became increasingly important as a housing option for those on very low incomes who struggled to access the private housing market, as renters or buyers.

It has been noted that a house serves in many ways as 'a symbol of self'. Makeshift, temporary, run-down or non-conventional housing has often caused both the general public and the residents of such housing to view occupants of poor accommodation as 'no good'. Conversely, providing access to good quality housing has been taken as a symbol of public and government care.<sup>2</sup>

In the nineteenth century, government housing was provided only to some government employees. After World War One, Britain introduced public rental housing schemes, but it was another quarter of a century

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1301.0~2012-Main%20Features~Home%20Owners%20and%20Renters-129> accessed 1 July 2014

<sup>2</sup> Ross, Helen, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, Peter (ed), *Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000, p.14, quoting Clare Cooper

before Australian governments entered into rental housing.<sup>3</sup> The creation of the Workers' Homes Board in 1912 was the first Western Australian government initiative to provide housing support, in the form of home-purchase schemes. All other Australian States also legislated some form of government housing scheme between 1910 and 1919 - Queensland (1910, the first), South Australia (1910), New South Wales (1912), Victoria (1914) and Tasmania (1919). The schemes, all initiated under Labor governments, focused on home ownership, and attempted early rental programs in Victoria and New South Wales largely failed.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1 FORMATION OF THE WORKERS' HOMES BOARD (1911-1914) ([SECTION 6](#))

*Themes:*

*Engaging with housing policy through government*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Forming families and partnerships*

*Financing Australia*

The Workers' Homes Board (WHB) began operations in 1912 with the *Workers' Homes Act*. The Board was formed with bi-partisan support to provide home-purchase schemes for low-income workers, in response to high costs of living. Homes were offered under two schemes, one where the government retained title to the land while occupants slowly purchased the house ('Part III' or 'Leasehold' homes) and the other where the occupant purchased both home and land or, in some cases, used government support to build on land they already owned ('Part IV' or 'Freehold' homes).

The Board offered a range of standard designs for homes built under its schemes. Part III homes were often built by departmental labour, while Part IV homes were supervised by the department but appear to have mostly been built privately. Homes were modest, although compared to government housing in later periods they were not so different to general housing standards of the time.

### 3.2 WORLD WAR ONE (1914-1918) ([SECTION 7](#))

*Themes:*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Servicepersons returning into the community*

Construction of WHB homes virtually stopped during World War One. After the war, applications were accepted only from country areas until 1924.

From 1918, Commonwealth legislation provided housing assistance to returned servicepersons on more generous terms than WHB schemes. The War Service Homes scheme was also a home-purchase program, but had wider eligibility and allowed applicants to build larger, more expensive homes. The Commonwealth arrangement was administered in Western Australia by the WHB from 1920. The Board,

<sup>3</sup> Troy, Patrick, *Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing*, Federation Press, Sydney, 2012, pp.7, 16-17

<sup>4</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.20-24

and later the State Housing Commission (SHC), continued this function until 1973. Through the 1920s and 1930s, War Service Homes accounted for the majority of government housing provided in the State.

### 3.3 SUPPORTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT (1920S) ([SECTION 8](#))

*Themes:*

*Promoting Settlement*

*Making settlements to serve rural Australia*

*Developing agricultural industries*

*Developing and applying standard plans*

In the early 1920s, lack of capital and high building costs restricted government housing schemes. However, as conditions improved, WHB increased the number of housing applications it approved.

A major aspect of WHB work in the 1920s was provision of timber cottages to support the Group Settlement Scheme through the Southwest. The Board also increased its involvement in government employee housing, as an ad hoc service to other departments rather than a coordinated employee housing program.

### 3.4 DEPRESSION (1930S) ([SECTION 9](#))

*Themes:*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Creating capital cities*

*Coping with unemployment*

*Developing and applying standard plans*

*Learning to live with property booms and busts*

*Providing temporary housing – sustenance workers*

The 1930s saw Western Australia reeling from the impacts of the global Depression, followed by several years of drought. As a result, the number of applicants for WHB home purchase schemes dropped away. Although the government increased its funding for WHB construction as a stimulus measure for the building industry, the number of homes built still declined.

The Group Settlement Scheme was by the 1930s recognised as largely a failure, with many settlers leaving their land. WHB re-purchased many Group Settlement cottages, relocated them to towns, renovated and extended them, and sold them on to WHB applicants. By the late 1930s, WHB was demonstrating reluctance to approve new WHB residences in country areas, with the focus of its programs shifting to the gradually expanding Perth Metropolitan area.

From 1912 right up to the 1940s, all WHB residences were single detached homes. Although the Board had a preference for building in timber, as it was cheaper and therefore more accessible for low-income applicants, many Metropolitan councils did not permit timber homes in the 1930s. As a result, most Metropolitan WHB homes of the period were brick, but many country homes were timber.

The first WHB residences to be built in the Eastern Goldfields were at Kalgoorlie-Boulder, from 1935-36. Prior to this, WHB operated only in the Metropolitan and Country areas (Wheatbelt-Midwest-Southwest-Great Southern).

Despite high levels of unemployment and resulting housing pressures, the government did not extend its general housing assistance beyond home purchase schemes. It did arrange deferments and attempted to assist residents to remain in the WHB homes, but many homes were also repossessed.

Following a donation from philanthropist Charles McNess, the government also administered a Housing Trust to provide homes for poor and indigent applicants.

### 3.4.1 MCNESS HOUSING TRUST (1930-1968) (SECTION 9.1)

*Themes:*

- Significant individuals – Charles McNess*
- Providing services and welfare*
- Being poor/living with poverty*
- Looking after the infirm and the aged*
- Utilising Lotteries funding*
- Living as women in Australian society*
- Developing and applying standard plans*
- Increasing residential density – duplexes and early flats*
- Living as single-parent families*
- Helping people*

The McNess Housing Trust was a Depression-era initiative of Charles McNess, a local businessman and philanthropist. His initial donations were supplemented by government and Lotteries funding. After McNess' death in 1938, half his residual estate was bequeathed to the Trust, at which point it was named after him.

McNess homes were provided to aged pensioners, invalid pensioners, and widows or deserted wives with young children. Due to these eligibility criteria, the Trust housed more women than men. Occupants slowly purchased their homes, on very long timeframes with fixed low repayment amounts. Some who could not pay were granted free life tenancy, with the housing returning to McNess stock on their departure or death.

The number of McNess homes was not great, in comparison to total houses built in the State, with fewer than 200 homes built before construction stopped during World War Two. However, the Trust was the first government venture into what was later referred to as 'welfare housing' - provision of stable, secure, government-assisted accommodation for those who could afford to neither purchase a home nor pay private rental rates.

It appears all McNess homes in the 1930s were built using one standard plan, the 'Type 7', which was a four-room timber cottage. New designs were introduced from around 1940. After World War Two, duplexes and small groups of flats were built for the Trust. It appears no free-standing single detached McNess homes were built after the war.

The McNess Housing Trust continued operations until it was merged into the SHC in 1968, as its functions were by that time essentially replicated by the SHC's programs. By this time, the Trust retained 285 housing units in the State (less than it had constructed, as some had been fully paid off by occupants). Of these, 112 were flats in two large complexes for elderly women, Southlea South Perth (1960-61) and Westlea Cottesloe (1963-64).

### 3.5 WORLD WAR TWO AND THE END OF THE WHB (1939-1947) ([SECTION 10](#))

*Themes:*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Servicepersons returning into the community*

*Providing services to support industrial development*

*Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*

*Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

World War Two caused both a labour and materials shortage at home. It also saw government funding channelled into the war effort. Private construction was halted in 1942, and all WHB projects where building works had not already commenced were deferred. The only WHB housing constructed for two years was a small number of residences for workers in regional areas.

During the war years, plans were prepared at Commonwealth level for a large-scale government response to an anticipated housing crisis. The Depression had seen house construction drop behind housing need and as the war intervened this housing need could not be met, but fell further behind. It was also anticipated that returning servicepersons would want to obtain their own homes, where many had lived with their parents prior to enlisting.

The result of wartime planning saw a much bigger government housing program forecast, for which the WHB was not equipped. New legislation in 1946 (*State Housing Act*) brought the WHB to a close and replaced it from 1947 with a bigger, more powerful agency, the State Housing Commission (SHC).

### 3.6 POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION (1940S-1950S) ([SECTION 11](#))

*Themes:*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Forming families and partnerships*

*Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

*Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Being homeless*

*Applying international ideas to Australian contexts – Garden City planning*

*Migrating*

*Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration*

*Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity*

*Planning urban settlements*

*Creating capital cities*

*Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities*

*Organising workers and work places*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – first duplex; first two-storey flats*

*Supplying urban services*

*Significant individuals – Margaret Feilman*

As anticipated during the war years, the return to a nearly stalled domestic economy of hundreds of servicepersons, many of whom were at a life-stage of forming new households, resulted in a housing crisis. Further, from 1947, Australia began accepting large numbers of immigrants, initially from Britain and then from the displaced persons camps of Europe.

Housing was an issue of peak public concern, reflected in it featuring in the newspapers almost daily, and resulting in a Royal Commission in 1947-48 into the work of the SHC. The Royal Commission found that, despite some anomalies, the SHC was doing its best under very difficult circumstances.

In order to provide land for its expanding building program, the SHC in the 1940s and 1950s resumed significant portions of land, which caused public complaint but was not reversed.

Increased attention to town planning in the post-war years saw many government housing developments designed using Garden City principles. Some of the earliest WHB/SHC towns or suburbs to use Garden City design were Wundowie (1944), Hurlingham Estate South Perth (1945), Hilton (1945) and Manning (1948).

By the early 1950s, the supply of building materials was improving and by the mid-1950s the housing 'crisis' was generally considered to be over. The SHC, under its various schemes, constructed 41% of all residences built in the State between 1945 and 1956.

Most homes built in the post-war decade were single detached residences. The first duplex was built in 1945, at Bassendean, although few followed except for McNess residences. Two-storey blocks of flats were also erected in small numbers from 1948, generally in complexes of six or eight units. The immediate post-war houses were largely brick but by the 1950s the proportion of timber-framed homes was increasing, clad in either asbestos cement, timber or a combination of both.

### 3.6.1 FIRST COMMONWEALTH-STATE RENTAL HOUSING SCHEME (1943-1956) (SECTION 11.1)

#### *Themes:*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

*Recruiting labour*

*Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*

*Living in rental accommodation*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems – pre-fabricated Austrian houses; expandable houses*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Being homeless*

*Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration – bonded workers inc Austrian pre-fabrication teams*

*Forming families and partnerships*

*Living as single-parent families*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – lower ceilings*

The main government housing initiative of the immediate post-war period was the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*. Between 1944 and 1949, 71% of homes built by the SHC were for this scheme.

This Commonwealth-funded scheme provided rental homes, for which the government retained ownership. The SHC administered the scheme for Western Australia, including designing and building most of the houses. Many were constructed in large groups, creating the earliest 'public housing estates'.

The first of these rental homes were erected late in 1944, at Collie and Boyup Brook, with Metropolitan homes to follow in Joondanna (1944) and Claremont (Graylands) (1945). Bassendean and South Perth followed later in 1945.

Commonwealth-State rental homes were generally four- or five-room single detached houses. Commonwealth regulations dictated they were to have 9'6" (2.9m) ceilings, which caused some dispute, as it was perceived to be too low, but was eventually accepted as standard. A range of SHC-drawn standard plans was used for housing in this period.

Plans were drawn from the 1940s for 'expandable' homes, which had a bare minimum of rooms and allowance for additions as funds permitted and family sizes increased.

In 1951, 900 pre-fabricated timber homes were imported from Austria to be erected by Austrian workers. The first 450 were erected at Willagee in 1952.

Changes to rental law in 1951 saw a rush of evictions from private rental accommodation. The SHC responded by providing emergency rental housing over the next few years until the situation stabilised.

Rental homes originally catered for two-parent families, with couples or single-parent families largely excluded except in some emergency situations. From 1953, specific provision began to be made for smaller families and couples.

The first *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, signed in 1945, ran for ten years. It initially made it difficult for tenants to purchase their rental properties, but amendments in 1955 made purchase easier and the replacement Agreement of 1956 actively encouraged renters to take up schemes to purchase their government homes.

### 3.6.2 WAR SERVICE HOMES (1919-1973) ([SECTION 11.2](#))

#### *Themes:*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Servicepersons returning into the community*

*Associating for mutual aid*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

The War Service Homes Scheme set up after World War One was expanded to cater for the large number of servicepersons returning from World War Two. It later also included those who served in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.

Popular areas for constructing War Service Homes in the 1940s and 1950s included Scarborough, Wembley, Victoria Park, Floreat Park, South Perth, Doubleview, Mount Pleasant, Applecross, Hilton, Yokine and Manning. They were concentrated in the Metropolitan area or large country centres.

War Service Homes were generally larger and included more features than other SHC homes built under either rental or purchase schemes. In the 1950s, considerable numbers were owner-built, some in group schemes.

The SHC continued administering the scheme until it was handed back to the Commonwealth late in 1973.

### 3.6.3 STATE HOUSING ACT (PURCHASE SCHEMES) (1945-1956) (SECTION 11.3)

*Themes:*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Living in rental accommodation - eviction*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems – pre-cut homes*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – pre-cut homes*

Immediately following the war, the SHC concentrated on rentals and War Service homes. However, by the early 1950s, construction was underway again on houses for purchase under the terms of the original 1912 *Workers' Homes Board Act*, which had been retained in the 1946 *State Housing Act*.

Houses in the early 1950s for 'evictees' (private tenants impacted by changed rental legislation) included special terms on State Housing Act homes to allow longer repayment periods, with over 200 provided in about two years.

From 1951, the SHC began producing pre-cut timber homes to erect in country areas. They could be built with minimal labour in a short period of time. From 1954, pre-cut homes were also used in the Metropolitan area, especially in Brentwood and Willagee. The scheme was discontinued in 1956 but pre-cuts appear to have been back in use by the late 1950s in some instances.

Construction of State Housing Act homes really took off in 1952-53. Prior to this, only around 150 such homes had been built since the end of the war, but in two years over 600 were erected. By 1956, the highest concentrations of post-war State Housing Act homes were at Brentwood (224), North Innaloo (204) and Willagee (181), and in country areas at Collie (163), Northam (94), Albany (69) and Bunbury (54).

### 3.6.4 ARMY CAMPS (1946-1958) (SECTION 11.4)

*Themes:*

*Living in rental accommodation*

*Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*

*Being homeless*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Living with social stigma*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes – rental legislation*

*Providing temporary housing*

From 1946, the SHC took over six disused army camps and repurposed them as emergency accommodation. The huts provided little more than bare necessities, with communal ablutions and

laundries. Intended as short-term housing while families waiting for rental accommodation to become available, they developed into overcrowded communities with poor conditions, even accused of being slums. Some residents remained for years. At peak, up to 471 families were in the camps.

The government finally closed the camps and moved out the last tenants in 1958.

### 3.6.5 HOUSING FOR INDUSTRY (1944-1970S) (SECTION 11.5)

#### *Themes:*

*Providing services to support industrial development*

*Promoting Settlement*

*Making settlements to serve rural Australia*

*Mining*

*Making forests into a saleable resource*

*Recruiting labour*

*Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity*

*Using Australian materials in construction*

*Selecting township sites*

*Organising workers and work places*

From the 1940s, the government did its best to aid the development of industry by providing housing for industrial workers. In some instances, this was by developing suburbs close to Metropolitan industrial areas, such as housing at Queens Park supporting Welshpool, and Hilton and Willagee supporting Fremantle. In other places, housing supported a specific enterprise and even, in a few instances, resulted in the creation of a new town.

Examples of SHC housing to support an industry in an existing town include Boyup Brook (flax, 1940s to 1965), Collie (coal, 1944-present), Big Bell (gold, 1957, removed 1955), La Porte Titanium Ltd at Bunbury (1960s), Esperance Fertilisers Pty Ltd at Esperance (1960s) and B.H.P. (iron ore) at Koolyanobbing (1960s).

Towns that were established by the government specifically to support one industry were Wundowie (charcoal iron, 1946-present) and Wittenoom (1948-1960s). To address the post-war shortage of timber for house building, the SHC provided housing at new mills at Palgarup, Tone River and Donnelly River, and expanded existing mill towns at Nannup, Denmark, Walpole, Northcliffe and most significantly Manjimup.

Possibly the best-known and certainly the largest development to support a single industry was the establishment of Kwinana-Medina from 1953 in association with the new BP oil refinery. By 1955, 653 homes were completed. The new town was designed by Margaret Feilman and initially visited by Metropolitan residents as a sort of country-town tourist attraction. The scale of the government's new, relatively isolated settlement impressed many visitors. By the late-1950s, however, it was considered a Perth suburb.

In 1974 the Industrial and Commercial Employee Housing Authority was established to provide country employers with housing for vital employees.

### 3.7 NORMALISATION AND EXPANDING SUBURBS (1950S-1960S) ([SECTION 12](#))

*Themes:*

*Making suburbs*

*Planning urban settlements*

*Creating capital cities*

*Supplying urban services*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Designing using architectural competitions – Commonwealth Games village*

During the second post-war decade, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the SHC settled into a long-term operational mode beyond its initial crisis-abatement role. Construction of rental properties slowed and home purchase schemes were expanded. The client base was expanded to target elderly tenants and special rental homes were provided for serving military personnel. Building materials were no longer limited. In addition to single detached homes, increasing numbers of apartment complexes were built, and new SHC suburbs continued to be developed.

The second *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, operating from 1956, moved the focus of Commonwealth housing support away from rental housing towards home ownership schemes. By the early 1960s, over 80% of homes built by the SHC were sold rather than moved into rental stock. The sale of existing public housing accelerated and the construction of new homes slowed dramatically.

In 1962, Perth hosted the Commonwealth Games. The SHC constructed an 'athletes' village' of 150 homes at City Beach, using designs from an architectural competition for the purpose. After the Games the homes were sold into private ownership.

Brick veneer was increasingly favoured by the SHC, being used for more than half of all SHC homes by 1961 and becoming the primary material used by the Commission in its Metropolitan estates by the mid-1960s. However, it remained unpopular with private builders and as a result became a characteristic feature of government homes in this period.

From the mid-1960s, the SHC began to improve the comfort of residents. Hot water systems began to be included in new homes and by the late 1960s were being retrofit into early SHC rental properties.

#### 3.7.1 EARLY FLATS (1948-1960S) ([SECTION 12.1](#))

*Themes:*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – first high rise flats*

*Increasing residential density*

*Significant individuals – Krantz & Sheldon; John Oldham*

*Utilising Lotteries funding*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems – housing shortages*

The first government flats in the State were built at South Perth/Como in 1948. They were two two-storey blocks of six and eight units.

Between 1954 and 1956, the SHC constructed its first major complex of flats, at 'Wandana', Subiaco, comprising a three-storey and a ten-storey block. Further flats through the Metropolitan area followed, and some in country towns, but they remained a small part of the SHC's building program. It appears

these early flats were two- to four-storey blocks and no further high rise was built until 1968. The flats of the 1950s to the mid-1960s were largely intended for elderly residents.

### 3.7.2 ARMED FORCES HOUSING (1956-1989) ([SECTION 12.2](#))

*Themes:*

*Defending Australia*

*Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*

From 1956, the SHC provided housing for serving members of the armed forces, funded by the Commonwealth. Armed forces housing used ordinary SHC standard plans but added more features and fittings to bring them up to the accepted standards of Defence housing.

By the mid-1970s, the SHC had provided over 1,000 houses for serving Defence personnel. Demand was tapering off and SHC subsequently negotiated to use vacant Defence housing in its regular rental program. In 1989, existing Defence housing was split equally between State and Commonwealth agencies, with SHC ceasing involvement in Defence housing.

### 3.7.3 SHOPS (1950S-1980S) ([SECTION 12.3](#))

*Themes:*

*Retailing foods and beverages*

*Marketing and retailing*

*Making suburbs*

*Supplying urban services*

*Responding to lack of services*

Under the 1946 *State Housing Act*, the new State Housing Commission was given authority to purchase land for the purpose of shops.

The first SHC shops recorded in annual reports were at Mosman Park, Belmont, Midvale and Bunbury (c.1950), Bedford Park and South Perth (1951) and Manning Park (1952). These were small strips of six shops each.

By 1963, shopping centre sites within SHC estates were being sold at auction rather than being developed by the Commission.

As many new SHC suburbs were developed in stages over several years, in 1968-69 the SHC designed transportable shops, to allow some shopping facilities to be erected for the first residents before sufficient houses were built to make permanent shopping facilities economically viable.

Temporary shops continued to be used in new housing developments into the 1970s.

The Commission's first major shopping complex was opened at Kwinana in April 1973, superseding the original small SHC shopping strip built at Medina in 1953. It was followed by large complexes at South Hedland (1977) and Mirrabooka (1978), the latter the largest of them all.

## 3.7.4 HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY (1950S-2014) (SECTION 12.4)

*Themes:*

- Living outside of a family/partnership*
- Growing old*
- Retiring*
- Living as women in Australian society*
- Looking after the infirm and the aged*
- Providing care for people with disabilities*
- Increasing residential density*
- Utilising Lotteries funding*
- Redressing discrimination*

Provision of non-institutional government housing for the elderly was until the 1950s made only under the McNess Housing Trust scheme, begun in 1930. Some housing for the elderly was constructed in the post-war decade, most single-storey flats and duplexes.

In 1958, the SHC developed policy to specifically include housing for the elderly in its remit. An initial roll-out began of 342 duplexes (684 single-bedroom units) for elderly tenants, using one standard plan. A three-storey block of 70 single-bedroom units at West Perth, 'Graham Flats', was also constructed in 1958-59.

From the early 1960s, multi-storey developments of single-bed units for elderly pensioner women began to be developed, initially for the McNess Trust and later under SHC's general programs. Lotteries assisted with these developments.

Through the 1960s, Commonwealth legislation encouraged private agencies to take up provision of aged care and many church and charitable agencies secured funds to this end. SHC provided assistance to them in establishing aged care services, including nursing homes.

In the 1970s, Commonwealth funding was injected specifically to house single aged pensioners. Around 280 units were constructed in five years, mostly in the Metropolitan area. A further three years of funding targeted country areas. Single men were also included in housing for the elderly from the early 1970s, where previously only single women or some couples had been accommodated.

The original SHC policy of providing large groups of aged accommodation together had moved by 1974 to interspersing accommodation for the elderly throughout new housing estates under the 'housing blend scheme', including allowing them to take up one-bedroom and bedsit units within general medium density developments.

Bedsit units were no longer constructed for aged persons from around 1980, with single applicants and couples both being offered one-bedroom self-contained units. From the late 1980s, many earlier bedsit units were converted to one-bedroom units.

In the early 1980s, more than half the Metropolitan SHC homes were built for elderly occupants. Very rarely did the Commission provide universal access to aged persons' units, in single- or multi-storey complexes. Some aged care units were modified for disabled tenants following Homeswest's 1986 disability housing policy.

In the 1980s, the Commission began undertaking joint projects with non-profit and charitable organisations for the provision of pensioner accommodation. By the mid-1980s, Homeswest was

contributing substantially to the construction of aged care accommodation, both independently and through joint ventures with charitable institutions. The agency also designed, but did not build, several frail aged hostels.

From 1992, SHC also offered home purchase schemes specific to aged applicants.

Housing for the elderly moved from a marginal part of SHC's housing program in the post-war period to being around a third of the agency's rental building and acquisition program by the 1990s, and remains a significant portion of DOH's program to the present.

### 3.8 HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING ESTATES (1960S-1970S) ([SECTION 13](#))

*Themes:*

*Promoting Settlement*

*Mining*

*Recruiting labour*

*Developing economic links outside Australia*

*Learning to live with property booms and busts*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life*

*Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – transportable houses*

*Providing services and welfare*

This period was shaped by the Pilbara mining boom, the turbulent Federal politics of the early 1970s, a recession and international oil crisis, and an era of pursuing increases in housing density.

The mining boom caused both a demand for housing in the Northwest and a shortage of labour in southern areas. Much SHC housing in the period was in the Northwest as a result. Transportable homes were also developed.

Nearly two decades of government policy prioritising low-income home-purchase schemes began to change direction from 1973, with Commonwealth funding linked to providing rental housing as a welfare measure.

#### 3.8.1 INCREASING DENSITIES (1960S-1970S) ([SECTION 13.1](#))

*Themes:*

*Applying international ideas to Australian contexts – Radburn design*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems*

*Increasing residential density*

*Developing public parks and gardens*

*Planning urban settlements*

*Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities*

Changes in departmental philosophy saw a move by the late 1960s away from whole suburbs of family homes. Higher density housing was pursued instead, including apartment blocks of two- to four-storeys,

many of which were to house small families. Most of the apartments were 'walk-up flats'. By the end of the 1960s, over 40% of housing units being constructed by the SHC were flats.

Despite drawing plans for high rise in several areas, the SHC's only venture into high rise flats in this period was at Brownlie Towers, Bentley, where a two-storey, a three-storey and two ten-storey blocks of flats were erected in 1969-70, along with townhouses and single detached residences in a 'residential park'.

Over the next five years, the SHC developed several housing estates based on 'Radburn' design principles. These aimed to have a central, communal parkland onto which the residences faced, which functioned as a pedestrian core, with vehicle movement limited to cul-de-sacs and an external ring road. Radburn estates were laid out at Withers (Bunbury), South Hedland, Adeline (Kalgoorlie-Boulder), Langford, Karawara and Hamilton Hill. Many private developments in Pilbara mining towns also used a Radburn approach, some of which (eg. Karratha) included government housing.

Brick veneer remained the material of choice for SHC homes in this period. Government housing also responded to wider social trends in housing, including providing three bedrooms as a minimum in family homes, and often four, but it remained a very modest reflection of private housing.

### 3.9 FROM COMMUNITY TO PRIVACY (1970S-1980S) (SECTION 14)

*Themes:*

*Living with social stigma*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems – blending in*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – private design; select & construct*

*Developing public parks and gardens – children's playgrounds*

*Living as women in Australian society*

*Responding to family violence and abuse*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Playing and watching organized sports – America's Cup*

*Advancing knowledge in science and technology*

*Developing and applying standard plans*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

From the mid-1970s, the SHC shifted its focus in medium density housing to townhouses, duplexes, terraces and courtyard housing. Public housing estates were increasingly linked to social problems, and stigmatised. Radburn planning was found to have many problems, and was abandoned.

Tenants' dislike of many features of the 1960s-1970s estates led to a change in design emphasis. Where the ethos of the previous decade had been to facilitate community, from the mid-1970s designs began to pay attention to privacy. Security concerns also began to be considered, especially for the elderly, single parents and families fleeing violence, although it was only partially addressed and remained a tenant concern through to the mid-1990s.

Contractors building for the SHC were permitted to use their own designs from 1974-75, provided they met SHC requirements. This was the beginning of a departmental shift away from in-house government design and standard plans towards privately-produced unique designs for each project. However, it was some time before SHC residences lost their 'look alike' quality.

Design from around the late 1970s began to attempt to 'blend in' with existing neighbourhoods, by using similar materials, scale or finishes. Although early attempts remained clearly different to surrounding houses, the idea of blending in was developed and improved over subsequent years and remains a dominant design ethos to the present.

From the mid-1970s, the SHC also purchased existing housing, especially in inner-city areas, to distribute its housing through a wider range of suburbs and provide clients with housing closer to some services.

To expand its designs, the SHC ran a series of competitions from the mid-1970s, including for Northwest and country housing.

Playgrounds were added at all SHC apartment complexes in the late 1970s, part of a move to provide services beyond basic housing. Social workers and community development officers were also employed in some estates.

By the late 1970s, the SHC generally no longer constructed homes clad in timber or fibrous/asbestos cement sheeting. By the mid-1980s, except for in some remote locations, SHC residences were double-brick, with both timber and brick veneer out of use.

A new *State Housing Act* came into operation in 1981, expanding the scope of the SHC.

Although the SHC continued to subdivide and service new housing estates, from the 1980s they were mixed estates with only a small percentage of government housing. In the early 1980s, the SHC began offering private builders 'Select and Construct' house and land packages in its new housing developments.

From 1975 to 1983, Commonwealth funding for housing was steadily reduced, impacting on the scale and nature of the SHC's building program.

In the mid-1980s, the SHC undertook several building projects in the Fremantle area to provide additional affordable housing in anticipation of accommodation shortages when the town hosted the America's Cup in 1986-87.

### 3.9.1 URBAN RENEWAL & CONSOLIDATION (1976-1993) (SECTION 14.1)

#### *Themes:*

*Making suburbs*

*Planning urban settlements*

*Increasing residential density*

*Responding to changing standards and social norms*

*Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*

*Attending to security, safety and privacy*

The focus of density increase from the mid-1970s turned from building new estates to redeveloping old estates to increase their densities. The first 'renewal' project was at Midvale from 1976, followed by Beaconsfield, Redcliffe and Willagee.

Old houses were often completely demolished and replaced with new residences, especially townhouses. In some areas, old houses were refurbished, such as at Maniana (Queens Park), where 300 homes were stripped of cladding, extended, internally modernised and reclad in brick veneer in 1979-80.

Renewal of apartment blocks included addition of security features, fencing, courtyards, awnings and carports.

From the mid-1980s, changes were made at 'Radburn' estates to remove some features of the design in response to resident dissatisfaction. Houses were fenced, removing the connection with the communal parklands, and some additional through-roads were added to increase vehicle access.

Urban renewal was also referred to as urban consolidation and was perceived by the SHC as a successful way to reduce urban sprawl and provide 'more suitable' homes for smaller families, singles and seniors.

### 3.10 NEW NAME AND NEW CLIENTS (1980S-1990S) ([SECTION 15](#))

#### *Themes:*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Working as government in partnership with private or community groups*

*Associating for mutual aid – housing collectives*

*Living outside of a family/partnership*

*Applying international ideas to Australian contexts – Green Streets*

*Living with social stigma*

*Conserving Australia's heritage*

The *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* of 1984 expanded the eligibility criteria for public housing to include youth, single working people and single invalid pensioners, all previously excluded from Commission services. Funding was also increased and the mid- to late-1980s saw a renewed building program. Building particular focussed on catering to the needs of the new client group, many of whom were deemed to require small residences.

By the mid-1980s, around 30% of the public housing constructed since World War Two had been sold. New building programs had struggled to stay ahead of schemes to sell off rental properties, but by the end of the 1980s total rental stock had increased in five years by about 5,000 units to 35,000 units.

Increasing numbers of unemployed applicants and single-parent families, an ageing population and the expansion of eligibility criteria all contributed to a continuing rapid increase in demand for public housing. From 1984-85, SHC launched Community Housing, a form of joint venture where the SHC funded and retained ownership of accommodation facilities, including lodging houses and other alternative forms of housing, while local governments and not-for-profit agencies provided housing and support services from the buildings.

From September 1985, the SHC adopted the trading name 'Homeswest', which was to become its public face for around twenty years, and remains in colloquial use to the present.

Funding for housing collectives was initiated from 1987. A small number of these co-operative, alternative housing groups continue to the present.

In 1989, SHC launched 'Keystart', which was to become its most successful scheme for financing low-income home ownership. Within ten years, Keystart provided over 30,000 home loans to low and moderate income earners.

Departmental restructure in the late 1980s reduced staff numbers and moved the SHC towards a more project-managed approach, including increasing use of private contractors.

From the late 1980s, SHC used 'Green Street' design principles in its residential subdivisions.

SHC undertook several projects in the early 1990s to repurpose former commercial and industrial buildings as residential apartment complexes.

### 3.10.1 CRISIS ACCOMMODATION & HOMELESSNESS ABATEMENT (1980S-2014) (SECTION 15.1)

*Themes:*

- Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*
- Providing services and welfare*
- Being homeless*
- Lodging people*
- Growing up – youth*
- Living outside of a family/partnership*
- Being poor/living with poverty*
- Living as women in Australian society*
- Living as single-parent families*
- Responding to lack of services*
- Responding to family violence and abuse*
- Working as government in partnership with private or community groups*
- Helping people*
- Designing using architectural competitions*

While some emergency housing had been provided by the SHC since the post-war period, active measures to house the homeless began in the 1980s. Commonwealth funding under the 1984 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* provided for capital works for crisis housing, including women's refuges, homeless shelters and youth accommodation. These were developed as community housing partnerships.

Crisis services were funded through other agencies under the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. The SHC built and owned the actual properties where these services were offered.

### 3.10.2 DISABILITY HOUSING (1980S-2014) (SECTION 15.2)

*Themes:*

- Providing care for people with disabilities*
- Living with social stigma*
- Providing services and welfare*
- Living outside of a family/partnership*
- Responding to lack of services*
- Redressing discrimination*

Provision of government housing for clients with disabilities was ad hoc and often insufficient into the 1980s. From 1984, disability pensioners became eligible for government housing, bringing the issue of appropriate housing into the light.

The Commonwealth *Disability Services Act* (1986) required the SHC to develop a coordinated policy for housing disabled clients. Subsequently, a portion of SHC housing stock was purpose-built or retrofit to be suitable for disabled tenants.

Both intellectually handicapped and mentally ill adults were increasingly moved out of institutions through the 1980s into community-based housing with varying levels of independence. The SHC responded to this move by providing additional housing for these individuals, particularly through its community housing program.

### 3.11 HIDING HOMESWEST (1990S-2000S) ([SECTION 16](#))

#### *Themes:*

*Responding to changing standards and social norms*

*Living as women in Australian society*

*Attending to security, safety and privacy*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems – blending in*

*Conserving Australia's heritage*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

From the mid-1990s, the SHC aimed to completely hide its housing by camouflaging it amongst private residential development.

A 1993 policy change saw the SHC move away from density increase and 'urban consolidation' towards free standing homes. Major suburban redevelopment projects characterised the period. Percentages of Homeswest properties within any suburb were to be reduced. Sales of public housing increased and by the mid-2000s the total number of rental houses available was in decline.

Women made up a substantial majority of Homeswest tenants by the mid-1990s. Efforts were made to improve security on rental properties in response to well-founded fears from female tenants that they were unsafe in their homes.

In 1999, the SHC became part of the Ministry of Housing, and from 2001 the Department of Housing and Works (DHW). After 2001, 'Homeswest' was used only for the SHC's rental program.

Heritage issues became a consideration for the Department from around 2000, with Wandana and Graham Flats added to the State Register in 2000, Maniana and Brownlie Towers assessed for heritage values in 2001-02 and a long-term process of protecting early SHC housing in Hilton initiated around the same time.

### 3.11.1 JOINT VENTURES AND 'NEW LIVING' REDEVELOPMENT (1993-2014) (SECTION 16.1)

*Themes:*

*Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*

*Making suburbs*

*Planning urban settlements*

*Creating capital cities*

*Supplying urban services*

*Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities*

*Working as government in partnership with private or community groups*

Redevelopment of SHC estates from the mid-1990s was undertaken in joint venture with private developers. Housing densities were reduced, particularly by demolishing many of the 1960s and 1970s apartment blocks. The proportion of public housing was also reduced, with renovated housing, new residences and cleared sites sold into private ownership. The first two redevelopments in this program were at Lockridge and Kwinana, from 1995, the former completed in 2000.

Redevelopment projects from 1997-98 were rebranded as the 'New Living' program. It aimed to dismantle all the department's public housing estates. By 2000, over a quarter of all Homeswest residences in the state were part of New Living redevelopments. New Living is ongoing in 2014, having redeveloped over twenty suburbs.

Joint ventures were also the preferred approach to new housing developments. This had begun at Stratton from 1989 and Ballajura from 1992. From the mid-1990s, the joint-venture suburb of Ellenbrook began to be released in stages, the largest SHC residential development for some time.

### 3.11.2 ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN (LATE 1970S-2014) (SECTION 16.2)

*Themes:*

*Building to suit Australian conditions*

*Conserving Australian resources*

*Designing and building fine buildings*

*Advancing knowledge in science and technology*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life – 1970s oil crisis*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems*

*Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

*Responding to changing standards and social norms*

*Designing using architectural competitions*

Within the architectural profession, attention to energy efficient design began from the 1940s. However, it remains somewhat 'optional' or 'alternative' to the present.

Government housing designs for the Northwest were more likely to pay attention to passive energy design features, but even those were more inclined to be built in response to cyclones than heat.

From the 1970s, the SHC engaged in some experiments with energy efficient design.

In the 1990s, energy efficiency became a more significant design criterion. Some SHC projects were praised for their solar passive features.

Between 2001 and 2008, the State government initiated whole-of-government sustainability measures and reporting criteria and the SHC increased its attention to sustainable house design in response, including some subdivisions with attention to the orientation of residential lots. This emphasis was not retained after the change of government in 2008.

### 3.12 A NEW HOUSING CRISIS? (2000S-2014) (SECTION 17)

*Themes:*

*Learning to live with property booms and busts*

*International events impacting on Australian domestic life – Global Financial Crisis*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Providing services to support industrial development*

*Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Increasing residential density*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

Perth house prices sky-rocketed around 2006, in response to a renewed mining boom. Already, some commentators had been talking of a housing crisis approaching post-war levels, as significant numbers of households, especially low-income households, were paying over 50% of their gross income for housing. Private rents increased dramatically and by 2007 a 'housing affordability crisis' was being broadly discussed. A Senate inquiry in 2008 recommended more than doubling public housing stock across the country.

Waiting lists for housing assistance, which had been gradually increasing for some time, grew steadily. The SHC increased its rental building program and slowed the sale of existing properties.

The State Housing Commission was finally superseded in 2006 by the Housing Authority, a branch of DHW that also amalgamated the Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA). From 2009, DHW was disbanded and the Housing Authority became part of the new Department of Housing (DOH).

In 2008, the last *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* lapsed, and was replaced in 2009 by the *National Affordable Housing Agreement*. Although the new agreement continued Commonwealth funding for government housing, it was different in form.

In response to the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, both State and Federal governments announced stimulus funding packages for construction of public housing. Between January 2010 and June 2012, DOH constructed over 3,400 new units of government housing. The majority of these were to be transferred into the Community Housing program. Although the waiting list reduced slightly in this period, it remained well over 20,000, with the number of new tenancies offered each year around 15% of this number.

DOH began constructing moderate size apartment complexes from around 2010, some as multi-storey developments and others as large townhouse groups. Unlike apartment developments of the 1960s and 1970s, SHC sold significant portions of the developments into private ownership, avoiding whole complexes of government housing.

From 2011, DOH pursued a policy branded 'Opening Doors', intended to move clients through stages of government housing support, from public renting to full home ownership.

3.13 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE HOUSING (19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – 2014) (SECTION 18)*Themes:*

*Making settlements to serve rural Australia*  
*Recruiting labour*  
*Working in harsh conditions*  
*Organising workers and work places*  
*Establishing regional and local identity*  
*Living in rental accommodation*  
*Developing and applying standard plans*  
*Providing services to support industrial development*  
*Responding to lack of services*  
*Responding to changing standards and social norms*  
*Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*  
*Forming families and partnerships*  
*Living outside of a family/partnership*  
*Maintaining hierarchy, distinction or social status*  
*Providing temporary housing – workers' tent camps*

*Themes relating to the occupations of government employees:*

*Mining*  
*Developing agricultural industries*  
*Making forests into a saleable resource*  
*Developing agricultural industries*  
*Supplying urban services (esp fire)*  
*Fishing and whaling*  
*Establishing communications*  
*Moving goods and people*  
*Altering the environment*  
*Providing health services*  
*Working in offices*  
*Establishing schools*  
*Building a system of higher education*  
*Educating people in remote places*  
*Developing local government authorities*  
*Policing Australia*  
*Dispensing justice*  
*Incarcerating people*  
*Conserving fragile environments*  
*Administering Indigenous Affairs*

From the nineteenth century, housing for government employees was provided on an ad hoc basis. The PWD began developing standard housing plans from around 1900, and after the formation of the Workers' Homes Board in 1912, WHB standard plans were also used for government employee housing.

Accommodating employees at or near their place of work was common practice in both government and private industries until the second half of the twentieth century. From 1958, the SHC had a section

dealing with government employee housing, but it remained underfunded and accommodation provided varied significantly. The standard of much government employee housing was woeful into the 1960s.

In 1964, the *Government Employees Housing Act* was passed, with the Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA) coming into operation the following year. Initially, GEHA was intended to provide housing for salaried public servants and teachers. Many departments signed up with GEHA from its inception, especially the Education Department, but others joined later or not at all.

GEHA developed its own standard plans, initially based on SHC plans. The agency also set standards for government housing and worked to bring the residences it inherited from other departments up to these standards.

GEHA designed houses assuming a married man as tenant, but also supplied housing to single employees, especially teachers. Singles were often expected to share a family house, often with housemates not of their own choosing.

Provision of housing for the Northwest was a significant part of GEHA's work, especially in the boom period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and again in the last decade.

By the 1990s, GEHA was in financial difficulties. A restructure in the mid-1990s moved it towards offering a commercial service rather than being a discount housing provider. The move was a financial success. It was also reported as improving housing standards and providing a more tenant-focussed service.

In response to the 2002 Gordon Inquiry, significant additional government services were developed for remote Aboriginal communities. GEHA provided housing for the government officers staffing these new ventures.

From July 2006, GEHA was merged with the SHC and became Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), a branch of the new Housing Authority.

### 3.13.1 CASE STUDY: WA GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS (1980S-2000S) (SECTION 18.1)

Western Australian Government Railways Commission (WAGR) was one of the largest providers of government employee housing through the twentieth century. Although WAGR never joined GEHA, its long provision of employee housing for both workers and salaried staff provides a good example of the standards and approaches to government employee housing in the state, and the influence of GEHA standards on other departments.

Not all WAGR employees received housing. The housing that was provided was designed to reflect the hierarchy of WAGR employment, from single-men's barracks and two-room timber cottages for some waged workers through to expansive brick-and-tile architect-designed residences for district officers.

In response to GEHA standards, WAGR reviewed its properties in the 1970s and initiated an upgrade program. However, this was a huge project and many houses were not brought up to modern standards. In the twenty-first century, WAGR decided to cease providing employee housing altogether and subsequently disposed of much of its housing stock.

### 3.14 COUNTRY HOUSING (1940S-2014) ([SECTION 19](#))

*Themes:*

- Making settlements to serve rural Australia*
- Living in the country and rural settlements*
- Developing agricultural industries*
- Providing services to support industrial development*
- Mining*
- Making forests into a saleable resource*
- Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity*
- Working in harsh conditions*
- Financing home-purchase schemes*
- Developing and applying standard plans*
- Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*
- Designing using architectural competitions*

During the years of the Workers' Homes Board, government housing policy actively supported and encouraged rural development, especially through prioritisation of country applications after World War One and provision of homes in the 1920s for the Group Settlement Scheme. From the mid-1930s, focus turned to the Metropolitan area, with the Board deciding not to build new homes in many country areas, as those they already owned struggled to find tenants or buyers.

Following the war, country houses were predominantly supplied to support industries that would address the building materials shortage. From the 1950s, housing also followed the expansion of agriculture, particularly in the Wheatbelt.

Timber was favoured for construction in country areas under the WHB and continued to be used in the country by the SHC after it had been largely phased out in the Metropolitan area.

Standard SHC plans included some homes considered more appropriate for country areas. In the 1970s, new and more specific designs were developed for country homes.

By the twenty-first century, it was recognised that country housing was often of lower standard than in the Metropolitan area, and this contributed to difficulties in retaining rural employees. The Country Housing Authority, formed in 1998, provided finance for construction of rural housing.

The SHC also moved to upgrade or replace its country housing stock. Country government housing was initially focussed on families, and upgrades included improving choices for singles, seniors and small families.

From the 1940s to the 1990s, the SHC's building program was focussed in the Metropolitan area, and in large regional centres. Attempts were made in the 1990s to increase country building programs, but property holdings in country areas remain less than proportionate to the size of the rural population to the present. In addition, much country housing is government employee housing rather than social housing stock.

### 3.15 NORTHWEST HOUSING (1947-2014) ([SECTION 20](#))

*Themes:*

- Promoting Settlement*
- Mining*
- Building to suit Australian conditions*
- Using Australian materials in construction*
- Developing economic links outside Australia*
- Selecting township sites*
- Working in harsh conditions*
- Dealing with hazards and disasters – cyclones*
- Establishing regional and local identity*
- Advancing knowledge in science and technology*
- Living in rental accommodation*
- Providing services to support industrial development*
- Response to government inquiries and policy changes*
- Designing to address particular needs or problems*
- Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos - cluster homes*
- Responding to lack of services*
- Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*
- Working as government in partnership with private or community groups*
- Designing using architectural competitions*

The SHC began providing housing in the Northwest with the establishment of Wittenoom from 1947-48, followed by Carnarvon, Port Hedland, Onslow, Roebourne, Derby, Broome and Wyndham between 1950 and 1955. Housing numbers remained small, however, until the mining boom of the mid-1960s. Much of the early government housing that was provided was for government employees, and almost all the regular SHC houses were rentals.

From the mid-1950s, some designs were developed specifically for Northwest conditions, especially in response to cyclones. From the 1970s, designs for the region were increasingly regionally responsive. GEHA housing, however, continued to largely use standard southern designs for its Northwest housing into the 1980s.

Pre-cut homes of the 1950s, including some designed for the region, were used for longer in the Northwest than in southern areas. Transportable houses were developed from 1967. Developed to save time and money, and in response to building labour shortages in southern regions, they were mostly used for remote locations and particularly for government employee housing.

Kununurra was developed from 1960 to support the Ord River irrigation scheme, and included substantial government housing.

From the mid-1960s, as mining expanded in the Pilbara, demand for housing also increased, both for workers directly employed in the mines and government and service industry workers supporting the new towns. The SHC developed a substantial housing estate from 1970 at South Hedland to house workers for the booming port town, as well as providing housing in both new and existing centres.

Prior to the 1960s, all Northwest SHC residences appear to have been single detached homes. Duplexes were introduced from 1962, and from the late 1960s terraces, courtyard and cluster homes were constructed. Cluster homes were particularly favoured for the Northwest in the 1980s.

Northwest housing had higher proportions of both Aboriginal and government employee accommodation than southern regions.

From the late 1990s, Pilbara mining began to pick up again and SHC expanded South Hedland in response. However, by the mid 2000s, the Pilbara had the least affordable housing in the state. From 2008, Royalties for Regions funding boosted housing in the area. Additional housing for service workers, who were priced out of Pilbara housing but would not otherwise qualify for government housing assistance, was provided from 2012, mostly at South Hedland.

### 3.16 ABORIGINAL HOUSING (1950S-2014) ([SECTION 21](#))

*Themes applying to the whole Aboriginal housing chapter:*

- Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants*
- Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*
- Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated economy*
- Providing services and welfare*
- Administering Indigenous Affairs*
- Being homeless*
- Lodging people*
- Developing institutions*
- Responding to changing standards and social norms*

*Themes particularly applying to the pre-World War Two period:*

- Enforcing discriminatory legislation*
- Engaging with housing policy through government*
- Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration*
- Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*
- Being poor/living with poverty*

*Themes particularly applying to 1950s experimental housing:*

- Designing to address particular needs or problems*
- Developing and applying standard plans*
- Living with social stigma*
- Responding to changing standards and social norms*
- Maintaining hierarchy, distinction or social status*

From colonisation to the end of World War Two, government policy did not provide for Aboriginal housing in Western Australia. Increasing government control of Aboriginal lives following the 1905 *Aborigines Act* pushed many families onto reserves but did not provide housing.

In the post-war period, housing the non-Aboriginal population of the state consumed government housing funds and energy, despite acknowledgement from the mid-1940s that the housing situation for Aboriginal people was dire. Although in principle Aboriginal persons could apply within regular SHC programs if they met the criteria for citizenship, few managed to become SHC clients in this way.

Through the 1950s, the SHC provided a small number of houses for Aboriginal residents, later described as a 'social experiment'. Specially designed standard plans were used. The Type 79A standard plan was a timber-framed house featuring a large central living area with all other rooms including kitchen, bathroom/laundry and bedrooms as louvered sleep-outs surrounding the central area. Although located in 'white' areas, the houses were conspicuously different. Occupants found them sub-standard and many vacated them or were evicted.

The SHC also built some Aboriginal hostels for the Department of Native Welfare (DNW) in this period.

### 3.16.1 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (1953-1972) (SECTION 21.1)

#### *Themes:*

*Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness*

*Being poor/living with poverty*

*Designing to address particular needs or problems*

*Developing and applying standard plans*

*Living with social stigma*

*Maintaining hierarchy, distinction or social status*

*Enforcing discriminatory legislation*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes - citizenship*

From 1953, a system of transitional housing was established for Aboriginal families, beginning in Geraldton. It was intended as a three-stage continuum: 'primary transitional', where families were housed together on reserves on the outskirts of towns, 'standard transitional', where families were provided 'rudimentary houses with ablution facilities on the outskirts of regional towns', and, 'conventional', where families were moved to a townhouse 'indistinguishable' from others in the street.

'Primary transitional' accommodation was bare houses within Aboriginal reserves, often of such poor quality residents preferred to sleep outside or in makeshift dwellings nearby. Reserves were overcrowded and unhygienic, with insufficient housing provided for the number of persons expected to live there.

In theory, families who demonstrated their ability to look after a house in a manner acceptable to white housing officers were moved into 'standard transitional' housing on the edge of towns. However, they had not really been provided 'houses', just shelters with shared ablutions. Further, no stage two houses were built until 1959 and the first 'conventional' house was built in 1965, twelve years after the transitional scheme began.

In 1967, a referendum acknowledged Aboriginal persons as citizens of Australia. The substandard living conditions of these 'new' citizens were of immediate concern. At the same time, application of the pastoral workers award resulted in many being evicted from pastoral stations and crowding into town reserves.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the construction of stage two and three housing under the transitional program increased, but it was never enough for the number of people it was intended to house.

Reserves began to be dismantled from 1969, sometimes including the forced removal of residents. However, the transitional housing program continued until the end of the DNW in 1972.

## 3.16.2 SHC TAKES OVER FROM DNW (1972-1980S) (SECTION 21.2)

*Themes:*

- Educating Indigenous people in two cultures*
- Making suburbs*
- Providing services and welfare*
- Living in rental accommodation*
- Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – integrated housing*
- Responding to changing standards and social norms*
- Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*
- Financing home-purchase schemes*

Responsibility for housing Aboriginal persons was transferred to the SHC from the DNW from 1 July 1972. In southern areas, it was intended to incorporate Aboriginal applicants into standard SHC homes as part of policies of 'integration/assimilation'. In remote northern and eastern communities, a policy of creating 'village housing' was pursued.

Of 30,000 people of Aboriginal descent in the State in 1972, only 5,000 were adequately housed. Addressing this housing shortfall was a long, slow process.

The SHC deliberately integrated its Aboriginal housing throughout the suburbs of Perth and large regional centres by 'sprinkling' families up to an official 'saturation point' of Aboriginal households in any area. Houses were no longer specially designed, although some were modified to have internal walls lined with painted, fluted metal to allow for easy maintenance in response to the 'robust living standards' of residents. The SHC's insistence on housing Aboriginal tenants in regular SHC housing resulted in much overcrowding, on account of large Aboriginal families and cultural obligations to host kin.

An education program in the 1970s provided training for Aboriginal tenants in the skills of maintaining a home according to 'white' standards.

After the passing of the Federal *Race Discrimination Act* in 1975, Aboriginal applicants were able to obtain regular SHC housing more readily.

In 1978, the Aboriginal Housing Board was formed to advise the SHC on Aboriginal matters.

A specific Aboriginal home purchase scheme was initiated in 1981-82. Nearly 25 years later, the 500<sup>th</sup> home loan was issued under the scheme.

## 3.16.3 REMOTE COMMUNITY 'VILLAGE' HOUSING (1970S-2014) (SECTION 21.3)

*Themes:*

- Making settlements to serve rural Australia*
- Selecting township sites*
- Establishing regional and local identity*
- Associating for mutual aid*
- Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*
- Designing to address particular needs or problems*
- Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos – village housing*
- Working as government in partnership with private or community groups*
- Building to suit Australian conditions*

When the SHC took on Aboriginal housing in 1972, it began designing 'villages' for remote communities. The houses were to be built on a 'self-help' basis by local communities, under SHC supervision. They included service buildings and recreation areas, with clusters of homes around a central area.

The houses were steel framed, with polyurethane fibro wall cladding and concrete raft floors. They were designed for easy erection but provided very basic housing.

The first 'village' settlements were at One Arm Point (Bardi, 200km north of Broome) and Camballin (Looma, 80 miles south of Derby), from 1973. Construction of village housing was extremely slow. At One Arm Point, for example, it took four years to complete the initial settlement of 42 houses. In the first ten years of the program, 256 houses and 33 other buildings were constructed in remote communities.

From the early 1980s, village designs were amended to include more standard features, such as verandahs instead of breezeways, conventional living areas and gas stoves, while retaining large outdoor living areas.

By 1987, nine Aboriginal communities constructed under the SHC's village program had been granted self-management: One Arm Point (Bardi), Looma (Camballin), Junjuwa (Fitzroy Crossing), Go Go (Bayulu), Christmas Creek (Wangatjunka), Woolshed/Cheeditha (Mount Welcome, Roebourne), Kurnangki (Fitzroy Crossing), Bindi Bindi and Geraldton Pensioner Village. Other 'village' settlements under construction were Noonkanbah (Yungngora community) and Tjalku Wara Community, both near Port Hedland. The Upurl Upurlila Community was also in a six-year process of relocating from Cundeelee, which had inadequate water supply, to Coonana, with the new village completed in 1989. Two new villages were started in the late 1980s: Cherrabun, for Djugerari community, begun in 1988, and Warrimbah, begun in 1989. These appear to have been the last constructed under the 1970s scheme.

There were significantly more remote Aboriginal communities than those where the SHC had implemented self-help 'village' construction programs from the 1970s to the 1990s. A 2013 map shows over 150 Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley alone, and around fifty in the rest of the State. In many communities, housing was financed directly by the Commonwealth, through Indigenous Community Housing Organisations, funded from 2002 through the Commonwealth Housing and Infrastructure Program.

From the 2000s, work began to 'regularise' Aboriginal town reserves by upgrading roads and essential services to the standards of adjacent towns, with the intention to pass ongoing responsibility for infrastructure to the relevant local government authorities. This normalisation program continues to the present (2014).

By June 2013, the Housing Authority managed 2,439 homes in 122 remote Aboriginal communities, of which around 56% were managed by 'six regionally based primarily Aboriginal organisations' and the rest directly by the Authority.

### 3.16.4 MAINSTREAMING ABORIGINAL HOUSING (1980S-2000S) (SECTION 21.4)

#### *Themes:*

*Providing services and welfare*

*Living in rental accommodation*

*Financing home-purchase schemes*

*Pursuing home ownership*

*Living with social stigma*

*Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*

The *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* of 1984 was a landmark in Aboriginal Housing as, for the first time, it tied funding to provision of rental accommodation for Aboriginal tenants. Initially, this funding was mostly directed to regional and remote areas.

Aboriginal housing in the mid-1980s followed a policy of 'integration and social mix'. Spot purchase was favoured to provide Aboriginal housing in established areas, with a focus on larger homes.

In 1987-88, a program was initiated to upgrade 'traditional Aboriginal housing' erected prior to the 1972 dissolution of the Native Welfare Department. Extensive upgrades were required and in many cases properties were demolished as upgrading was not feasible.

By the end of the 1980s, Homeswest managed over 33,000 housing units, of which 7% were specifically Aboriginal housing and a further 7.5% were regular housing units occupied by Aboriginal tenants.

Up to the 1990s, Aboriginal tenants were rarely placed into higher density housing, such as apartments and townhouses, as they were considered unsuited to this style of living. This limited their housing options, as around 45% of Homeswest's Metropolitan housing at the time was medium density accommodation.

A restructure of Homeswest's Aboriginal Housing programs was undertaken in 1994-95, to create formal links with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and create an Aboriginal Housing Directorate in-house.

The 1996 census showed that Aboriginal communities depended much more heavily on rental housing than non-Aboriginal Australians. Further, Aboriginal renters were far more likely to be in government than private rentals.

By the turn of the century, urban Aboriginal housing was equivalent to regular SHC housing, although often with more bedrooms to account for larger families. Around 18% of Homeswest tenants at the time identified as Aboriginal.

In mid-2002, a new Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council replaced the Aboriginal Housing Board.

### 3.16.5 RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES (2000S-2014) (SECTION 21.5)

#### *Themes:*

*Response to government inquiries and policy changes*

*Living with social stigma*

*Responding to family violence and abuse*

*Responding to changing standards and social norms*

*Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity*

*Attending to security, safety and privacy*

*Enforcing discriminatory legislation*

*Redressing discrimination*

*Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships*

In 2002, an inquiry was undertaken into the activities of all government agencies involved with Aboriginal communities, specifically in response to accusations of sexual abuse of children. Chaired by magistrate Sue Gordon, the inquiry found alarmingly high levels of sexual abuse of Aboriginal children and family violence within Aboriginal communities.

The Gordon Report on the whole endorsed the direction of DHW's Aboriginal housing policies, especially those that emphasised capacity building for Aboriginal communities, and recommended they be strengthened and expanded. It also recommended increasing maintenance for Aboriginal homes.

The report affirmed and encouraged moves to support Aboriginal home ownership, but also recommended substantial increases to the public housing stock. Another impact of the Gordon Report for ongoing DHW practice was its call for increased government officers in remote Aboriginal communities, such as the appointment of Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers. Housing for these additional officers was the responsibility of GEHA.

In December 2004, an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) report released the findings of an enquiry into discriminatory practices in providing public housing for Aboriginal people, following a two-year inquiry. The damning report accused Homeswest of individual and institutional racism. It found that application of standard Commission policies and practices particularly caused difficulties for applicants with large families, a previous history as public rental tenants, histories of family violence, or parents and grandparents in poor health and poverty, which amounted to a majority of Aboriginal tenants.

DHW set up a monitored process to respond to the EOC report, overseen by the department's Director General. By 2011, progress had been made on implementing the 2004 reports' 165 recommendations, but much work remained to be done.

From the mid-2000s, addressing the poor housing outcomes of Aboriginal persons was an identified priority for DHW. Aboriginal home ownership and Aboriginal community housing management were to be increased and improved. New supported housing was developed for Aboriginal clients with special needs, such as mental health concerns, disabilities or those being released from prison. Measures were taken to address overcrowding and a backlog of maintenance and infrastructure needs was tackled.

As part of the *National Affordable Housing Agreement*, which replaced *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements* from 2009, flexibility in assigning Commonwealth funds led to increasing 'mainstreaming' of Aboriginal housing programs. DHW subsequently merged its urban Aboriginal housing stock into general public housing.

## 4 SUMMARY DATA AND ANALYSIS

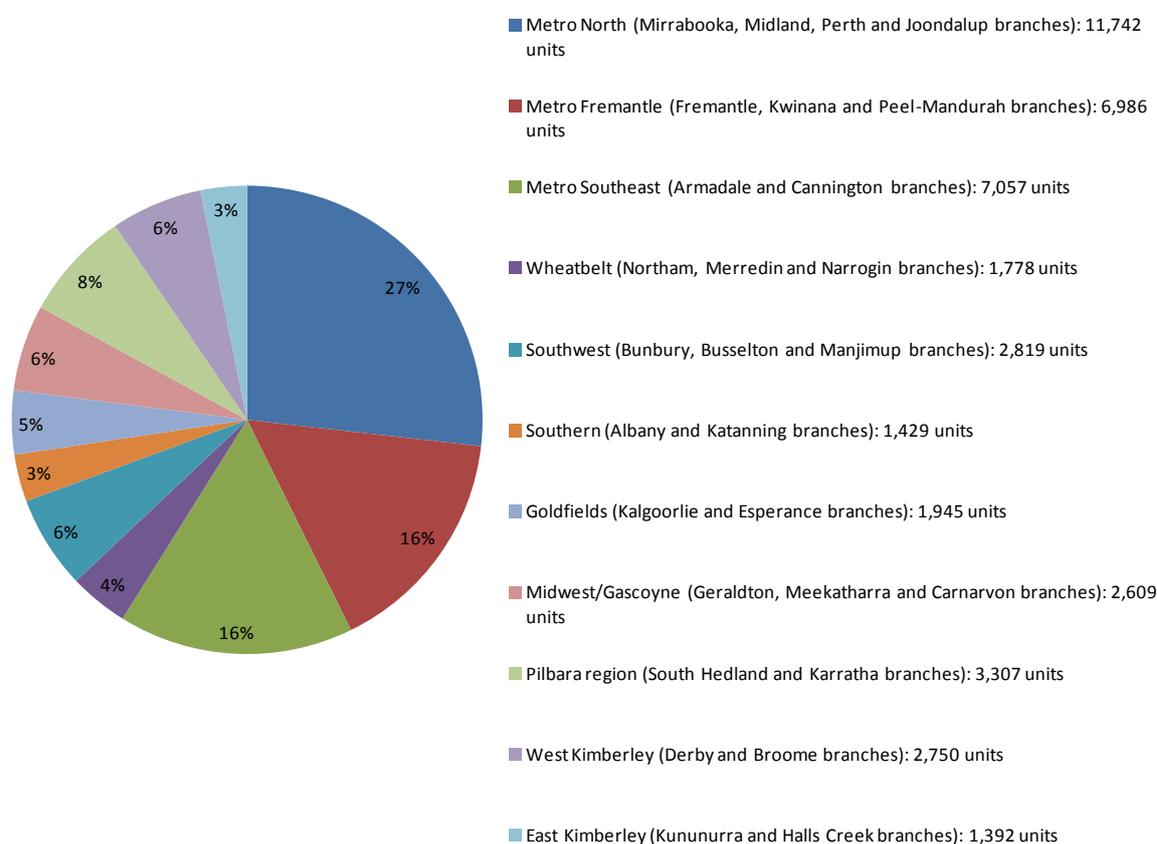
Where DOH retains housing stock relating to the material described in a chapter, an analysis of relevant DOH housing stock as of 31 May 2014 is included at the end of that chapter.

The following data relates to DOH housing stock as a whole, giving the context into which the analysis at each chapter-end fits.

### *Places that remain in 2014*

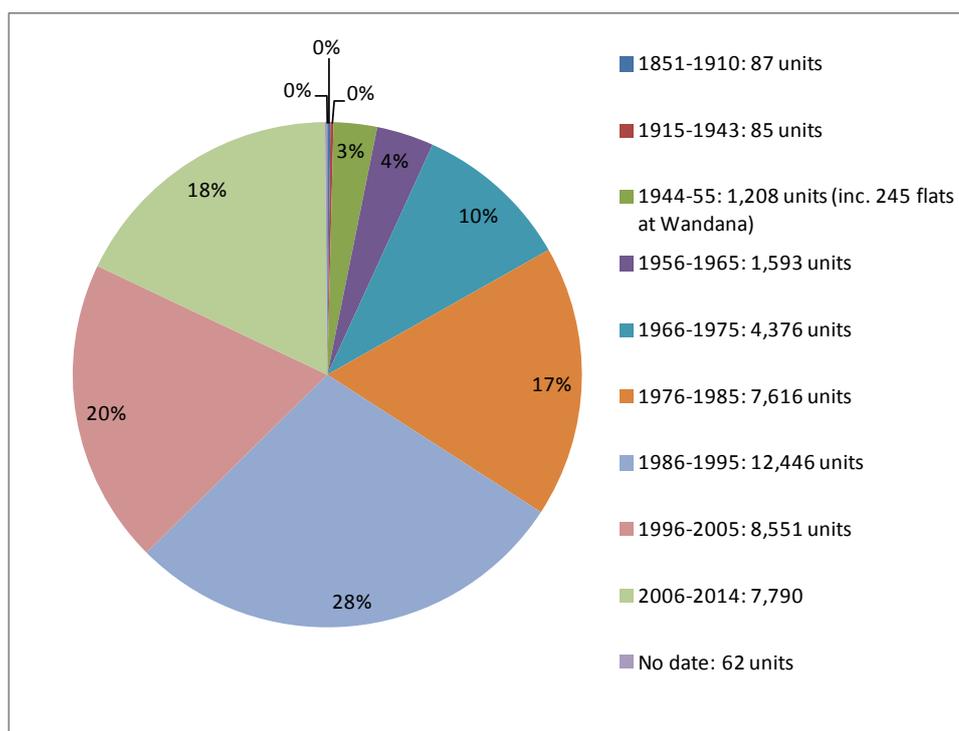
DOH retains 43,814 housing units in its regular housing stock and 6,597 units in Community Housing stock (50,411 total). An analysis of the Community Housing stock is provided at the end of [Section 15](#). As the DOH and Community Housing databases have different data categories it is very difficult to integrate the two data sets.

The 43,814 regular DOH units divide as follows:



Of all DOH stock, 58.9% is in the Metropolitan area, 22.3% in the Country and 18.8% in the Northwest. Carnarvon branch (805 units) is included as Northwest rather than Country.

Housing retained by DOH divides chronologically as:

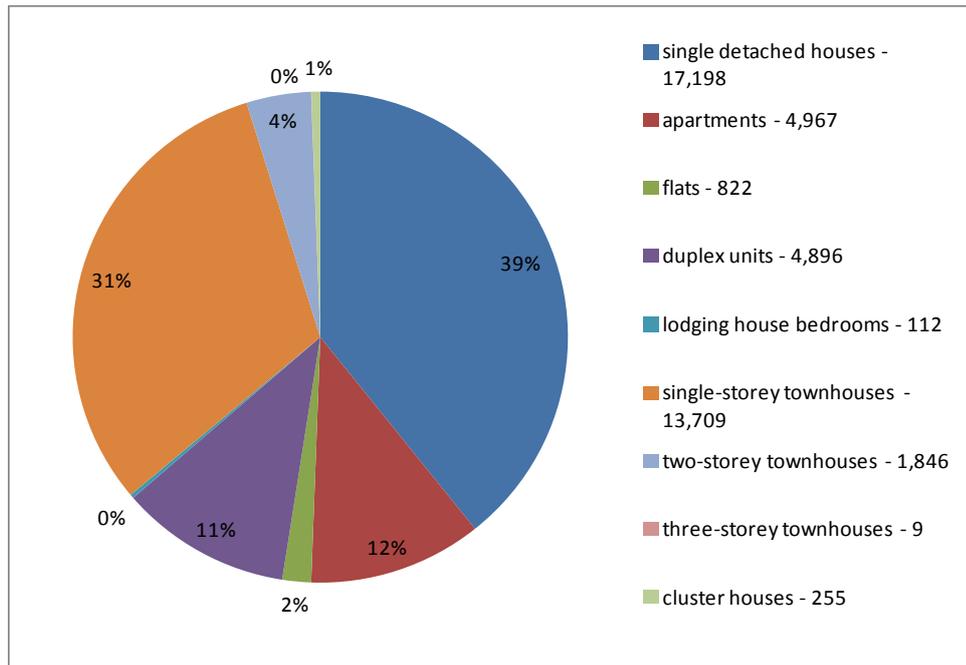


All DOH housing units dated up to 1943 were acquired more recently, indicating they were probably not built for the SHC. The earliest group includes 57 nineteenth century units, in three groups (Warders' Cottages Fremantle, Terminus Hotel Fremantle, Tom Collins' House Northbridge). Those with no date are all Midwest-Gascoyne remote Aboriginal housing.

The highest concentration of remaining housing stock is from 1986 to 1995 (28.5%). This is not indicative of the period when SCH built the most housing units, as many earlier properties have been sold or demolished.

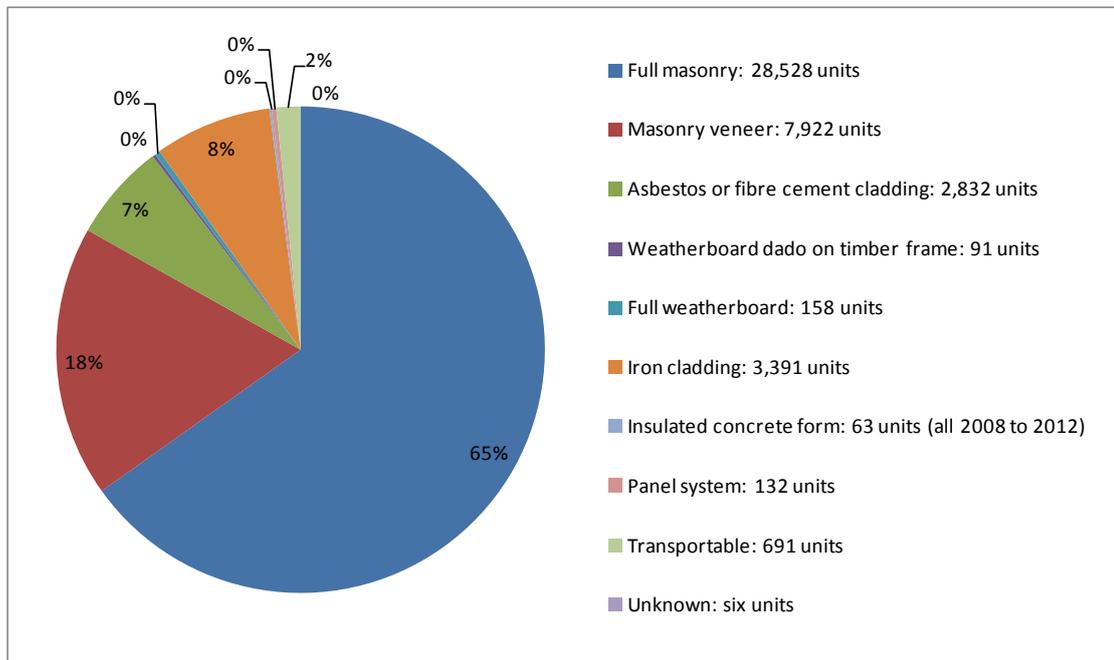
Note that the final period is approximately 18 months shorter than other decades. If rates of build and disposal from the period are retained, it can be expected that when this 'decade' concludes at the end of 2015 there will be around 9,165 units retained. However, as the period includes building from several national and regional stimulus funding initiatives, which have largely been completed, it is likely the rate of building will slow and the final number will be less than this projection.

DOH housing divides by building type as follows:



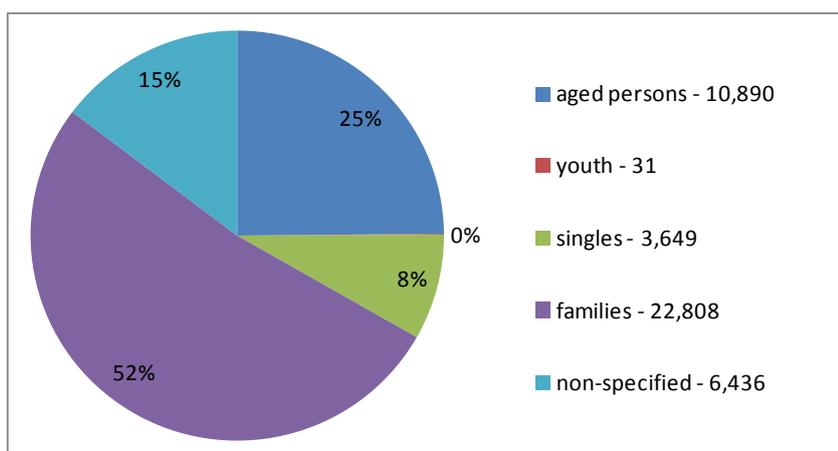
Single detached houses account for 39% of DOH's housing stock. Combined cluster and townhouses make up 36%, apartments and flats together 13% and duplexes 11%.

Housing stock may be assessed by building materials as follows:



Masonry and masonry veneer together account for a total of 83% of DOH's housing stock. 'Masonry' generally means 'brick'.

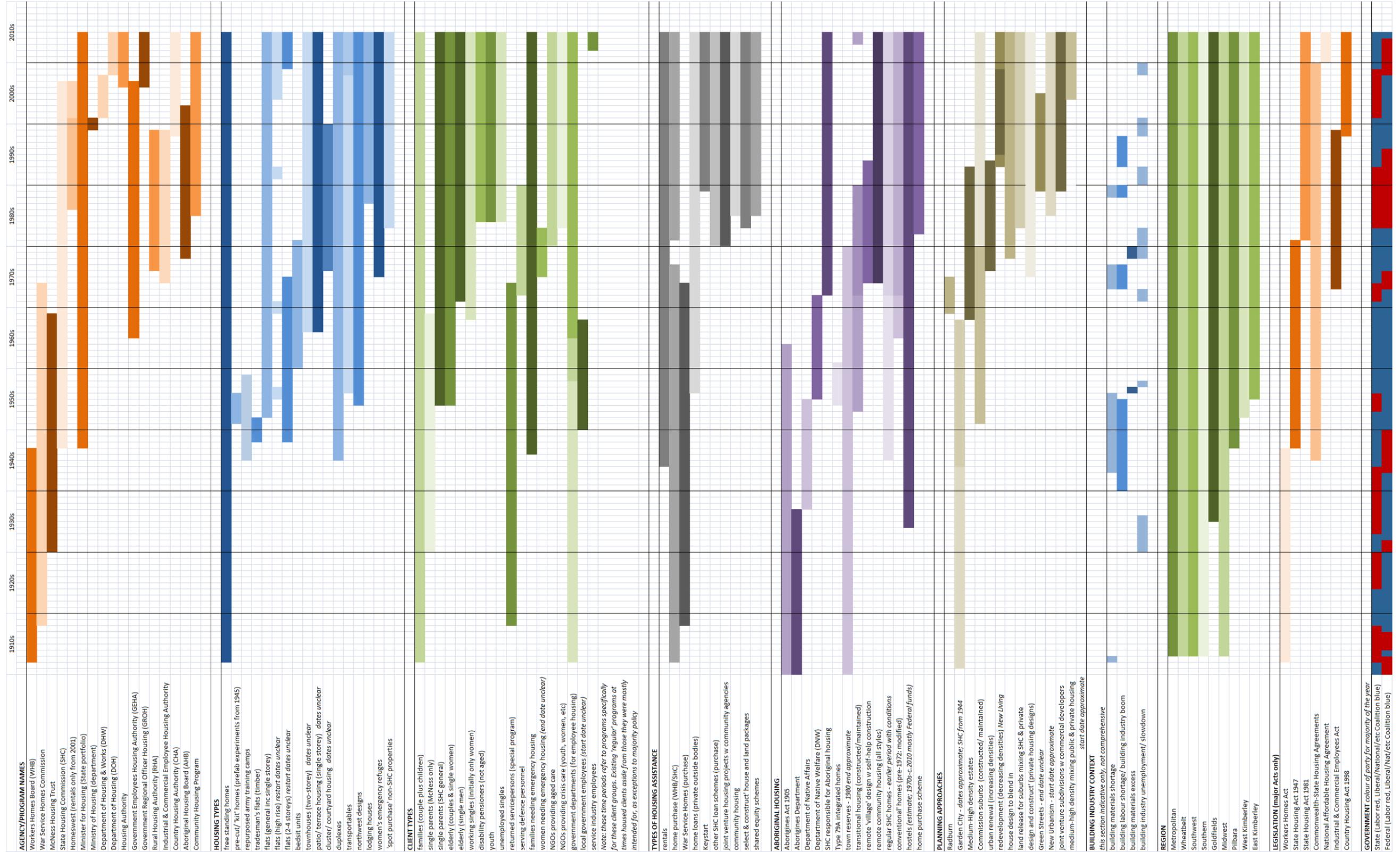
DOH housing may be considered by client group:



It is likely the 6,436 residences less clearly marked are also at times used for families, singles or aged/seniors. In addition, places earmarked for one client type are known to be at times occupied by another client group, such as when 'family' units have only one resident for various reasons. It is likely more than the 31 units noted are occupied by youth, although Community Housing provides more youth accommodation. Other client groups are not so readily identifiable in DOH property listings. Approximately 1,890 units appear to be assigned for disabled occupants. The database does not identify the gender of clients, but annual reports indicated over 50% of lead tenants are women.

Aboriginal clients are no longer assigned to specifically Aboriginal housing, except in remote communities. DOH notes 2,224 housing units as formerly designated for Aboriginal tenants, and a further 1,114 units in remote Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal tenants have also been placed in 'regular' DOH housing for many years. Annual reports suggest around 20% of DOH housing has Aboriginal occupants.

4.1 CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF KEY THEMES, EVENTS & AGENCIES



## 5 THEMES

Places related to the history of government housing may be considered in terms of a wide range of themes. Some are more abstract than others, relating to intangibles such as social attitudes and cultural change. Others address much more concrete matters, such as building materials and design styles, and may also be considered as 'types' or 'functions'. The latter group are listed below as 'quantifiable themes'

The Heritage Council of WA has developed a list of 55 themes that it uses in assessing the heritage value of places considered for entry into the State Register of Heritage Places. Of these, 45 have some relevance to the history of government housing in the State. As they are the identified Western Australian reference point for thematic heritage analysis, these themes are noted in detail as an Appendix, including notes on their relevance to this history ([Section 24.5.1](#)). HCWA themes are on the whole very broad, with some unusually specific exceptions. As they are mostly too vague or inconsistent to be of significant use in this project, they have not been further developed or worked with.

The Australian Heritage Council (AHC) in 2001 produced a wide-ranging 'thematic framework' to assist with considering heritage values for Australian places. These themes are based on activities. The framework includes over 200 themes and sub-themes, allowing for much more detailed analysis than the HCWA themes. It was also designed to be expanded for specific projects. Therefore, the AHC themes have been used as the primary framework for this study. They are outlined below as 'qualitative themes'. A detailed list of all these themes and their relevance to government housing in Western Australia is provided in the Appendices at [Section 24.5.2](#).

### 5.1 QUANTIFIABLE THEMES

DOH places may be considered 'thematically' according to any of the following criteria:

- Construction period (as per chapter divisions)
- Building materials (timber, brick veneer, pre-cut, transportable, asbestos, etc)
- Housing type (flat, townhouse, duplex, single detached, etc)
- Building style/standard plan (standard plan type numbers, also Apperly et al style guide)
- Client group (families, singles, aged, GEHA, etc)
- Location (country, metropolitan, remote community, inner city, suburban, etc)
- Type of housing assistance (rental, War Service, McNess, community housing, etc)
- Planning approach (Garden City, Radburn, Green Streets, etc)

These are relatively easy to assess and on the whole fairly concrete. A timeline plotting these categories chronologically is provided at [Section 4.1](#). All DOH properties should be able to be placed into each of these eight categories.

## 5.2 QUALITATIVE THEMES

As in many ways a history of government housing in Western Australia is a history of the State, many AHC themes are applicable in some way. Seventy-five AHC themes have been identified as relevant. However, they do not all have the same weight and some are relevant to only a small part of the housing story.

The AHC thematic framework was designed to be expanded and in keeping with this intention, a further 31 themes have been added to allow the history of government housing in Western Australia to be more fully represented. These are noted below in italics, with an approximate number or numbers relative to the AHC framework noted (marked with '?').

This expanded collection of 101 AHC themes has been sorted into eight groups:

Government policy

Town planning

Design & construction

External influences & events

Housing for particular workers

Experience of residents

Social & community services

SHC's influence on Australian society

Many DOH properties will demonstrate themes in most or all of these groups, but some may identify strongly in only one or two groups.

Government policy		Town planning		Design & construction		External influences and events	
Themes highlighting both the actions of government in housing policy, and the impact of government legislation/policy/inquiries etc (not necessarily directly housing-related) on government housing. Includes all housing programs and policies. Emphasises changes in rationale behind programs.		Themes highlighting SHC contributions to urban landscapes, especially through SHC estates and SHC-influenced towns, but also wider influence in shaping the residential form of the State including through more recent policies of integrating government housing into private residential areas. Includes application of particular town planning philosophies (eg. Radburn, Garden City, Green Streets)		Themes relating to the physical form of government houses and the design philosophies and social expectations that changed this form over time. Includes both original designs and later upgrades.		Themes relating to influences beyond government's direct sphere of influence: global economic events, wars, international sporting events, natural disasters, migration, multinational companies, etc	
2.5	Promoting Settlement	4.1	Planning urban settlements	3.14.1	Building to suit Australian conditions	2.4	Migrating
7.6.7	Enforcing discriminatory legislation	4.1.1	Selecting township sites	3.14.2	Using Australian materials in construction	2.4.5	Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration
7.6.8	Administering Indigenous Affairs	4.1.2	Making suburbs	7.6.9	Conserving Australian resources	3-15	Developing economic links outside Australia
7?	<i>Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships: cooperation and challenge</i>	4.1.4	Creating capital cities	7.6.12	Conserving Australia's heritage	3.16.1	Dealing with hazards and disasters
7?	<i>Responding to government inquiries and policy changes</i>	4.5	Making settlements to serve rural Australia	8.10.4	Designing and building fine buildings	4.1.3	Learning to live with property booms and busts
7?	<i>Engaging with housing policy through government</i>	4.6	Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities	8.10.5	Advancing knowledge in science and technology	8.1.1	Playing and watching organized sports
3/7/8?	<i>Working as government in partnership with private or community groups</i>	7.8	Establishing regional and local identity	4?	<i>Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity</i>	2/3/8?	<i>International events impacting on Australian domestic life</i>
		8.1.3	Developing public parks and gardens	4?	<i>Attending to security, safety and privacy</i>	8/9?	<i>Servicepersons returning into the community</i>
		4?	<i>Increasing residential density</i>	4?	<i>Designing using architectural competitions</i>		
		3/4/8?	<i>Applying international ideas to Australian contexts</i>	8?	<i>Developing and applying standard plans</i>		
				8?	<i>Designing to address particular needs or problems</i>		
				3/7/8?	<i>Responding to changing standards and social norms</i>		
				4/8?	<i>Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos</i>		

Unassigned	
This theme fits within many of the other categories, as significant individuals are of note for a wide range of reasons including government policy, town planning, social & community services and design & construction.	
8?	<i>Significant individuals</i>

Housing for particular workers		Experience of residents		Social & community services		SHC's influence on Australian society	
Themes connected to the work of housing occupants, generally outside their government house. Mostly government employee housing but also housing for industrial workers, armed services housing and temporary workers for sustenance workers. Particularly relevant in Country and Northwest regions.		Themes describing aspects of the experience of government housing occupants, both through the demographics of residents (eg. age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, social standing, income) and aspects of housing that influenced or were influenced by residents' experience (eg. stigma, poverty, tenancy, pursuit of home ownership, family violence, racial prejudice, unions, unemployment)		Themes demonstrating the SHC's role in providing services beyond just roofs and walls, both through the nature of the housing provided (eg. disability housing, aged person's housing, women's refuges) and through services outside of the actual houses (eg. SHC shops, urban infrastructure, community development workers). While these themes significantly overlap with those at 'Experience of Residents', this group emphasises the action of the agency rather than the experience of the residents.		Themes highlighting the wide indirect influence of government housing policies and programs on many aspects of Australian life, beyond the more direct influences emphasised by themes related to town planning, design or social and community services (the 'core business' of the SHC). For example: development of industries to supply building materials; apprenticeship schemes; industries and regions supported by provision of government housing (eg. Group Settlement, Northwest expansion)	
3.4.2	Fishing and whaling	2.1	Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants	3.12.5	Retailing foods and beverages	2.5	Promoting settlement
3.4.3	Mining	4.4	Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness	3.19	Marketing and retailing	3.13	Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity
3.4.4	Making forests into a saleable resource	5.1.1	Coping with unemployment	3.22	Lodging people	3.14	Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry
3.5.3	Developing agricultural industries	5.2	Organising workers and work places	3.26.4	Providing care for people with disabilities	3.18	Financing Australia
3.6	Recruiting labour	5.3	Caring for workers' dependent children	4.2	Supplying urban services	4.3	Developing institutions
3.7	Establishing communications	5.6	Working in the home	7.6.6	Providing services and welfare	6.3	Training people for the workplace
3.8	Moving goods and people	5.7	Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated economy	8.5.2	Helping people	6.6	Educating Indigenous people in two cultures
3.11	Altering the environment	8.5.3	Associating for mutual aid	9.6.2	Looking after the infirm and the aged	3?	<i>Financing home-purchase schemes</i>
3.26	Providing health services	8.12	Living in and around Australian homes	4?	<i>Utilising Lotteries funding</i>	3?	<i>Providing services to support industrial development</i>
5.1	Working in harsh conditions	8.13	Living in cities and suburbs	7?	<i>Redressing discrimination</i>		
5.4	Working in offices	8.14	Living in the country and rural settlements	4/8/9?	<i>Responding to lack of services</i>		
6.2	Establishing schools	8.15	Being homeless				
6.4	Building a system of higher education	9.2	Growing up				
6.5	Educating people in remote places	9.3	Forming families and partnerships				
7.6.1	Developing local government authorities	9.4	Being an adult				
7.6.3	Policing Australia	9.5	Living outside of a family/partnership				
7.6.4	Dispensing justice	9.6	Growing old				
7.6.5	Incarcerating people	9.6.1	Retiring				
				<b>Experience of residents continued</b>			
7.6.10	Conserving fragile environments	3?	<i>Being poor/living with poverty</i>	8?	<i>Maintaining hierarchy, distinction or social status</i>	<b>Experience of residents continued</b>	
7.7	Defending Australia	4?	<i>Living in rental accommodation</i>	8?	<i>Living with social stigma</i>	9?	<i>Living as women in Australian society</i>
4?	<i>Providing temporary housing</i>	8?	<i>Pursuing home ownership</i>	9?	<i>Living as single-parent families</i>	7/8/9?	<i>Responding to family violence and abuse</i>

## 6 FORMATION OF THE WORKERS' HOMES BOARD (1911-1914)

Western Australia had developed relatively slowly through the nineteenth century. European settlement in 1829 brought a tiny, struggling population. The arrival of convicts in 1850 boosted the population and brought an influx of government funding to support the convict establishment. This allowed European settlement to stabilise and expand, so that after the last convicts arrived in 1868 the colony was sufficiently established to continue its gradual growth.<sup>5</sup>

The discovery of gold in the Kimberley in the 1880s and the Murchison and Eastern Goldfields in the 1890s, the latter coinciding with a severe recession in the eastern colonies, resulted in massive migration to Western Australia. Between 1890 and 1901, the official Western Australian population increased from 48,502 to 193,601, a fourfold (300%) increase. Over 60% of the population were male at the turn of the century, although in the mid-1890s this had been as high as 71%. Gold brought wealth, and the new population brought an expanded skills base. Government income and government expenditure both increased dramatically. As the gold boom eased at the start of the twentieth century, the population moved off the goldfields, into agriculture and into Perth and regional centres. Single men began to settle down and start families, and married men who had left their families behind in the east brought them west. Birth rates increased. By 1911, the female population had increased to nearly 43%. The official population was 293,923, a 50% increase over the preceding decade, with natural increase rather than immigration becoming the main determinant in population figures. In the same decade the number of houses in the state rose from 50,358 to 68,870, an increase of only 37%, meaning the average number of people per house rose from 3.8 to 4.3.<sup>6</sup> While single men could be accommodated in shared accommodation, including hostels, boarding houses, hotels and workers' barracks, families generally preferred their own homes.

By 1911, the cost of living in Western Australia was rapidly rising, causing public concern, especially about the high cost of rental accommodation in Perth. In the State election that year, both major parties promised homes for workers.<sup>7</sup>

Cost of living concerns were not always the motivation for government housing schemes. In other places, provision of workers' home was intended to address overcrowding or slums. In Britain following World War One, fear of social unrest motivated the government to initiate extensive public housing schemes, increasing both the quantity and quality of low-income workers' homes to provide for returned service personnel. In the USA, social housing programs of the 1930s developed in response to high Depression-era unemployment among the building trade, aiming to create jobs.<sup>8</sup>

The Western Australian Labor Party, led by John Scaddan, swept to power in October 1911, claiming twelve additional seats to hold 68% of the Legislative Chamber, a percentage majority that has never been held by any party in the State since, even in coalition. Scaddan's was the first Labor government for

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<sup>5</sup> Appleyard, R.T. 'Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914', in C.T. Stannage (ed), *A New History of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1981, pp.211-36

<sup>6</sup> Appleyard, 'Western Australia ... 1850-1914', in Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia*, 1981, pp.211-36; Gave, Dino 'Gold: Did it Transform Society?', pp.161-73, and Young, Mike, 'Agricultural Development: How Important?', pp.175-88, in Westralian History Group, *On This Side: Themes and Issues in Western Australian History*, Bookland (Education Department of WA), East Perth, 1985

Note: official population figures do not include Aboriginal persons in this period

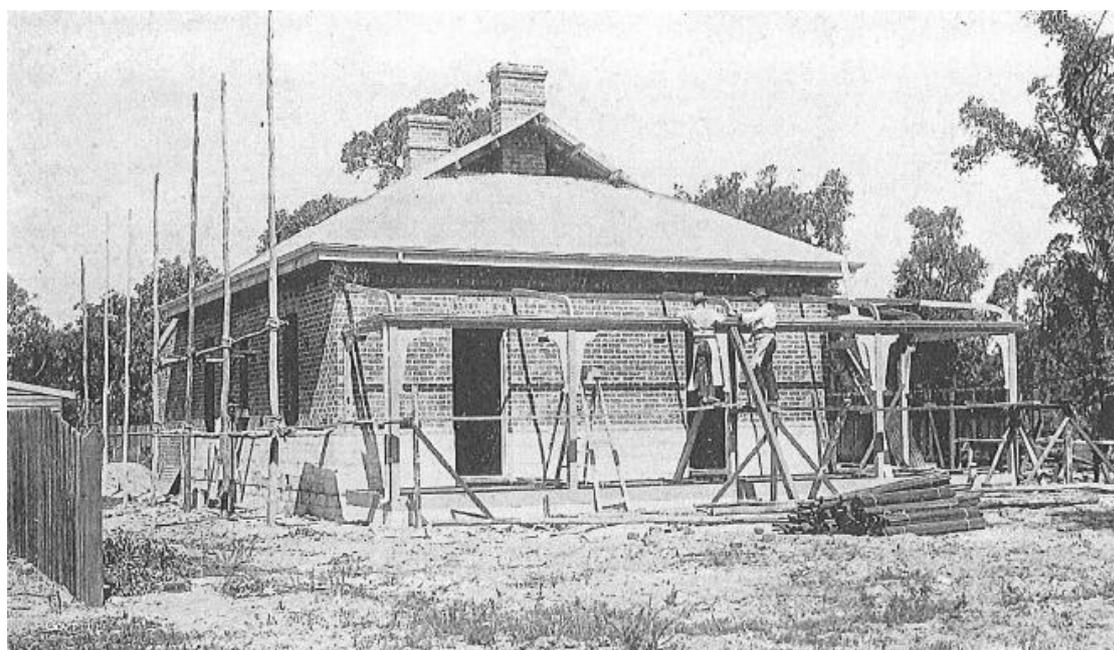
<sup>7</sup> Sharp, Roma, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia: the Workers' Homes Board and State Housing Commission: Precursors of Homeswest', Murdoch University History Honours Thesis, 1993, p.19

<sup>8</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.5-6, 8-9, 20-21

the State.<sup>9</sup> Two months after being elected, Scaddan introduced the Workers' Homes Bill into parliament to provide affordable housing and reduce the general cost of living. The following year, the *Government Trading Concerns Act* initiated State brickworks, quarries and timber mills as further measures to reduce building costs.<sup>10</sup>

The Workers' Homes Board was established under *The Workers' Homes Act*, which came into effect in January 1912 with bipartisan support. The Board initially comprised Surveyor General Harry F. Johnston (Chairman), Manager of the Government Savings Bank Carl Leschen, and PWD Assistant Architect W.B. Hardwick.<sup>11</sup> Attempts to have representatives for women's or workers' interests on the Board failed and such representatives were not included until the creation of the State Housing Commission after World War Two.<sup>12</sup>

'Workers', as defined by the Act, included any employed person, male or female, in any occupation, who earned under £300 per year. Within a year the income limit was raised to £400. Two different forms of housing assistance were offered. The first, 'Part III' or 'Leasehold', involved the Board constructing homes on Crown land for purchase at around half the cost of an equivalent rental home, with the government retaining the land title and the home owner, even after fully purchasing their house, being a perpetual lessee of the land. The second, 'Part IV' or 'freehold', comprised loans of up to £550 for land-owners wishing to build on their property, with moderate repayments rates. Initially, Part IV loans were much more popular, accounting for over 90% of applications.<sup>13</sup> No provision was made for the government to provide rental accommodation.



Part III home under construction at Subiaco, 1912-13

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

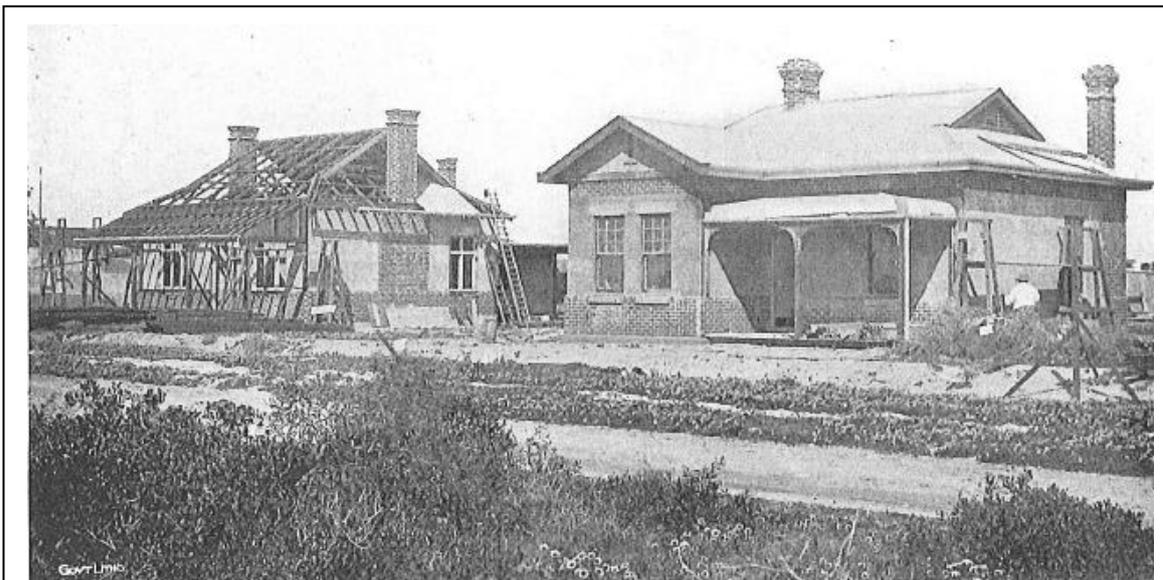
<sup>9</sup> List of Western Australian Legislative Assembly Elections, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Western\\_Australian\\_Legislative\\_Assembly\\_elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Western_Australian_Legislative_Assembly_elections) accessed 16 April 2014

<sup>10</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.20-21

<sup>11</sup> Workers' Homes Board (WHB), *Chairman's Report*, (Annual Report) for the period 1911-12

<sup>12</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.20-21

<sup>13</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933; Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.22-25



Part III homes under construction at Geraldton, 1912-13

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

The Workers' Homes scheme attracted surprisingly little recorded public comment. Some hesitation was expressed about the State taking on the role of landlord for 'leasehold' properties, although this possibly resulted from a lack of understanding about the Part III terms. The government, however, was confident that workers would be grateful for any secure housing and not wedded to a purist home-ownership dream. The building industry was supportive of the scheme as it would bring substantial additional work.<sup>14</sup>

Arrangements to purchase homes while also renting them were not uncommon in the private housing market at the time. A 1911 census identified 6% of Perth residences as occupied by 'rent purchasers', buying their rental properties by instalments. The payments were generally made to a land company, such as Woodville Estate in North Perth.<sup>15</sup>

In the first full year of the Board's operation, 102 applications were received for leasehold properties and 998 for freehold. Two thirds of the freehold applications were approved. Loans of £216,255 were distributed, more than half being for the construction of new homes, with the remainder for purchasing existing homes, discharging existing mortgages, or improving existing homes. Those repaying freehold loans were mostly paying 4s to 8s less than if they had been renting equivalent properties – a significant saving, especially as part of their repayments was the capital value of the property, not just interest.<sup>16</sup>

The first leasehold house built under the *Workers' Homes Act* was a four-room brick residence on limestone base, with limestone to sill height and iron roofing, completed at East Fremantle in June 1913. Four other Workers' Homes were erected within the year adjacent to this first home.<sup>17</sup> From the outset, the Board offered standard plans, designed by the government architect. From 1913, the three largest models were withdrawn, as building costs had risen to put them beyond the provisions of the Act, and seven new cheaper designs were offered instead, bringing the number of standard plans on offer to nineteen. To economise on size, entry halls were largely left out of plans, with circulation instead through

<sup>14</sup> Kelly, Ian, 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)', UWA Architecture Master's Thesis, 1992, pp.295-96

<sup>15</sup> Stannage, C.T. *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City*, Perth City Council, Perth WA, 1979, p.247

<sup>16</sup> WHB, *Report*, (Annual Report) 1913

<sup>17</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.26-27

living areas. However, the living room and master bedroom remained at regular size (16x12ft [4.88x3.66m] for living rooms, 12x12ft [3.66x3.66m] for main bedrooms). Back verandahs were often designed to allow for future enclosure when more bedrooms were needed. Most plans included bathrooms under the main roof.<sup>18</sup>

The *Workers' Homes Act 1912* and its subsequent amendments allowed for significant adaptation of homes for applicants' design choices. As such, considerable variety was evident amongst homes constructed under the Act.<sup>19</sup> Repayment terms favoured brick or stone homes, with terms permitting twice as long to repay loans compared with timber houses, arising from Scaddan's personal belief in the inferiority of timber dwellings.<sup>20</sup>



Part IV home, 1912-13

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

The first areas considered by the Board for homes were at Bushmead Estate, Midland Junction, Leederville, Osborne Park, Fremantle, Pingelly, Wagin, Narrogin and Geraldton. Within a year land for WHB houses was being obtained throughout the Metropolitan area, including Fremantle, Midland Junction, Victoria Park, Subiaco, and at Swan View, Gosnells, Geraldton, Northam, York, Brookton, Beverley, Wickiepin, Wagin, Pingelly, Katanning, Narrogin, Meckering, Cunderdin, Smith's Mill, Pinjarra, Bunbury, Brunswick, Lion Mill (Mount Helena), Donnybrook, Collie, Kalgoorlie, Merredin, and Beverley.<sup>21</sup>

In the first fourteen months that the Board constructed leasehold homes, 88 were completed in the Metropolitan area and a further 53 were well under way. Completed houses were at Fremantle (36), Buckland Hill (3), Cottesloe Beach (1), Osborne (1), Subiaco (30), South Perth (5), Victoria Park (2), Midland Junction (2), Queens Park (1) and Leederville (7). An unknown number of houses had also been

<sup>18</sup> Kelly, 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)', 1992, pp.298-301

<sup>19</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.25

<sup>20</sup> Kelly, 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)', 1992, p.298

<sup>21</sup> WHB, *Chairman's Report*, (Annual Report) 1912 and 1913



Part IV home, 1912-13

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

completed at Geraldton, Pingelly, Narrogin and Wagin.<sup>22</sup> The spread of homes throughout the State indicates the dispersal of WHB properties. In the Metropolitan area, Workers' Homes were concentrated on the suburban fringes, close to industry – including areas that are now inner suburbs, such as Subiaco, Victoria Park, Carlisle, Maylands and Jolimont. Belmont and Guildford were also favoured for these homes in the first years of the scheme.<sup>23</sup>

Leasehold homes in the early years were largely constructed by the Board's own day labour workforce.<sup>24</sup> Problems were initially encountered as a boom in the building industry in 1913 meant labour and materials, especially bricks, were in short supply, but by mid-1914 both were readily available.<sup>25</sup>

Freehold homes were regularly inspected during construction by building inspectors of the agency. In 1913-14, most were built between Fremantle and Armadale. Building materials included brick, brick and stone, cement concrete blocks (2), 'rough castings on metal' (1), asbestos cladding (2), timber, and timber and iron.<sup>26</sup> Once properties were complete, the Board continued to make annual inspections to check that the assets for which they held mortgages were being appropriately maintained.<sup>27</sup>

The recorded use of asbestos in 1913-14 is likely to be an early example of this material in Western Australian housing. Although asbestos had been in use as a versatile material around the world for hundreds of years, and in Australia from the 1880s, asbestos sheeting for residential construction was only developed commercially from the 1920s. Asbestos was imported and not used extensively until asbestos began to be mined at Wittenoom in the 1930s and building materials shortages in the 1940s and 1950s increased its popularity as a relatively cheap building material.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1914*

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)', 1992, p.301

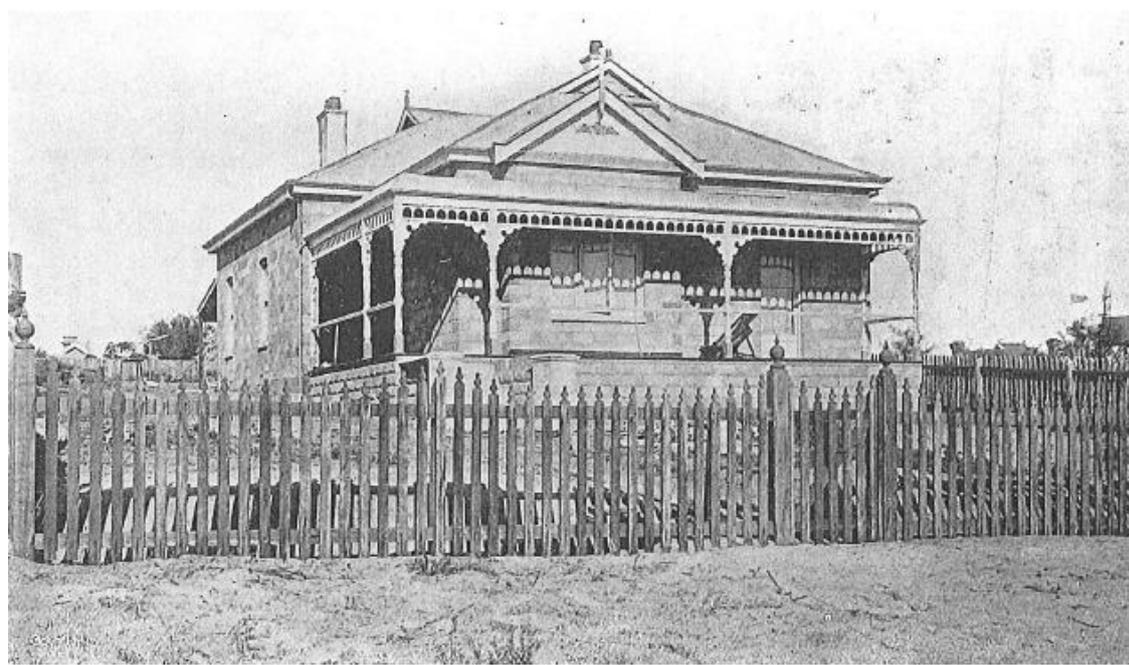
<sup>24</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.27-28

<sup>25</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1914*

<sup>26</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1914*

<sup>27</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1915*

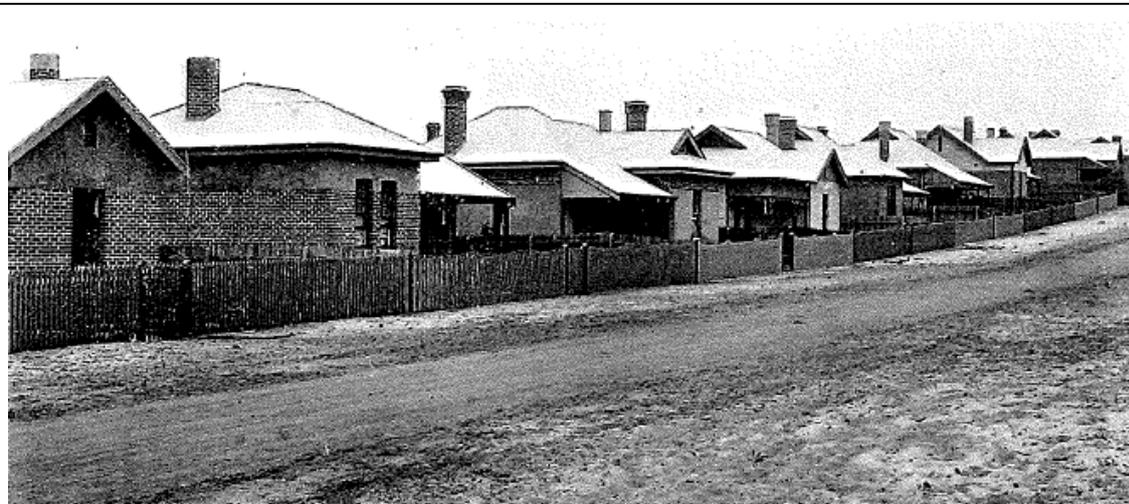
<sup>28</sup> Australian Asbestos Network <http://www.australianasbestosnetwork.org.au/Asbestos+History> accessed 12 Sept 2014



Part IV home, 1912-13

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

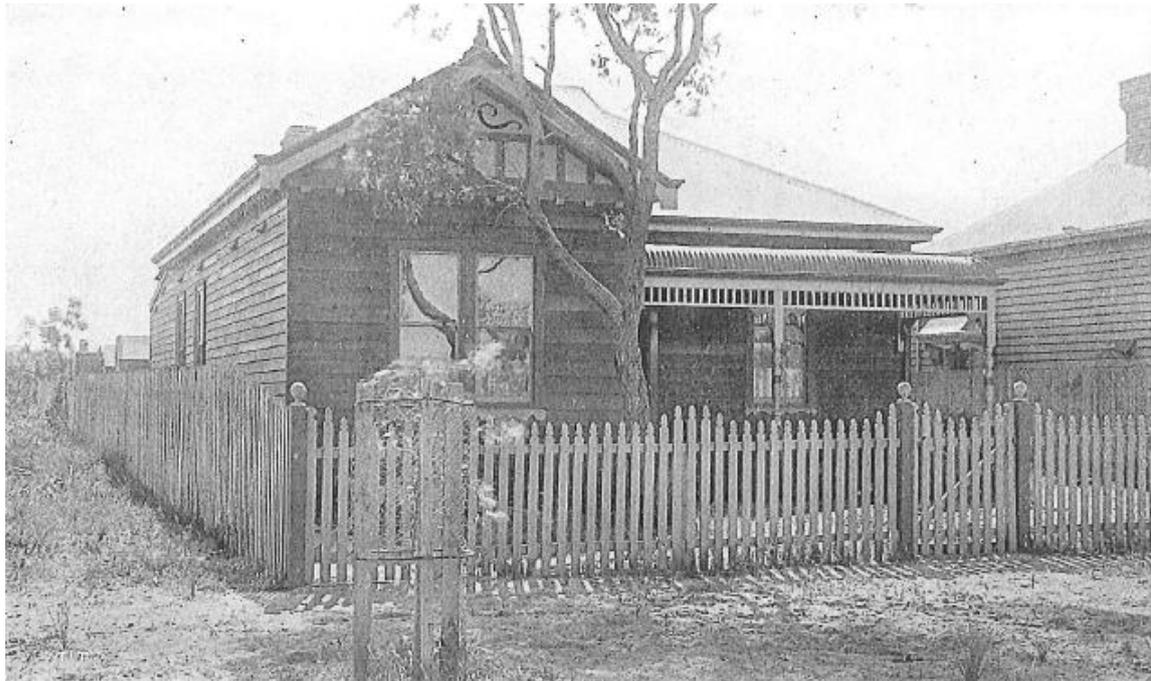
High living costs may have concerned West Australians in the years prior to World War One, but unbeknown to them the levels of per capita income in the State in 1913 were not going to be surpassed until around 1950, as wars, depression and drought intervened. However, standards of living did improve overall, as services were expanded.<sup>29</sup>



Row of Part III houses, 1913-14

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1914*

<sup>29</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, December 2004, p.15 <http://www.treasury.wa.gov.au/cms/uploadedFiles/1593-econhistory-5a%281%29.pdf>

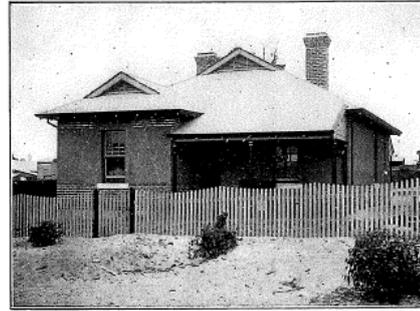
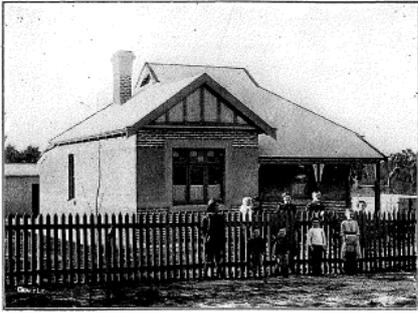


Part IV home, 1912-13

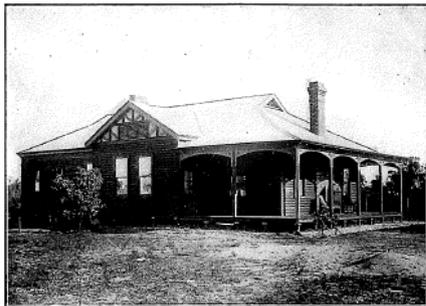
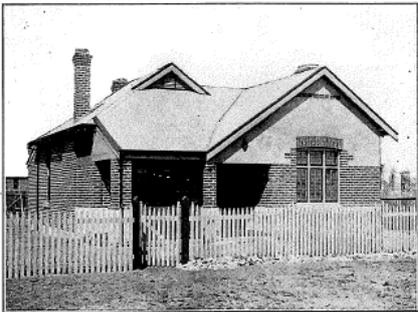
*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1913*

*Places remaining in 2014:*

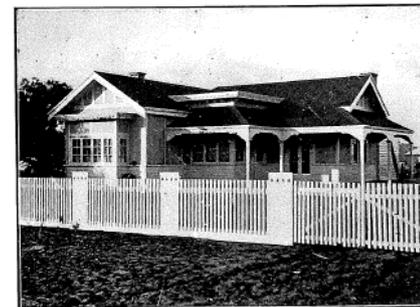
Fremantle and Subiaco, with the greatest concentration of early WHB homes, may retain some representative examples of this period in private ownership. DOH does not appear to retain any residences from the early WHB years.



Types of Dwellings erected by  
the Board, Part III.  
Metropolitan and Country Districts.



Types of Dwellings erected by  
owners with Loans approved  
under Part IV.  
Metropolitan and Country Districts.



Part III and IV residences, Metropolitan and Country, 1913-14  
*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1914*

## 7 WORLD WAR ONE (1914-1918)

With the outbreak of World War One in August 1914, almost half the Board's staff enlisted. The day after Britain entered the war, the Workers' Homes Board issued a notice ceasing to accept housing applications.<sup>30</sup>

Of the 231 leasehold properties constructed by mid-1915, most cost between £400 and £600, with the average price being £490. Loans for freehold properties included many smaller sums, with the average of 1,200 loans being £378.<sup>31</sup> This was because freehold provisions allowed applicants to receive a loan for all or part of the cost of their home.

Construction of homes slowed markedly as World War One took hold. However, services improved. Many Board homes had initially been constructed on unmade roads but by 1915 all Board leasehold properties had made road frontages.<sup>32</sup>

Work continued on homes approved prior to the war, all of which were completed early in 1916. Men enlisting were permitted to transfer their property to another approved worker.<sup>33</sup> From October 1916, leasehold provisions were 'discontinued' and freehold operations 'rigidly curtailed, if not practically discontinued'.<sup>34</sup>

With the exception of homes erected from February 1917 for disabled soldiers and a few 'special cases' for civilians, the operations of the Board practically ceased until the 1920s. Wartime provisions were made for deferment of repayments in cases of hardship, which a handful of the Board's 1370 clients took advantage of even in the first year of the war.<sup>35</sup>

In 1918, the *War Service Homes Act* was passed. This Commonwealth legislation provided generous terms for returned servicemen to obtain government home loans and established the War Service Homes Commission. The first War Service Home built in Western Australia was completed in October 1919, at 111 Fifth Avenue Inglewood.<sup>36</sup>

In some parts of Australia, War Service Homes were planned in large groups of up to 300 homes, but this was not popular and does not appear to have been pursued in Western Australia.<sup>37</sup>

From February 1917, applications under the *Workers' Homes Act* were reopened for returning servicemen. From mid-1919, these applications were referred to the Commonwealth under the *War Service Homes Act*. From February 1920, applications for new homes were restricted to country areas, with Metropolitan applicants eligible for assistance only to purchase existing homes or discharge existing mortgages.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.29

<sup>31</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1915

<sup>32</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1915

<sup>33</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1916

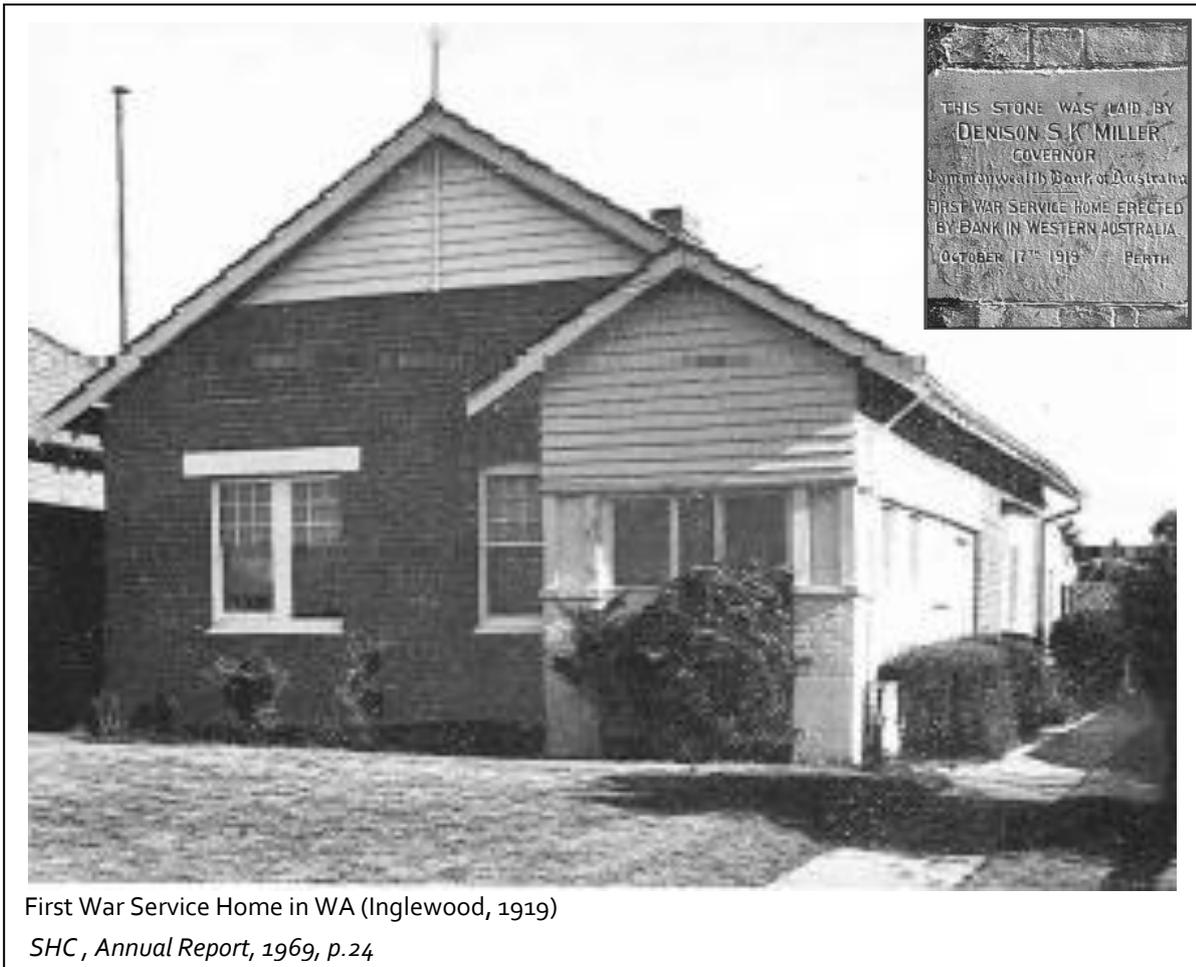
<sup>34</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1920

<sup>35</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.29

<sup>36</sup> State Housing Commission (SHC), *Annual Report*, 1969

<sup>37</sup> Freestone, Robert, *Urban Nation: Australia's Planning Heritage*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood Vic, 2010, p.182

<sup>38</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1920



*Places remaining in 2014:*

The first War Service Home, in Fifth Avenue Inglewood, may remain extant. Fifth Avenue is now in Mount Lawley. This section of Fifth Avenue mostly retains modest interwar residences, some with substantial additions. The house shown in historic photographs cannot be easily identified from Google Streetview but may remain.

## 8 SUPPORTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT (1920S)

A lack of capital and steadily high building costs restricted the State government's ability to provide civilian housing assistance under its own schemes in the early 1920s.<sup>39</sup> By 1920, there was a housing shortage for 'civilians' (presumably those not eligible for War Service Homes) in some towns and suburbs.<sup>40</sup> High building costs slowed the rate of applications for housing loans.<sup>41</sup>

The Workers' Homes Board took on administration in Western Australia of the Commonwealth *War Service Homes Act* from 1921.<sup>42</sup> The Federally-funded scheme provided greater financial support than the provisions of the *Workers' Homes Act*, and War Service homes were soon significantly outnumbering Workers' Homes Act residences in the State.<sup>43</sup> The State and Federal agencies worked together to provide these houses for returned servicemen.<sup>44</sup> By June 1924, 2,225 homes in the State were subject to War Service Homes loans, many of which had been approved before management transferred to the Workers' Homes Board.<sup>45</sup> Although a comparative figure has not been located, this appears to be several hundred more homes than had been constructed under the *Workers' Homes Act* in twice as many years of operation.

In 1922, legislation introduced by Premier James Mitchell was passed to improve the supply of housing for married rural workers. The Workers' Homes Board designed two simple four-room timber cottages, Types 2 and 3, to cater for rural workers. Type 2, the simplest, had one fireplace, front but no rear verandah, no ablutions, ceilings in only two rooms and unlined walls. Type 3, a slight improvement, had two fireplaces, front and rear verandahs, and ceilings to three rooms. William B Hardwick of the PWD was Chairman of the Workers' Homes Board through the 1920s, and it has been suggested he may have been involved in the preparation of standard plans.<sup>46</sup> By 1924, it seems all rooms had ceilings.<sup>47</sup> However sparse, these cottages were an improvement for many rural families living in tents or sheds.<sup>48</sup>

The Group Settlement Scheme was a State government initiative of the 1920s to expand farming areas through the Southwest, mainly for dairying.<sup>49</sup> Through the 1920s, the Workers' Homes Board provided these houses for the Group Settlement Scheme, administered through the Lands and Surveys Department. Type 1, 2 and 3 timber cottages were largely superseded from the late 1920s by Type 7. Between 1922 and 1924, 528 WHB cottages were erected for Group Settlements.<sup>50</sup> Group Settlement

<sup>39</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.29-30

<sup>40</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1920

<sup>41</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1921

<sup>42</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939

<sup>43</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.29-30

<sup>44</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1926

<sup>45</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1924

<sup>46</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Study Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage Western Australia', prepared for the Department of Planning and Urban Development, September 1992, pp.48, 51-52

<sup>47</sup> *Sunday Times*, Sun 24 August 1924, p.8

<sup>48</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Study Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage', 1992, pp.48, 51-52

<sup>49</sup> SLWA 'Group Settlement', [http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead\\_reckoning/government\\_archival\\_records/d-j/group\\_settlement](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead_reckoning/government_archival_records/d-j/group_settlement) accessed 24 April 2014

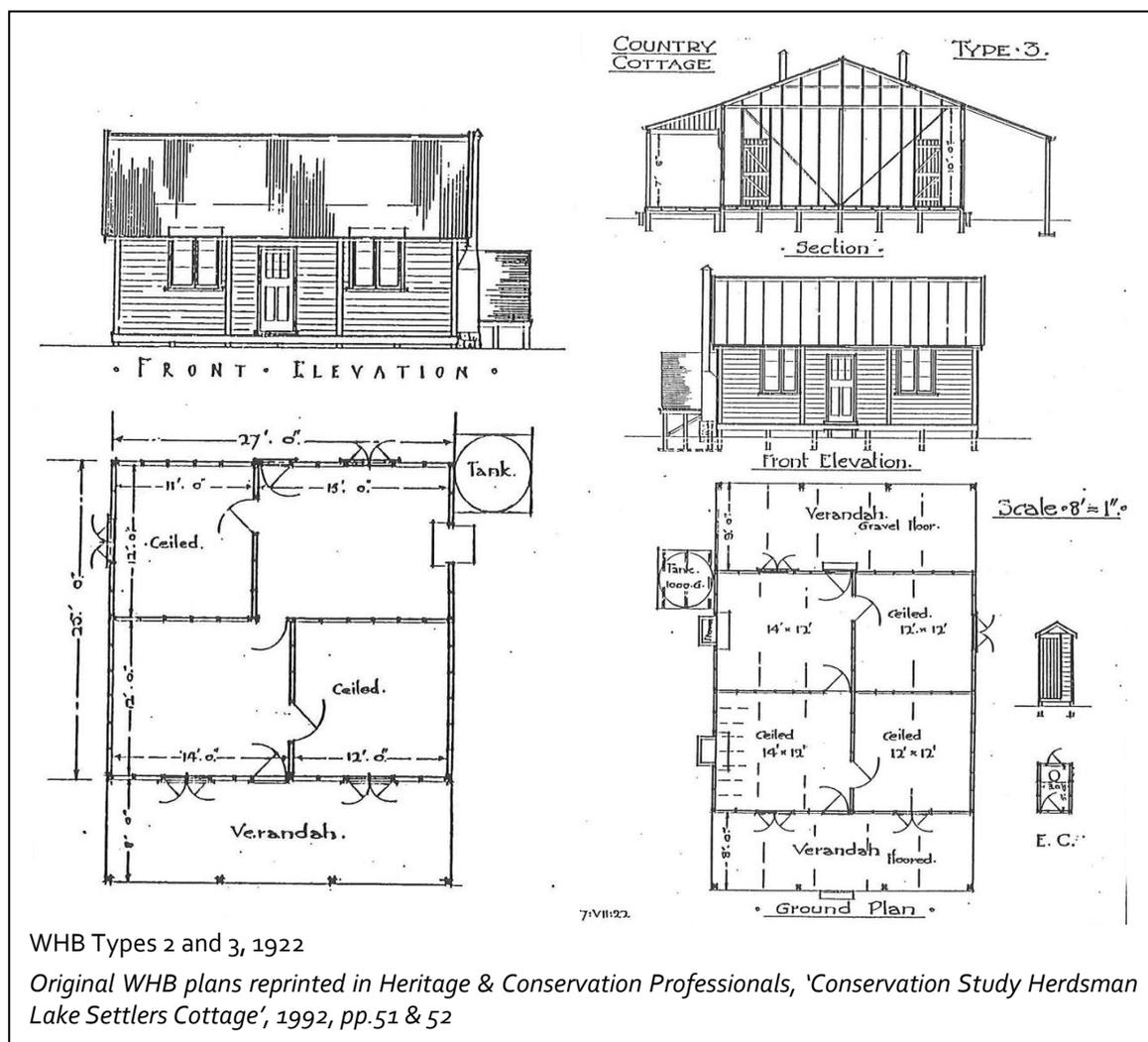
<sup>50</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', prepared for DHW on behalf of GEHA and CALM, February 2004, pp.17-18, 42-43.

Note: Forestry Cottage types 6 and 8 are also very similar to WHB Type 7

cottages were at times erected in large lots, such as a 1924 contract let to J. Carrigg of Mount Lawley to erect 362 WHB Type 3 cottages in the Northcliffe area.<sup>51</sup> The Board also administered the construction of some government employee housing, such as for the Forests Department at Inglehope in 1927.<sup>52</sup> Group Settlement cottages and government agency housing do not appear to have been included in the Board's annual statistics, possibly because they were not built on WHB land.

By 1923-24, construction of Workers' Homes Board residences was underway again, with 131 homes erected within the year. The majority of these were in country areas, where 101 homes were built in 49 different towns. This included 32 homes noted as 'the special type of weatherboard cottage', in 24 towns. Loan applications had been closed in the Metropolitan area. However, Metropolitan applications reopened early in 1924 and met with immediate demand.<sup>53</sup>

In 1926, it was agreed to supply £50,000 per year for loans and building construction. This allowed for approval of about 100 applications a year. The cap on loan amounts was also raised from £550 to £650.



Note: WHB annual reports mention neither Group Settlement houses in the 1920s nor government employee housing, but the above report relies on original WHB files held at SROWA and can be considered a reliable source for this information.

<sup>51</sup> *Sunday Times*, Sun 24 August 1924, p.8

<sup>52</sup> *Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, pp.17-18, 42-43*

<sup>53</sup> *WHB, Annual Report, 1924*

Previously, expenses were met from a diminishing capital supply and repayments on previous loans, supplemented by one-off grants.<sup>54</sup>

A considerable number of Leasehold loans were reallocated annually as lessees vacated their properties. In some years, more leasehold transfers were approved than new leasehold loans. By comparison, about a quarter of freehold loans had been transferred, demonstrating a lower turn-over rate amongst freehold properties. Board loans could be transferred to another approved worker.<sup>55</sup> Although most reports were at pains to note the exemplary character of Board tenants, including their care for their new homes, voluntary installation of fences and gardens, and the general favourable reception of Board properties in neighbourhoods,<sup>56</sup> at other times building inspectors reported that leasehold properties were vacated 'in a condition anything but creditable to the late lessees'.<sup>57</sup>

In 1927, a need for workers' homes was identified to accommodate those constructing Geraldton harbour. By 1929, twenty homes had been approved by the Board to partially address this need, mostly on Leasehold provisions.<sup>58</sup>

Provision of workers' homes was significant for the expansion of rural areas in the 1920s. Through the 1920s, the Board attempted wherever possible to approve country applications to facilitate regional development.<sup>59</sup>



Group settlers' cottage c.1925

*SLWA collection, 005155D*

<sup>54</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1927

<sup>55</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1926

<sup>56</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1914

<sup>57</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1915

<sup>58</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1926-29

<sup>59</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1927

In 1928-29, the maximum loan amount was increased from £650 to £800. However, the Board noted it would not be encouraging applicants to spend more than they could afford. Under the War Service Scheme at the time, loans of up to £1,800 could be obtained, indicating the very modest homes the Workers' Homes Board was administering in general. The number of applications for War Service Homes remained steady, and was far greater than applications under the *Workers' Homes Act*.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 38 housing units from the 1920s. All were acquired later, and may not be associated with either the Workers' Homes Board or War Services Homes Commission. Only eleven are single detached houses.

HCWA notes ten residences in its database that appear to have been built by the WHB, six of which are from the 1920s, three from the 1930s and one from 1941.

The 1941 and other 1930s houses are discussed in later chapters. It is likely other places in the HCWA database were constructed by the WHB but have not had the association noted.

HCWA does not systematically note associations with the Group Settlement scheme. However, six group settlement houses are identified in the HCWA database.

The Margaret River and Districts Historical Society recently completed a comprehensive project to photograph remaining group settlement residences in the Shire of Margaret River. Around 100 houses were photographed, varying from examples in original condition to either ruins or much-altered and extended houses.<sup>61</sup> Information regarding this project is available at <http://www.mrdhs.com/index.php?file=kop11.php>

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<sup>60</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1929

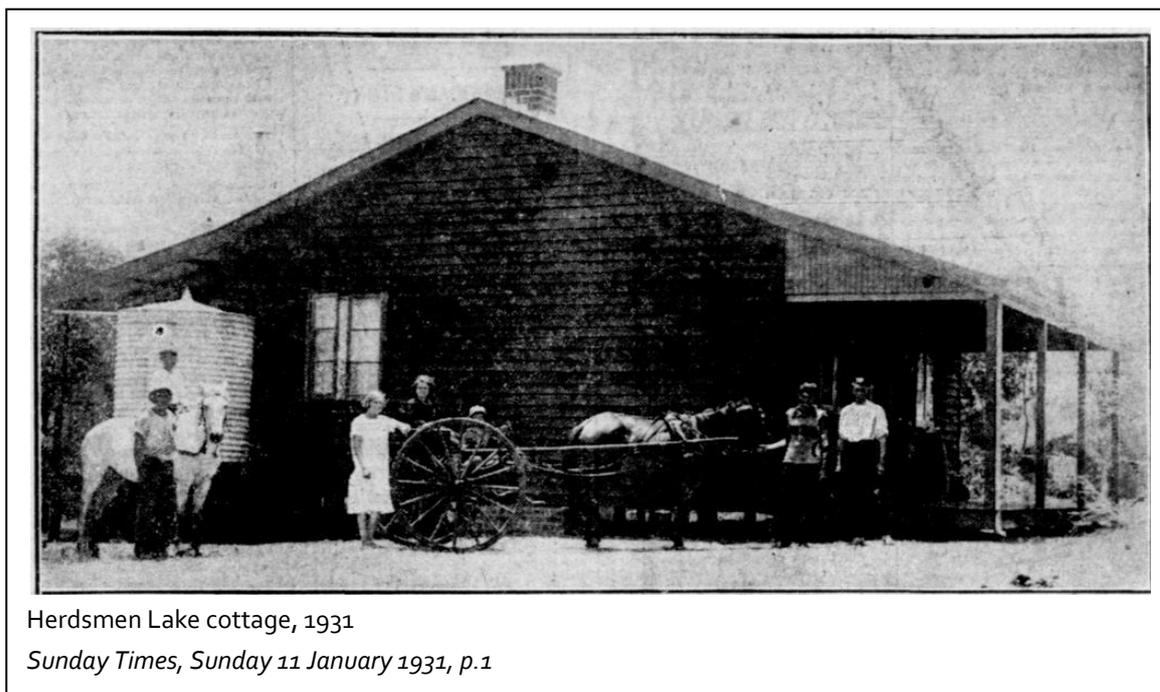
<sup>61</sup> Jan Matthews, Secretary, Margaret River & Districts Historical Society, email to Clare Menck, 14 August 2014

## 9 DEPRESSION (1930S)

When the New York stock market dramatically collapsed in 1929, Western Australia like the rest of the world suffered the subsequent economic Depression. Commodity prices fell, loans were recalled and capital dried up. Unemployment in the State peaked in 1932 at around 30%, and remained above pre-Depression levels until 1936.<sup>62</sup> Without a steady income, many people lost their homes and lived in makeshift accommodation. Although the economy was stabilising by the mid-1930s, for many people the effects of the Depression lasted throughout the decade.<sup>63</sup>

From 1930, the Housing Trust, later renamed McNess Housing Trust, was established, providing homes for the poor and indigent. The activities of the Trust are described in [Section 9.1](#). The Trust operated until 1968.

In 1930, the Commonwealth Bank loaned £100,000 to the Board to fund construction of homes under the 'Commonwealth Housing Scheme' (*Workers' Homes Act Section 54B*). This money was a one-off grant and was spent within the year.<sup>64</sup> By mid-1931, 630 Workers' Homes Board clients were unemployed and unable to pay their loan instalments, depending on the Board for relief, and others were paying at reduced rates.<sup>65</sup> This suggests a third or more of Workers' Homes Board clients were struggling with repayments at the time, on par with the State's unemployment rate.<sup>66</sup> The Board continued to turn a



Herdsmen Lake cottage, 1931  
*Sunday Times, Sunday 11 January 1931, p.1*

<sup>62</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, pp.16-17

<sup>63</sup> Australian Government, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/great-depression> accessed 24 April 2014

<sup>64</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939. It is not clear if this was a separate scheme or referred to War Service Homes

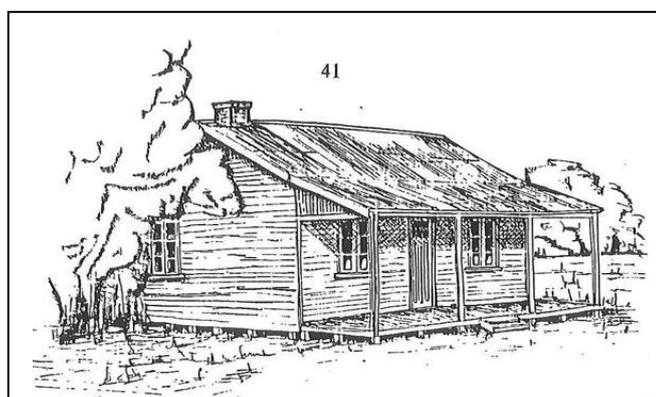
<sup>65</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 28 October 1931, p.5

<sup>66</sup> Annual reports for 1930, 1931 and 1932 could not be located for this project, and as such the exact number of properties on the books in these years has not been ascertained. Also, it is not known how many residents in addition to the 630 unemployed were paying reduced rates. The estimate of one third is based on an assumption of around 2,200 properties and around 100 clients on reduced repayments, a relatively conservative estimate.

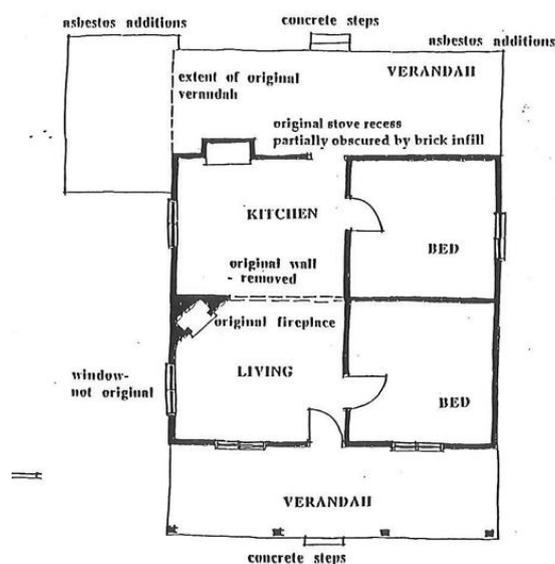
profit, however.<sup>67</sup>

In 1930-31, the Lands Department arranged with the Workers' Homes Board to have 40 houses built at Herdsman Lake. Managing these properties, including receiving payments and keeping accounts, remained the responsibility of the Board into the 1940s.<sup>68</sup> The government had purchased the land in 1920 to develop intensive agriculture, spent £150,000 draining areas around the lake, and attempted a failed subdivision in 1928. The second subdivision linked market garden plots of five to nine acres with cottages, made available on equal terms to other Workers' Homes Board residences. The £260 house-and-land package was to be repaid fortnightly over 30 years. While the Board managed finances, the Lands Department supervised improvement of the land, to ensure intensive agriculture was established as intended. The cottages were erected in two lots of twenty each in late 1930 and early 1931. They were all identical timber homes, using the WHB Type 7 'settlers' cottage' standard plan, the cheapest available. Roofs were clad in asbestos cement sheeting rather than the corrugated iron that had been used for these cottages elsewhere, as for only £9 more per cottage twelve unemployed men could be given three weeks' factory work to provide the sheeting. The project as a whole was not intended as alleviation for Depression conditions, and in fact even the small deposit required was beyond the means of unemployed workers at the time.<sup>69</sup> Materials were supplied by the State Brickworks and State Sawmills.<sup>70</sup>

Almost immediately, the Herdsman Lake project struck difficulties, as residents struggled to meet repayments and poor soil led to crop failures.<sup>71</sup> By 1933, the Board was having difficulty in obtaining instalment payments. An arrangement to defer repayment of capital costs for three years and claim only the land rental was intended to assist the situation, but even this eight or nine shillings per week was beyond many of the settlers.<sup>72</sup> In 1935, the land was reclassified as residential, in recognition that it was unsuitable for agriculture, and revalued accordingly. The following year valuation again reduced the level of



Perspective showing cottage as originally built, 1931.



Herdsman Lake cottage floor plan, 1992

*Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Conservation Study Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage', 1992, p.41*

<sup>67</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 28 October 1931, p.5

<sup>68</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939

<sup>69</sup> HCWA Register Documentation P3464 *Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage*, October 1995, pp.4-6

<sup>70</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 22 November 1930, p.12

<sup>71</sup> HCWA Register Documentation P3464 *Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage*, October 1995, p.6

<sup>72</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933

repayments. However, when the Herdsman Lake properties were transferred out of WHB control in July 1942, an outstanding liability of £11,057 remained, more than the cost of building the cottages in the first place.<sup>73</sup>

As the Depression took hold in Western Australia, the Board restricted their approvals to those that would allow building works to commence, in order to create as much employment as possible. Approvals were no longer granted for home purchases or discharge of existing mortgages. The total number of approvals appears to have remained steady, although the proportion of leasehold increased. The Board also approved substantial deferments of arrears, recognising that this would increase until economic conditions improved. Not all were able to defer, however, and the Board reclaimed numerous freehold and leasehold properties, many of which it then put on the market.<sup>74</sup> At least 93 families lost their WHB homes in this period.<sup>75</sup> Arrears deferments were only available to 'deserving' clients, generally those who lost their jobs or became too ill to work.<sup>76</sup>

As a stimulus measure in response to the Depression, the government in 1933 gave £30,000 to the Board to establish a Small Loans Scheme. Property owners, regardless of whether they were in Board homes, were able to use this fund to carry out repairs, renovations and alterations to their houses, thereby creating employment. Loans were capped at £300, with a repayment period of up to 15 years at 5% interest. In the first year, 113 applications were approved, at a total value of £13,592.<sup>77</sup> Within two years, the original £20,000 had been overspent, with Treasury making up the difference.<sup>78</sup> The scheme lasted until 1937, and was reinstated in 1939 with a further £9,000 grant.<sup>79</sup>

Between 1930 and 1933, the Board undertook a program to dismantle, remove and re-erect former Group Settlement cottages.<sup>80</sup> The Group Settlement Scheme had been failing from the mid-1920s, and the Depression finally brought to an end what had largely been a social and economic disaster.<sup>81</sup> Re-erection generally included enlargement of the original cottage. An example of this at Katanning in 1931 showed the original four-room cottage with verandahs wrapping three sides, rear bedroom sleep-out and a bathroom-laundry in the newly created rear corner of the verandah. In the first twelve months of the scheme, 88 cottages were moved.<sup>82</sup> In total, 148 former Group Settlement cottages were relocated by the Workers' Homes Board. The cost of relocation was approximately £240, in addition to the average £77 paid to the Lands Department for the houses. This allowed workers to obtain 'a really fine type of roomy and comfortable cottage' through the Board at around half the regular price. The program was discontinued in 1933 when no more suitable Group Settlement cottages were available.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>73</sup> HCWA Register Documentation P3464 *Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage*, October 1995, p.6

<sup>74</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>75</sup> Department of Housing (DOH)

<http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Centenary%20of%20flashback%20Great%20Depression%20leads%20to%20new%20Housing%20Trust.pdf> accessed 5 June 2014

<sup>76</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.33

<sup>77</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1934

<sup>78</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1935

<sup>79</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939

<sup>80</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>81</sup> SLWA 'Group Settlement',

[http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead\\_reckoning/government\\_archival\\_records/d-j/group\\_settlement](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead_reckoning/government_archival_records/d-j/group_settlement)

accessed 24 April 2014

<sup>82</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 25 July 1931, p.3

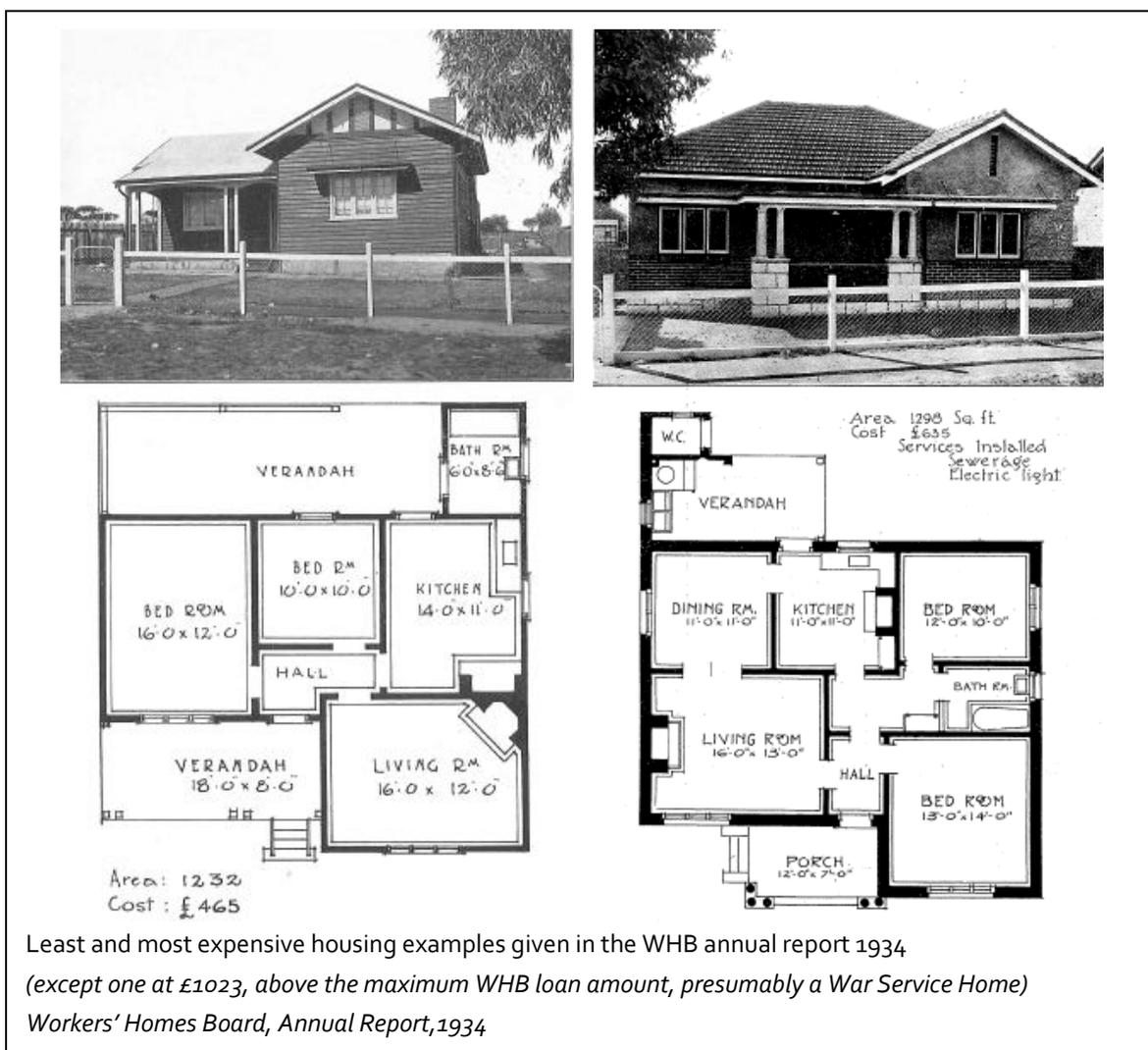
<sup>83</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933.

Note: Annual reports do not state where the Group Settlement cottages were relocated from or to.



first ventures into being a government landlord came as these vacated homes were rented out until they could be sold. However, providing rental accommodation at this time was incidental to the Board's primary role of assisting people towards home ownership.<sup>90</sup>

In November 1935, the *Workers' Homes Act* was amended to allow leaseholders who had repaid the capital value of their house to purchase the land from the Crown and thus discharge all obligations to the Workers' Homes Board.<sup>91</sup> Subsequently, the popularity of leasehold loans increased significantly. By 1938, two thirds of homes built by the Board were under leasehold provisions, and two years later this had risen to three quarters.<sup>92</sup> Freehold loans required an applicant to provide their own land and provide a ten percent deposit. The loan amount was capped (£800 in 1937-38), but larger homes could be built, provided the applicant found other finance for the amount over the loan cap. Leasehold applicants needed only a nominal amount (£6 6s in 1937-38) in deposit and fees to obtain a home, to a design of their choice, assisted by Board architects. Fortnightly payments included interest, principal, fire insurance and ground rent, and covered all rates and taxes except excess water. The benefit to low income earners of paying rates and taxes in small fortnightly amounts rather than an annual sum was one of the attractive aspects of the scheme.<sup>93</sup>



<sup>90</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1935-39

<sup>91</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936

<sup>92</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1937-40

<sup>93</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1938

Before the mid-1930s, the Board had not been active in the Goldfields. However, following requests from Goldfields bodies, the Board visited the area in 1935 and subsequently agreed to erect forty homes at Kalgoorlie and Boulder, using nine standard plans. The homes were designed to cost less than £450. Almost all the applicants chose the leasehold rather than freehold provisions. Land for these homes was made available by the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council and the Railways Department. In 1935-36, nearly all homes constructed by the Board outside the Metropolitan area were in Kalgoorlie and Boulder (39 of 46). The same year, the Lands Department also released large areas of land for leasehold scheme homes at Boulder (104 lots) and Kalgoorlie (51 lots).<sup>94</sup>

Although initially the *Workers' Homes Act* had anticipated that Part III homes would be constructed on Crown land, the Board also purchased land for these homes. By 1933, almost 10% of leasehold properties were on sites purchased by the Board for housing. The government retained title of the land as security.<sup>95</sup> Board purchase of land continued to increase. By June 1936 it had purchased 256 blocks, of which 141 had been acquired in the preceding twelve months.<sup>96</sup>

By 1936, the Depression had impacted so significantly on low income workers that the press was discussing a 'housing crisis' and criticising the Board for failing to provide sufficient housing for those in need. At the time, the Board was able to provide a four-bedroom timber house with external bathroom and washhouse for £350, with repayments by the Leasehold scheme of 10s. 3d. per week. Once rates and insurance were added, this amounted to 13s. 4d, which 'compare[d] very favourably with the average rental payments for a four-roomed wooden house in the Metropolitan Area'. It was approximately equivalent to a day's pay at basic wage.<sup>97</sup> Nearly all Metropolitan local councils in the 1930s prohibited the erection of timber homes. Some outer suburbs did allow timber construction, but as these were remote from public transport they were considered unsuitable for low-income homes.<sup>98</sup> The Board acknowledged that a timber home 'unless it is carefully preserved and surrounded by a garden, tends to degenerate into a slum type', but believed it was the responsibility of householders to avoid this outcome. However, few applicants were prepared to accept small, outlying timber homes, preferring to apply for something more substantial in better locations. The Board generally rejected applications for homes larger than they believed the applicants could afford, instead advising applicants to try for a cheaper home, but most chose not to. As the Board did not have government authorisation to subsidise the cost of houses, it believed it was doing all it could within its remit.<sup>99</sup> Some continued to criticise the Board as providing only for those on above-average incomes, however.<sup>100</sup>

The Board also continued to administer the *War Service Homes Act*, but the Commonwealth made no additional funds available for several years through the mid-1930s and as a result only three new homes were approved between 1932 and 1935. The number of War Service Homes built through the rest of the decade remained small. Funds were provided, however, for essential maintenance or for approved additions to existing homes. By the end of the 1930s, many War Service loans had been fully discharged and the homes moved out of government control.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936

<sup>95</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>96</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936

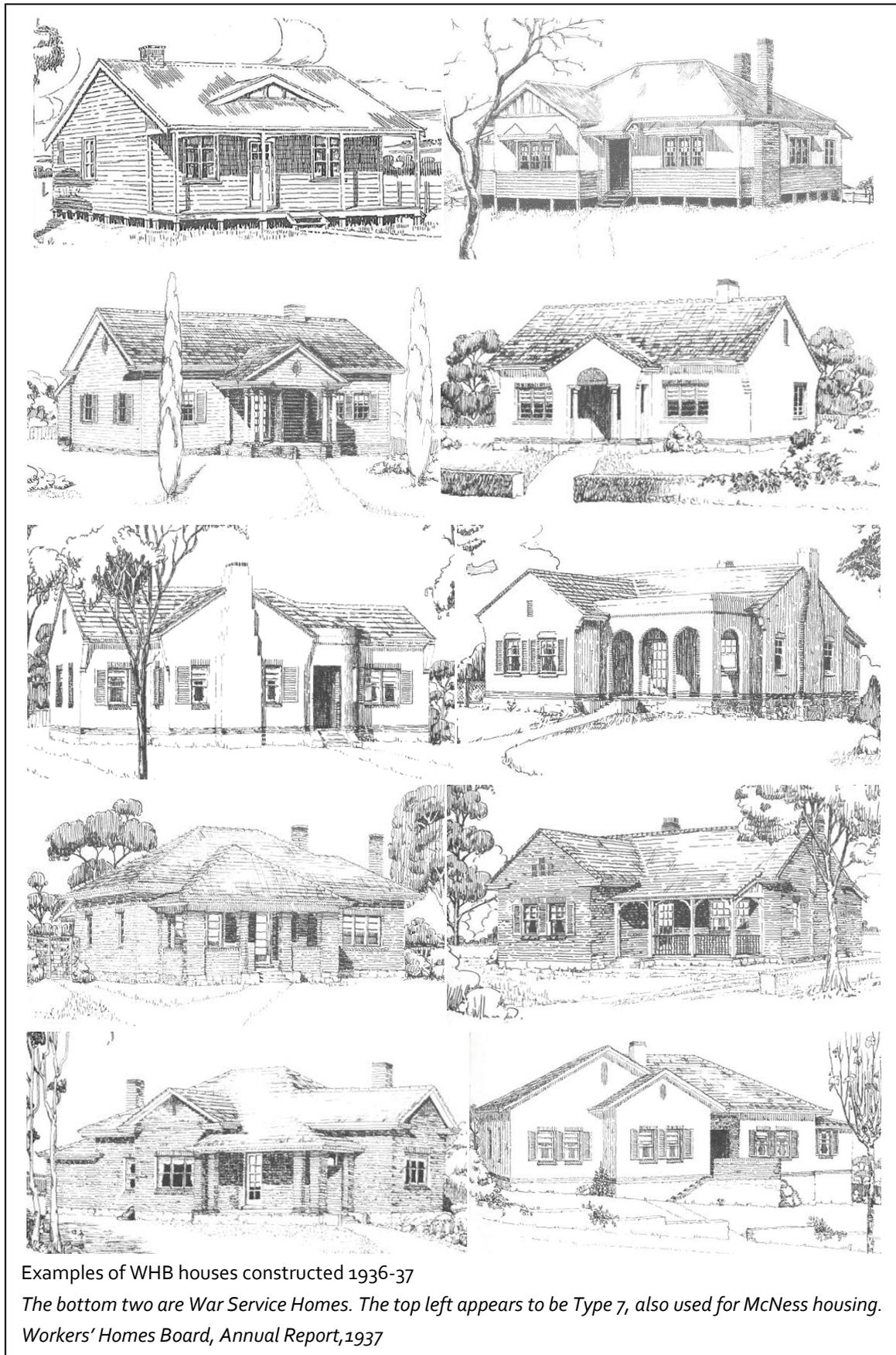
<sup>97</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936, quotes from pp.6-7

<sup>98</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936 & 1938

<sup>99</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1936, quotes from pp.6-7

<sup>100</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.42

<sup>101</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1932-39



From December 1935, the Board also administered the Widows Relief Scheme, introduced to ensure the widows or widowed mothers of servicemen, or women whose sons or husbands were registered as insane, could be assured of lifetime occupancy of their War Service Homes. Assistance included deferred payments, but these remained charged against the property for payment if the women sold the house or died.<sup>102</sup>

The operations of the Workers' Homes Board finally returned to pre-Depression rates of approving homes around 1937. The number of homes constructed in 1936-37 was more than double that constructed at the peak of the Depression in 1932-33.<sup>103</sup> However, the total number of homes being constructed was still under 100 each year, a small contribution to the State's housing overall.<sup>104</sup> In 1937-38 approvals rose to 102 homes, and to 144 the following year.<sup>105</sup>

Many farmers deserted farms in the 1930s, as global wheat prices had collapsed. A severe drought through much of the State between 1935 and 1940 also devastated rural communities.<sup>106</sup> In 1937 it was noted that rates of home loans reverting to the Board where occupants could not meet repayments were higher in country areas. The Board cautioned that new homes should not be built in these country areas, mostly Wheatbelt towns, as it struggled to find either tenants or buyers for them.<sup>107</sup> This move away from funding rural development was a significant shift in government policy.

Western Australia had focussed its expenditure on rural areas from the start of the twentieth century, when wheat-growing areas in particular had been opened up and supported with railways and government infrastructure. The 1930s made it clear that 'the limits of closer settlement had been exceeded' and a serious injection of funds was required in the Metropolitan area. Urban infrastructure was improved, and increasing government support was provided for manufacturing and industry, previously very small sectors in the heavily agricultural and mining-dominated economy.<sup>108</sup>

In 1937, the Board opened applications for leasehold homes on land it had purchased in Floreat Park. Nearly three times more applications were received than the 26 available lots. By January 1938, eighteen WHB homes were under construction on the block bounded by the Boulevard and Bournville, Highbury and Winmarley Streets.<sup>109</sup>

By 1938, most of the Board's Metropolitan houses, especially those constructed as leasehold, were built of brick, but all its country houses were timber. The brick homes cost an average of almost £800 at the time, while a small timber cottage could be constructed for under £500, although in country areas all materials tended to cost more. Local building bylaws meant most Metropolitan applicants had to build in brick and acquired much larger mortgages than their country counterparts. The Board noted that this insistence on brick was making it difficult to assist some clients into home ownership.<sup>110</sup> Subsequently the Board approved only timber homes in country areas.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.33-34

<sup>103</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1937

<sup>104</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1938

<sup>105</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939

<sup>106</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, pp.15-16

<sup>107</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1937 and 1938

<sup>108</sup> Snooks, 'Development in adversity', in Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia*, 1981, pp.260-66, quote from p.261

<sup>109</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 1 January 1938, p.8

<sup>110</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1938

<sup>111</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939



WHB homes, Floreat, 1938

*The West Australian, Saturday 1 January 1938 p.8*

Workers' Homes Board annual reports do not discuss standard plans for their homes, but provide examples of plans for homes built. Through the 1930s, considerable variety in both style and size was evident, although as would be expected most were modest houses. Some simple rectangular four-room homes continued to be built throughout the decade, especially those using timber. Nearly all the examples of WHB houses shown in annual reports were two-bedroom homes, some with sleep-outs, but most had separate kitchen, dining and living areas. Some larger homes even featured wide entrance halls in addition to passageways. As the decade progressed, many designs brought bathrooms in from the rear verandah and floor plans became increasingly asymmetrical. Most had small front porches and larger rear verandahs. Some designs make simplified reference to Interwar architectural styles, such as Old English, Functionalist or Californian Bungalow, but on the whole the houses shown are too modest in design to strongly utilise any of the stylistic characteristics used to identify architectural styles.<sup>112</sup>

Parliament in 1939 amended the *Workers' Homes Act* to allow the Board to borrow 'on the security of its debentures guaranteed by the Government'. It was anticipated that in 1939-40 loan approvals would increase to around 200 on the strength of these borrowed funds.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1932-39; Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989

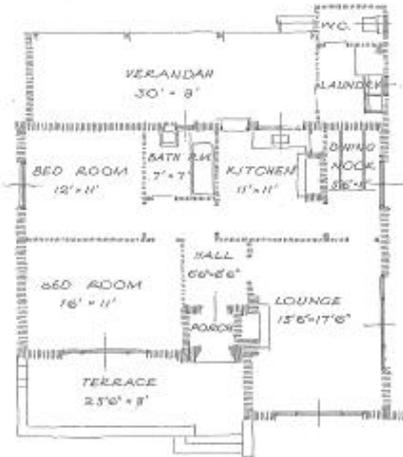
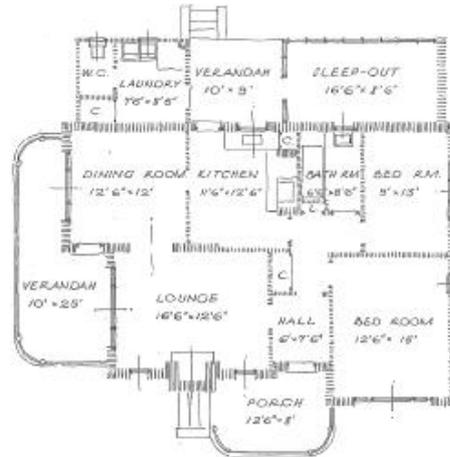
<sup>113</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1939



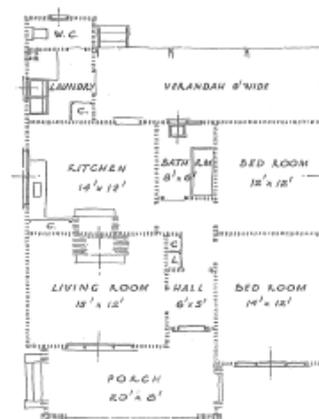
PERSPECTIVE



PERSPECTIVE



PERSPECTIVE



1939-40 WHB plans with simple references to Interwar Old English (above), Functionalist (above right) and Bungalow (right) styles.

*Workers' Homes Board, Annual Report, 1940*

The Board continued purchasing land for new homes, paying attention to locations where they could build in timber.<sup>114</sup> In the Metropolitan area, Victoria Park, Carlisle and Osborne Park in particular were areas favoured for timber home construction.<sup>115</sup>

In 1939, the Board constructed around 6.5% of all homes built in the State. The total number of government and private houses built for the period was around 2,000 homes.<sup>116</sup>

The Depression years brought to light many inadequacies in the way Australian governments supported their populations. Inequity, always a part of Australian society, had leapt to the forefront of public consciousness. Out of the 1930s emerged a 'climate of reform', including a readiness for change around issues of affordable housing.<sup>117</sup>

The notion of housing as a basic human right developed in Australia particularly out of the experience of the 1930s Depression, when more than half the population found itself in difficulties. Previous ideas that secure housing was a right only for 'decent' people, particularly white-collar workers, were shaken by this decade of struggle. War conditions further stretched housing resources such that by the mid-1940s, conditions supported a major shift in government attitudes to provision of housing.<sup>118</sup>

*Places remaining in 2014:*

One of the original forty Herdsmen Lake cottages remains and is entered into the State Register of Heritage Places as P03464 *Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage*. It is owned by the WAPC.

Google imagery suggests up to 22 of the original (approximately 26) 1930s brick and tile residences in the block bounded by the Boulevard and Bournville, Highbury and Winmarley Streets Floreat may remain.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1939*

<sup>115</sup> The Housing Trust of Western Australia (Housing Trust WA), *Annual Reports*, for the period 1934-39

<sup>116</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1939*; SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*

<sup>117</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, pp.29-30

<sup>118</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, pp.2-3

<sup>119</sup> <https://www.google.com.au/maps> accessed 5 June 2014

## 9.1 MCNESS HOUSING TRUST (1930-1968)

As the impact of the Depression began to be felt, the housing needs of the State's poorest residents led Charles McNess to donate £5,000 to provide homes for those incapable of housing themselves.<sup>120</sup> Anticipated as the cost of twenty simple family homes, this would equate to something like \$3million in today's housing market.<sup>121</sup>

McNess, who was knighted the following year, had started out as an ironmonger and tinsmith in Perth after arriving from England in 1876. He successfully invested in property and became very wealthy through the 1890s gold boom period. Following his retirement in 1915 he gave generously of his fortune. In addition to funding housing, other Depression-era donations were for an emergency clothing fund, Perth Public Hospital, and employment schemes through the State Gardens Board and creating Yanchep National Park, as well as support of many private charitable organisations.<sup>122</sup>

In 1930, the Housing Trust was formed, with a Board of two members served by the secretary of the Workers' Homes Board. The initial funds for the Trust were the £5,000 endowment from Charles McNess and £15,000 from the Federal Government's Unemployment Grant. At an average cost of £259, it was estimated that these funds would provide 75 homes. However, the Trust accepted 318 applications for consideration in its first year, approving 72 of them. Of these, fourteen were granted free life tenure and the remaining 58 were to gradually purchase their homes at capital cost on a fee simple basis at five shillings per week.<sup>123</sup>

By June 1931, 38 cottages were occupied, 26 were under construction and a further seven were approved awaiting contracts, with a total of 192 persons housed in the year. The Trust acquired the land for all these homes, through a variety of means including donations, grants from the Lands Department, funds or land transfers from applicants, and ordinary purchase. Operations were State-wide and applicants were housed on a needs basis. Houses were four-room weatherboard cottages with verandahs at front and rear, built to a standard plan. They were built by the Workers' Homes Board on behalf of the Trust. The Workers' Homes Board provided free administration services for the Trust.<sup>124</sup>

Eligible applicants for Trust housing were aged pensioners (mostly women), invalid pensioners with dependent families, widows with young children and deserted wives with dependent children, most of whom received financial support from the Child Welfare Department.<sup>125</sup> They were to be 'of good character', aged over 21 and unable to access funds for a home.<sup>126</sup> Where elderly single women were assigned Trust homes, it appears at least in some instances they were expected to share with another such woman.<sup>127</sup>

In 1931-32, Charles McNess made a further donation to the State government of £20,000 for 'relief of unemployment'. The Housing Trust received £2,000 from this grant to continue its program. Land was acquired for Trust housing at Osborne Park, Gosnells, Carlisle, Bayswater, Geraldton, Three Springs and

<sup>120</sup> Brady, Wendy 'McNess, Sir Charles (1852-1938)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1986, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcness-sir-charles-7435>

<sup>121</sup> A precise comparative figure is impossible. This calculation has assumed the smallest family home in Perth in 2014 might be built for around \$150,000.

<sup>122</sup> Brady, 'McNess, Sir Charles (1852-1938)', 1986

<sup>123</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1931

<sup>124</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1931

<sup>125</sup> The McNess Housing Trust of Western Australia, *Annual Report*, 1939

<sup>126</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.36-37

<sup>127</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 18 June 1937, p.22

York. By June 1932, 377 persons had been accommodated in 72 Trust houses.<sup>128</sup> No additional funds were forthcoming, so no new building works were initiated. A year later, completed houses numbered 81, accommodating 417 persons.<sup>129</sup> This means on average over five people were resident in each two-bedroom Trust home. As Trust homes were largely contracted to the elderly or women without recognised partners, these figures indicate that the women assisted generally supported four or more children.

While the Trust extended consideration towards residents in financial difficulties unable to meet instalment payments, and at times transferred hard-up tenants from fee simple to free life tenancy, they were less sympathetic towards residents displaying antisocial behaviour. For example, in 1931-32, a client in Fremantle 'whose conduct rendered him undeserving of assistance by the Housing Trust ... was dispossessed of his dwelling', which was then handed on to 'a more deserving client'.<sup>130</sup>

By 1933, the Trust's funds were exhausted and further homes could not proceed.<sup>131</sup> Occupants were purchasing their homes at a rate of five shillings per week, and as this money came in it was used for minor works to improve Trust homes.<sup>132</sup> In 1932-33, five bathrooms, lining of six houses, and installation of one septic and one sewerage system were funded by Trust income.<sup>133</sup> The following year, sufficient income was generated to build two additional cottages.<sup>134</sup>

The Housing Trust, having had no additional private or government funds granted, turned to the Lotteries Commission for assistance. Four houses were constructed in 1934 using Lotteries funds.<sup>135</sup>

An additional eight Housing Trust homes were built in 1935 using Lotteries Commission funds. It was decided that all future Trust homes would be lined and have bathrooms and laundries provided. By this time, 19 of the Trust's 88 homes were occupied on free life tenancies, but sufficient payments came in from the other 69 homes to cover land and buildings costs above the £300 per home that Lotteries allocated. It appears all houses were built to a standard plan, with the exception of a one-roomed home in Williams purchased for a blind woman in 1934-35. In anticipation of further Lotteries funding, land was purchased at Kalamunda, Bassendean, East Fremantle, Osborne Park and Victoria Park.<sup>136</sup> The Lotteries Commission continued to provide annual funds for Trust housing until 1938.<sup>137</sup>

The 1930s standard plan for Housing Trust homes was an 1184sqft (110m<sup>2</sup>) four-room cottage with double chimney providing fireplaces to the lounge and kitchen, both of which were rooms 14x12ft (4.27x3.66m) and provided access to the two bedrooms. The bedrooms were 12x12ft (3.66x3.66m). An eight-foot (2.44m) deep verandah ran along the full front of the home, and a nine-foot (2.74m) deep rear verandah included a small combined bathroom and laundry. The whole including verandahs was under a single end-gabled roof with, in later years, a simple decorative gable above front door.<sup>138</sup> This standard plan continued to be shown in annual reports to 1941, at which time two new designs were also printed.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1932

<sup>129</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>130</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1932, quotes from p.2

<sup>131</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>132</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1934

<sup>133</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1933

<sup>134</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1934

<sup>135</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1934

<sup>136</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1935

<sup>137</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1934-39

<sup>138</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report*, 1936. Standard plan reproduced in 1937, 1939 & 1941 reports unchanged, except that indicative cost had risen from £340 to £360 in 1939.

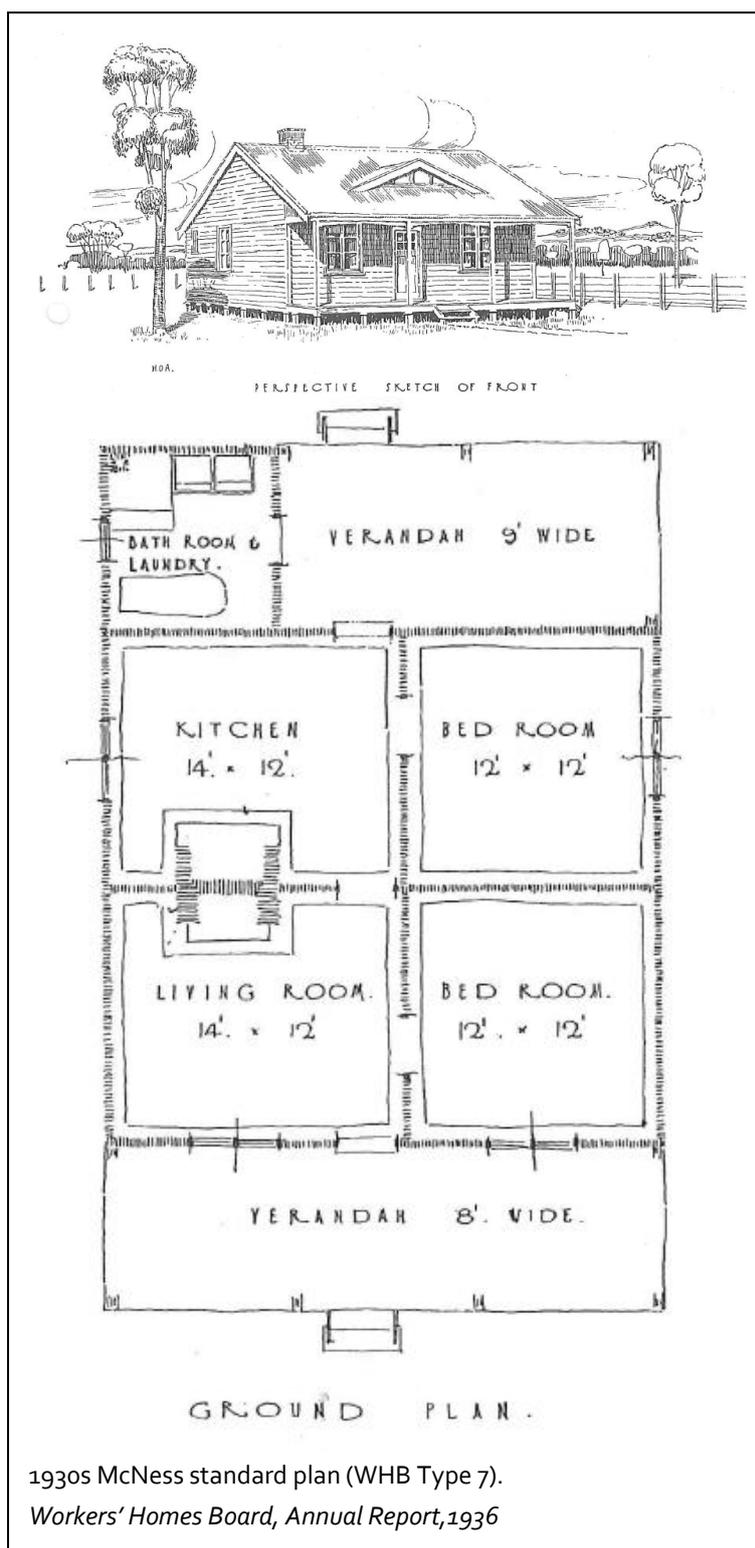
<sup>139</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1935-41

The Workers' Homes Board used the same plan for its own most basic homes, such as those at Herdsman Lake, and referred to it in places as 'Type 7'.<sup>140</sup>

Six further Housing Trust homes were erected in 1935-36. Additional land was purchased at South Fremantle, Queens Park, North Cottesloe, Victoria Park and Cannington.<sup>141</sup>

By 1937, the Housing Trust managed 100 homes, having sold one to the Railways Department the previous year that it no longer needed. Although the Trust recognised that its many unlined homes were uncomfortable for residents, its program of improving properties was slow, being tied to the Trust's small income from housing payments. The original Act made no provision to repossess homes occupied under the fee simple arrangement when residents' situations improved such that they could afford other housing, and this caused concern to the Trust, as it managed a long waiting list of high-needs applicants. Homes occupied under free life tenancy could be repossessed and a few instances were recorded of this occurring.<sup>142</sup>

An amendment to the Act in 1937-78 allowed the Trust to require occupants to pay the whole remaining sum owing on the house if it was felt their circumstances had improved sufficiently to warrant it. This action was taken on two clients immediately, who subsequently purchased their homes.<sup>143</sup>



<sup>140</sup> Floor Plan for P3464 *Herdsman Lake Settlers Cottage*, October 1995, provided by SHO

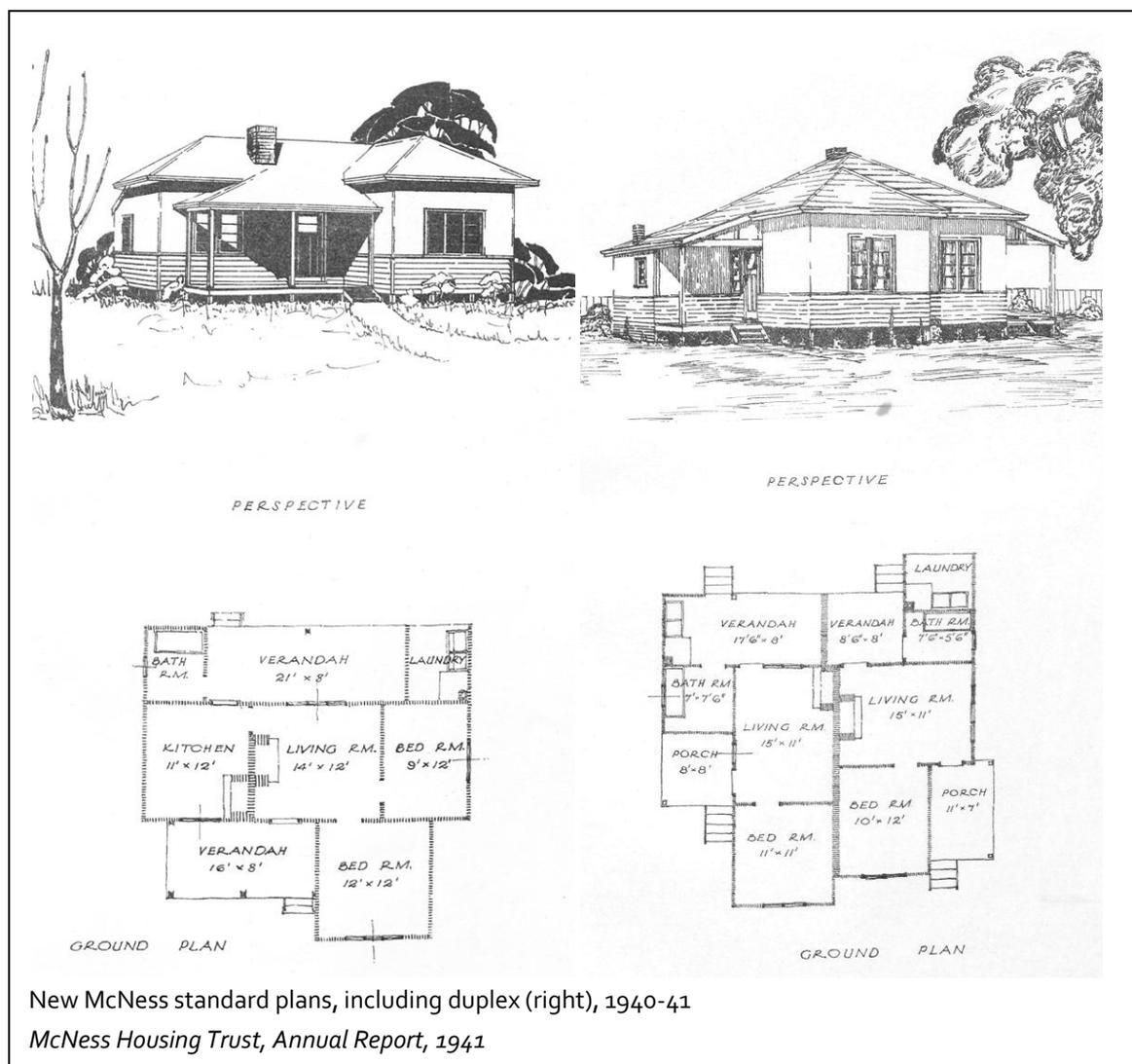
<sup>141</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report, 1936*

<sup>142</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report, 1937*

<sup>143</sup> Housing Trust WA, *Annual Report, 1936*

Sir Charles McNess died in 1938 and the enabling legislation for the Housing Trust was amended to perpetuate his memory by naming it the McNess Housing Trust. McNess had retained a 'practical interest' in the operations of the Trust to the end of his life and his will left half of his residual estate to the Trust.<sup>144</sup>

Most McNess Housing Trust applicants were living in extremely difficult circumstances prior to receiving housing assistance. Despite rejecting more than half the applications it received, by June 1939 the Trust had 209 approved applications awaiting housing as funding permitted, while managing 109 existing residences and constructing only a handful of new homes each year. As funds from Charles McNess' Will became available, the Trust increased its building program, authorising twelve new homes immediately, and also sped up the improvement of its earliest homes. By this time, some of the original recipients of Trust housing had managed to fully complete their repayments and gain freehold title for their homes.<sup>145</sup>



New McNess standard plans, including duplex (right), 1940-41  
*McNess Housing Trust, Annual Report, 1941*

In 1940-41, the McNess Housing Trust received a substantial boost to its funds as the bulk of its legacy from the estate of Charles McNess was acquired, a total of £69,219. It was anticipated another £10,000 would come to the Trust when McNess' estate was completely wound up, which took several more years.

<sup>144</sup> The McNess Housing Trust of Western Australia (McNess Housing Trust), *Annual Report, 1938*, quote from p.5

<sup>145</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report, 1939*

An increased land purchase and building program was initiated, with 73 new lots purchased in the year and 47 new homes approved. Some of the money was also invested to provide a permanent annual source of funds.<sup>146</sup> In the four years following McNess's death, the Trust doubled its number of houses using funds from the McNess estate.<sup>147</sup>

Some of the new homes were erected in groups, such as a row of McNess cottages built in Tyler Street Osborne Park in late 1939 (now Tuart Hill). The Perth Road Board protested that these very simple timber residences, 'little better than the ordinary settlers' cottages at the Peel Estate', were 'cheap' and 'plain' and would reduce property values in the area. McNess homes of this style had been built in the area previously, but the Road Board objected to them being sited together, 'by which the poor design was accentuated'.<sup>148</sup> Complaints about the design of such homes particularly emphasised the 'very plain roof design' and unpainted weatherboard cladding, and encouraged moves to use tiles for roofing and partially clad homes in asbestos.<sup>149</sup> Several local government authorities, including Midland Junction, Guildford, Swan and Bassendean, joined together in 1940 to request that the McNess Housing Trust 'be urged to build better designed and more substantial homes'.<sup>150</sup>

The wartime shortage of labour and increase in building costs hampered the building program of the McNess Housing Trust, just as it finally had sufficient funds to increase its housing assistance. The Trust considered that building extensively at the increased prices of 1940-41 would have been a bad investment. As such, only 35 new homes were approved, of which twelve were single-bedroom duplexes (six buildings total). Duplexes were constructed for aged pensioners, both singles and couples, as a cost saving measure. Each unit comprised one bedroom, living room, bathroom and laundry provisions within the rear verandah, with cooking presumably to be done at the living room fireplace. Some local authorities, however, refused planning permission for the tile-roofed timber duplexes, despite them looking from the street much like a single detached house. New standard plans for single detached homes were also used from 1940-41, along with the original 1930s design. The new, asymmetrical plan had a marginally smaller footprint (1024sqft/95m<sup>2</sup>) as the front porch, kitchen and one bedroom were smaller than in the 1930s plan. The front door opened into the lounge, from which the kitchen and both bedrooms were accessed. The rear verandah, running the full width of the house, was accessed from the kitchen and had a separate bathroom and laundry enclosed at each end. The plans suggest at least some of these homes may have been clad in timber only to sill height, with the upper walls clad in smooth sheeting.<sup>151</sup>

The same year, amendments to the Act allowed the Trust to offer some homes on a rental basis. Weekly payments were the same as for those on purchase arrangements, steady at 5s as at the Trust's inception, but the Trust retained ownership of the properties indefinitely. In the first year of this arrangement, 23 of the Trust's 182 properties were offered as rentals.<sup>152</sup>

As McNess Trust homes were all timber construction and many local authorities did not permit timber homes, the Trust was limited in the areas it could build within the Metropolitan area. Suburbs where the Trust could continue to build included Carlisle, Osborne Park, Mosman Park, East Fremantle 'and one or two other places'.<sup>153</sup> By 1941, the Trust had constructed 182 homes in 32 country and 24 Metropolitan suburbs. Of these 56 localities, most had only one or two McNess homes. The highest concentrations in

<sup>146</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1940

<sup>147</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1942

<sup>148</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 23 February 1940, p.7

<sup>149</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 21 June 1940, p.6

<sup>150</sup> *The West Australian*, Mon 26 February 1940, p.8

<sup>151</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1941

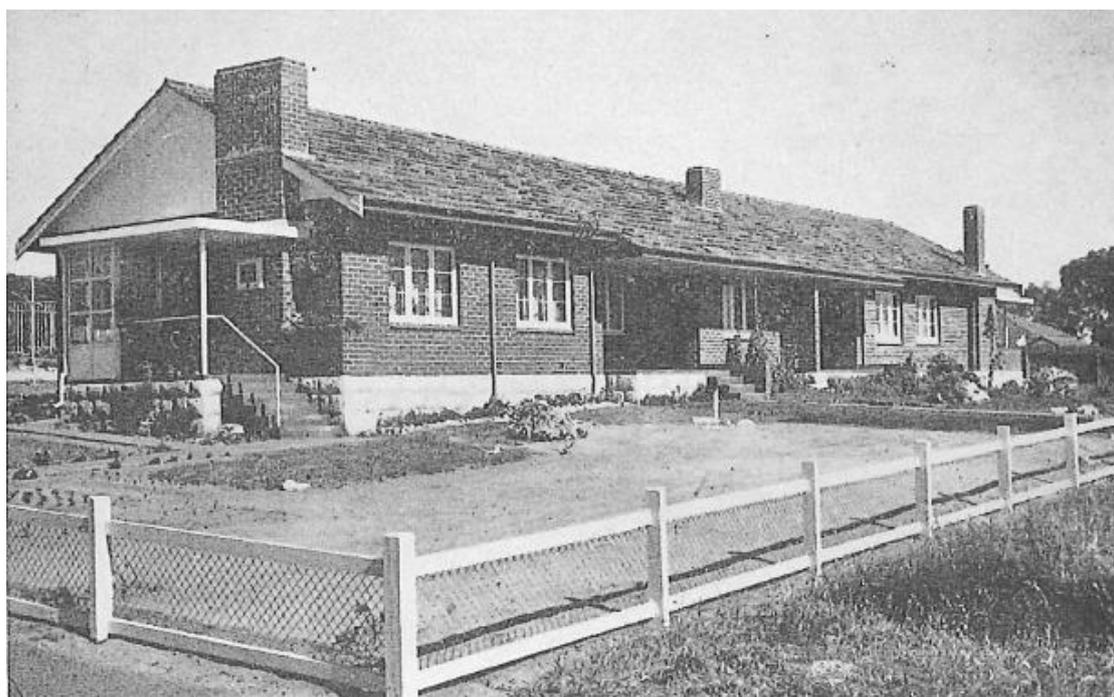
<sup>152</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1941

<sup>153</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1940, quote from p.4

rural areas were at Collie (5) and Northam (5). The only suburbs with more than four McNess homes were East Fremantle (6), Bassendean (10), Maylands (10), Osborne Park (27) and Carlisle (34). The latter two suburbs accounted for a third of all McNess homes in the State, and almost half of those in the Metropolitan area.<sup>154</sup> More than half the McNess homes in Carlisle and Victoria Park in 1941 had been constructed in the preceding two years (15 in Osborne Park, 23 in Carlisle). Seventy Metropolitan homes but only three country homes but had been approved in these years, indicating the bulk of the McNess estate was put towards Metropolitan housing.<sup>155</sup>

The McNess Housing Trust ceased approval of new homes from the start of 1942, but completed those already under construction, such that at June 1942 it had completed 196 homes and purchased another eleven, of which 97 had been acquired in three years using funds from the McNess estate.<sup>156</sup> For the remainder of the war all building works ceased, except urgent maintenance required for 'health and protective reasons'. Trust properties were generally well cared for by residents, with many making improvements at their own expense.<sup>157</sup>

Following the war, the McNess Housing Trust continued to provide accommodation for 'the aged and infirm' at 'nominal rent'. However, by 1950 its funds were so limited that very little building work was undertaken.<sup>158</sup> Between 1945 and 1955, only 59 McNess homes were built, with at least four years when none were built at all, in a decade when over 19,500 government-funded houses were built in the State.<sup>159</sup>



Four McNess flats at Hilton, c.1955

*SHC, Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>154</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report, 1941*, table p.6

<sup>155</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report, 1939* and 1941

<sup>156</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report, 1942*

<sup>157</sup> McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report, 1943*, quote from p.1

<sup>158</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the period 1947-1950 (one report, combined)

<sup>159</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956* and 1964. Note that in 1956, the number of houses for 1946 and 1947 are 8 and 16 respectively, while the 1964 table lists McNess builds for those years as 9 and 17. These have not been transferred from other programs, as the totals for the year are also higher. The above statement is based on the 1956 report.

It appears that the increase in housing costs through the 1940s undercut the ability of the Trust to deliver housing. Had the war not intervened, it is likely the substantial McNess estate funds would have been able to erect far more houses than in fact eventuated.

Sixteen McNess Housing Trust homes were completed in 1950-51,<sup>160</sup> comprising twelve duplex units at Belmont and another four at Hilton Park.<sup>161</sup>

From the inception of the McNess Housing Trust in July 1930 to June 1952, 255 cottages had been built or purchased for the Trust and another one donated. Fifty-seven of the Trust's properties had been either sold or, the majority, fully paid off by their occupants.<sup>162</sup>

Two blocks of four brick-and-tile flats were completed in Carlisle in 1953-54 for the McNess Housing Trust.<sup>163</sup> A timber-framed four-unit block of Trust homes was erected in Bassendean the following year, with two more at Bassendean and four at Hilton Park completed in 1955-56.<sup>164</sup>

By June 1957, 315 McNess Housing Trust units had been completed since Charles McNess' 1930 bequest, using Government and Lotteries Commission funds to extend the original funding. Although for many years occupants were permitted, if able, to purchase Trust homes, by the mid-1950s the Trust changed its policy to only provide rentals. Eighty-one of their properties had already been sold, and it was found that when the aged occupants died the units passed on to people who were eligible for assisted housing in their own right.<sup>165</sup>

It appears that following World War Two, the McNess Housing Trust constructed no more single detached homes, confining itself instead to duplexes and small apartment groups. Construction of these McNess homes peaked in the latter 1950s, with 80 homes constructed in four years from 1955 to 1959, the most being 36 erected in 1956-57. In 1960-61, the Trust constructed its first larger apartment complex, the 39-unit Southlea in South Perth, to accommodate elderly single women. The only McNess homes constructed outside the Metropolitan area in the post-war period were six units constructed at Bunbury in 1962-63.<sup>166</sup>

The last McNess Housing Trust homes were constructed in 1963-64, when 73 units were built at 'Westlea', Cottesloe. This was the greatest number of McNess units built in a single year since World War Two. Reports of the construction of Westlea, and also Southlea three years earlier, make no mention of the Trust, indicating the extent to which Trust housing by this time was integrated into the overall SHC program. Both projects were assisted with Lotteries funding.<sup>167</sup> Southlea and Westlea were the only large blocks of flats built for the Trust.

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<sup>160</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*, OIC Administration report (appendix)

<sup>161</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1952*

<sup>162</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1952*

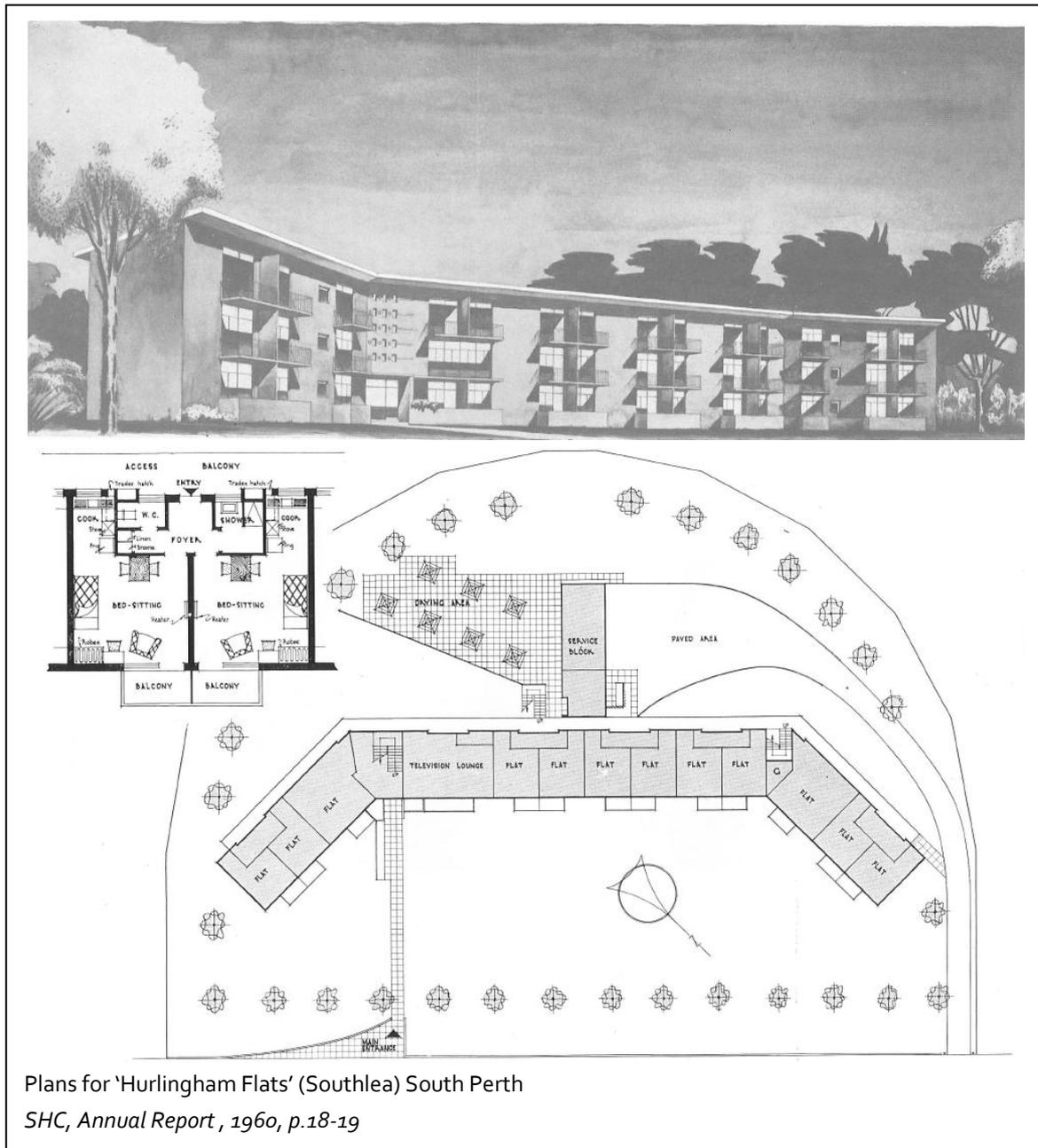
<sup>163</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*

<sup>164</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1955*

<sup>165</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>166</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1945-64

<sup>167</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1961, 1964 and 1969*



Tenants in SHC aged care cottage flats in 1966 paid \$6.10 per rent week, but this was reduced to only \$3/wk for residents on a pension. By comparison, McNess Housing Trust tenants paid only \$1.25/wk, fixed by statute, as Trust homes had always been intended for indigent persons. Some were able to exercise options to purchase, with repayments of as little as 50c per week, and others had been given free life tenure. In 1966, the SHC administered 285 Trust properties. It believed it was time that the provisions of the Trust were wound up and Trust housing incorporated into the general SHC housing stock.<sup>168</sup>

The McNess Housing Trust was subsequently amalgamated into the *State Housing Act* in November 1968. Provision was made 'to protect the existing rights of McNess tenants and purchasers', but amalgamation reduced the administration required. There were 282 McNess Housing Trust units on the books at the time, of which all but six were in the Metropolitan area. The multistorey flats at Cottesloe and South Perth accounted for 112 McNess homes. Of the remaining 170, the largest groups were at Rivervale (26),

<sup>168</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1966

Carlisle (23), Innaloo (18), High Wycombe (18) and Maylands (17). Osborne Park, which had high numbers of McNess homes prior to World War Two, had only six remaining in 1968, with another six in neighbouring Tuart Hill, parts of which had formerly been Osborne Park.<sup>169</sup> Bringing McNess Housing Trust clients fully within the SHC was indicative of a growing recognition that the Commission had a welfare function rather than simply being a housing provider.<sup>170</sup>

*Places remaining in 2014:*

DOH retains only one home likely to be a McNess house from the period 1930 to 1942, the period when the Trust built single detached homes, and when McNess homes were the only government housing assistance for the very poor

None of the 1950-51 duplexes built at Hilton and Belmont remain in DOH ownership in 2014.

None of the 73 McNess housing units constructed between 1945 and 1956 appear to remain in DOH ownership.

Both Westlea and Southlea remain largely in DOH ownership.

From the mid-1950s to 1960s, DOH retains at most 37 units, in 15 pairs or groups. It is not possible to be certain that these examples are in fact former McNess properties, especially after 1958 when the SHC also provided duplexes for elderly tenants.

<sup>169</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969

<sup>170</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.90-91

## 10 WORLD WAR TWO AND THE END OF THE WORKERS' HOMES BOARD (1939-1947)

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, Australia automatically joined them. Unmarried men aged 18 to 21 were required to enlist. As World War One had all happened far away, Australians initially appear to have carried on after the commencement of World War Two without expectation of much impact at home. However, by 1941, particularly as Japan moved south and attacks began on Australian soil, the nation mobilised a considerable home front war effort, with activities considered non-essential largely suspended until after the war.<sup>171</sup>

At the start of the war, the operations of the Workers' Homes Board continued much as before, with large loans obtained in 1939-40 and 1940-41 to expand the Board's operations.<sup>172</sup>

By 1941, the number of men enlisting for World War Two had created a shortage of labour in Australia. The war also increased the cost of materials, and the combined effect was that the Board could no longer provide a five-roomed brick house within the £800 loan limit of their Act unless the applicant provided a substantial deposit. The construction cost of brick homes had increased since the outbreak of war by 10-12%, while timber homes were costing up to 25% more.<sup>173</sup>

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in December 1941, bringing the USA into the war and triggering an increasing Pacific conflict, the Board suspended all building work. Prior to this, 64 approvals had been made from July-December 1941, but many of these had not proceeded and were held in abeyance. At June 1942, 23 houses remained under construction.<sup>174</sup>

In March 1942, the Federal government legislated to restrict any building works over £1,000 without a permit from Canberra. In June 1942, this was extended to works over £25 [sic]. Subsequently the Board anticipated it would not be undertaking building works in the foreseeable future. It was assigned the task of administering the Federal building restrictions for Western Australia.<sup>175</sup> Applicants for whom construction had not commenced were informed that their homes could not be built at the time, but were still charged for the preparation of plans and specifications, with a promise that the homes would be constructed as soon as conditions allowed.<sup>176</sup>

By agreement between the Prime Minister and the State Premier, virtually no government residential building was undertaken after the passing of the National Security Regulations for Building Operations, until the first *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* was signed in 1944.<sup>177</sup> Along with many other departments, the Board even ceased printing annual reports until after the war, as a measure of 'economy and conservation of paper and labour'.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Gregory, Jenny (ed.) *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1996

<sup>172</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1940 and 1941

<sup>173</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1941

<sup>174</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1942

<sup>175</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1942

<sup>176</sup> WHB, standard letter to applicants, 1942, copy provided by DOH, May 2014

<sup>177</sup> Moseley, H.D. *Report of the Royal Commission on the State Housing Commission*, Government Printer, Perth, 1948, p.3

<sup>178</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1942

The Board attempted to give consideration in repayments for clients serving in the Forces, and an increase in arrears payments resulted.<sup>179</sup>

Between July 1943 and June 1945 only five building loans were approved, all in regional areas (Northam, Waroona, Donnybrook x3). Two of those in Donnybrook were constructed 'for letting on a weekly tenancy basis' under Part IV(A) of the Act, following the erection of a dehydration factory in the area. These 1944-45 homes appear to be the first instance of the Board actively initiating rental housing.<sup>180</sup>

Many Board homes were transferred to War Service Homes conditions as clients returned home from war service and became eligible for these more attractive terms. By 30 June 1945, the Board held 812 Leasehold, 899 Freehold and three rental houses.<sup>181</sup> During the 1940s, even after the war, barely any maintenance was carried out on Board homes, due to the extreme shortage of building materials.<sup>182</sup>

In anticipation of post-war building restarting, the Board was recording applications for freehold and leasehold loans. At 30 June 1945, they had nearly 1,000 applications awaiting attention.<sup>183</sup>

In 1943, a report by the State Advisory Committee on Post-War Housing recommended replacing the Workers' Homes Board with a new housing authority. It found that, even prior to World War Two, the Board had been able to construct only one house for every twenty built by the private sector and that it was not meeting the needs of workers on low wages. Although almost 4,000 people had been assisted into homes in the Board's thirty years of operation, far more workers had been unable to access its schemes.<sup>184</sup>

In January 1947, the *State Housing Act 1946* was approved by the governor. It incorporated all the provisions of the 1911-1946 *Workers' Homes Act*, but added wider powers with regards to 'slum clearance, resumption of land, purchase of materials, establishment of shopping sites, hostels and community centres, etc', as well as provisions for implementing the '*Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*' (see [Section 11.1](#)). The Commission was to include in its board, in addition to three long-standing members of the Workers' Homes Board, a union representative and a qualified licensed builder.<sup>185</sup> Board positions to represent the interests of women and ex-servicemen were also added in 1947.<sup>186</sup>

The 1946 Act concluded the Workers' Homes Board, with its functions merged into the new State Housing Commission. Changing the terminology from 'homes' to 'housing' possibly reflected a more detached, less personal approach to the issue of affordable accommodation. Where the Board had been a function of the Treasury, the Commission from 1947 was answerable to a Minister for Housing, a newly created State government portfolio. From 1948 staff transferred out of the Treasury building to a new SHC head office in East Perth, reflecting the greater political importance being given to housing, as well as the magnitude of the post-war housing challenge.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1942 and 1943-45 (one document, combined)

<sup>180</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>181</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>182</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1946

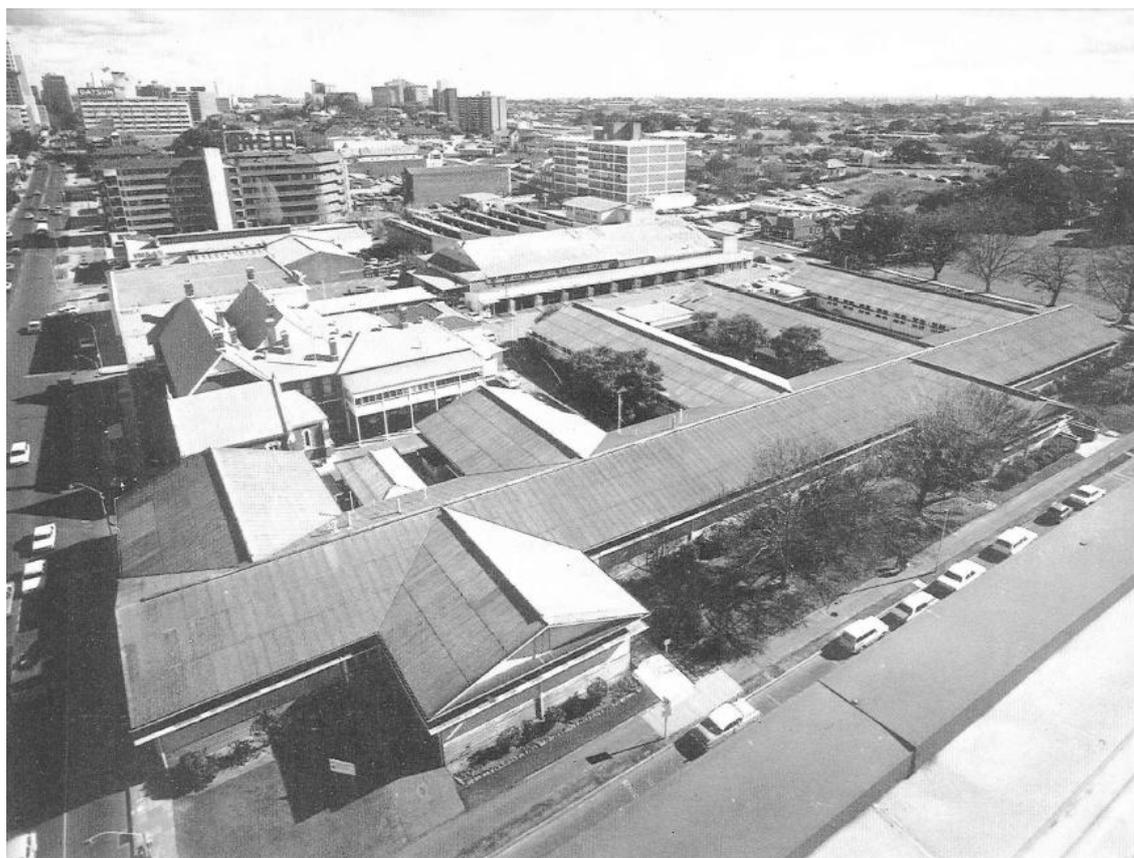
<sup>183</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>184</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.43-44

<sup>185</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the period 1945-47 (covers two years, despite 1946 report also being filed)

<sup>186</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950

<sup>187</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950 (single report covers three years); Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.46



1948 SHC office, Plain Street East Perth (picture from 1972)

*SHC annual report 1971-72*

*Places remaining in 2014:*

Aside from the McNess homes mentioned in the previous section, and early 'post war' places dating from 1944 as per next chapter, DOH retains 19 housing units constructed during World War Two. All of these appear to have been acquired much later, and may not have any association with WHB.

## 11 POST WAR RECONSTRUCTION (1940S-1950S)

During the war, many aspects of development in Australia had been on hold. As the war years ended, attention turned to reinvigorating the domestic economy and starting work on the backlog of needs. One of the most urgent needs was housing.

The Commonwealth Department of Post-War Reconstruction was established in 1942. It was intended that it could have the vital planning stages for post-war works completed so that, immediately on the cessation of hostilities, reconstruction could begin. Housing was one of its focal areas.<sup>188</sup>

Western Australia already had a housing shortage before the war, caused by years of tight financial conditions through the 1930s. The cessation of residential construction during World War Two further exacerbated the shortage. As service personnel returned from duty, many young couples married and wished to start a home together,<sup>189</sup> increasing the number of potential households even before actual population increase. The national birth rate continued to gradually increase from a low in 1934, peaking in 1952, with fertility rates continuing to increase for another decade.<sup>190</sup> Government policy aimed to increase Australia's population both through natural means and immigration. British migrants were preferred and welcomed first, arriving from January 1947. Beginning in November 1947, Australia also began accepting European displaced persons. From 1947 to 1954, 170,000 displaced persons arrived in Australia.<sup>191</sup>

The Department of Post-War Reconstruction estimated that 50,000 new homes would be required in Western Australia in the first decade after the war to address the housing shortfall and provide for the increasing population.<sup>192</sup> Such an assessment of housing stocks and housing needs was not made again for at least three decades, and was a significant factor in shaping government housing policy of the post-war years.<sup>193</sup>

The shortage of housing meant many young couples, especially newlyweds, lived with their parents or in-laws.<sup>194</sup> Many lived in spare rooms or garages.<sup>195</sup> As the wait for housing drew on, this led to many couples raising children in their parents' homes.

The local newspapers delighted to report cases of overcrowded and unsuitable housing: in 1944, a couple with two small children living in a room at Cremorne Arcade; a woman and her three children living on a verandah while her husband worked away;<sup>196</sup> in 1945, three families (five adults and eleven children) living in a four room house, some walking several blocks to a relative's house to use a bath, all cooking on

<sup>188</sup> Gregory, *On the Homefront*, 1996

<sup>189</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.45

<sup>190</sup> [http://www.ined.fr/en/pop\\_figures/developed\\_countries/developed\\_countries\\_database](http://www.ined.fr/en/pop_figures/developed_countries/developed_countries_database) 16 April 2014  
<http://www.aifs.org.au/institute/info/charts/births/index.html> 25 April 2014

<sup>191</sup> Peters, N., Bush, F & Gregory, J, 'Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre: a Heritage Study', Centre for Western Australian History, UWA, January 1996, pp.4-5; Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 'Immigration history 1945-1955', <http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2009-10/html/65-years-of-nation-building/Immigration-history-1945-1955.htm> accessed 2 June 2014

<sup>192</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.45

<sup>193</sup> Stretton, Hugh, *Housing and Government: 1974 Boyer Lectures*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Adelaide, 1974, p.8

<sup>194</sup> Creek, Monica, "'You know you've got a roof over your head": The War Service Homes Scheme', in Gregory *On the Homefront*, 1996, pp.251-56

<sup>195</sup> SHC, *In House: the Official Magazine of the State Housing Commission of Western Australia*, Vol.1. No.1. April 1985, p.5

<sup>196</sup> *The West Australian*, Mon 18 December 1944, p.4

kerosene stoves in their rooms;<sup>197</sup> a couple with nine children living in two basement rooms; many instances of families of four or more members living on verandahs or half verandahs; three families (eleven people in total) sharing a dilapidated cottage;<sup>198</sup> in 1946, returned servicemen living in stables; people leasing out tin sheds in their back yards as accommodation; occupants of houses without doors, ablutions or water supply; condemned, dilapidated shops used as housing;<sup>199</sup> a lame man living with his wife and three children in a 'leaky tent' behind a four-room cottage where another two adults and nine children resided;<sup>200</sup> in 1947, a man living in his tool shed because the tenants in his house refused to vacate, unable to secure alternate housing;<sup>201</sup> in 1948, an extended family of seven living in a one-bedroom flat, sleeping one adult on the porch, one in the lounge, and a couple with their three children in the bedroom.<sup>202</sup>

The primary government response to the housing shortage was the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, signed in 1944. This agreement initiated a large scale rental housing scheme, which accounted for over half (52%) of the houses built by the SHC between 1944 and 1956. See [Section 11.1](#) for details.

The work of the State Housing Commission was often reported in the state's newspapers in the 1940s, indicating a broad public interest in the housing situation. A search of Western Australian newspapers between 1944 and 1954 for articles referring to either the WHB or the SHC returned 5,496 related articles, of which 3,275 were in the six years 1944-1949, suggesting the department was mentioned in a newspaper somewhere in the State practically every day in this period. By comparison, between 1930 and 1941 only 1,563 articles were found, despite this covering the Depression years when many people lost their homes, demonstrating the relative importance of government housing in the post-war years. Regular updates were given in the newspapers of the number of houses being constructed by the government, particularly under the Commonwealth-State agreement. Articles described new suburbs and the style and quality of houses being built, generally in positive terms. However, there was also growing discontent at the speed with which housing was provided and some accusations that new homes were not being fairly distributed.<sup>203</sup>

In late 1947, in response to public and parliamentary complaints, H.D. Moseley was appointed to head a Royal Commission into the State Housing Commission, investigating both the adequacy of post-war housing schemes and whether they were being implemented fairly by the SHC. Moseley noted that as the Commission's work was expanding rapidly, its staff numbers were also increasing at pace, more than doubling in around three years. Many of these positions were temporary appointments, and the rate of staff turnover was very rapid, with the net result of an often inexperienced staff handling the State housing programs, such that 'the organisation was inadequate to the demands made upon it, and conditions were chaotic from the beginning'. The Royal Commission found no evidence of explicitly corrupt practices by the SHC. However, it did identify numerous examples where undue preferential treatment had been given to applicants and noted a lack of rigour in ensuring priority was given to the neediest applicants. On the whole, Moseley concluded that the SHC was carrying out its duties

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<sup>197</sup> *Daily News*, Fri 13 July 1945, p.1

<sup>198</sup> *Mirror*, Sat 24 March 1945, p.2

<sup>199</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 2 March 1946, p.4

<sup>200</sup> *Daily News*, Wed 31 July 1946

<sup>201</sup> *Daily News*, Tues 21 January 1947, p.7

<sup>202</sup> *Daily News*, Tues 6 January 1948, p.4

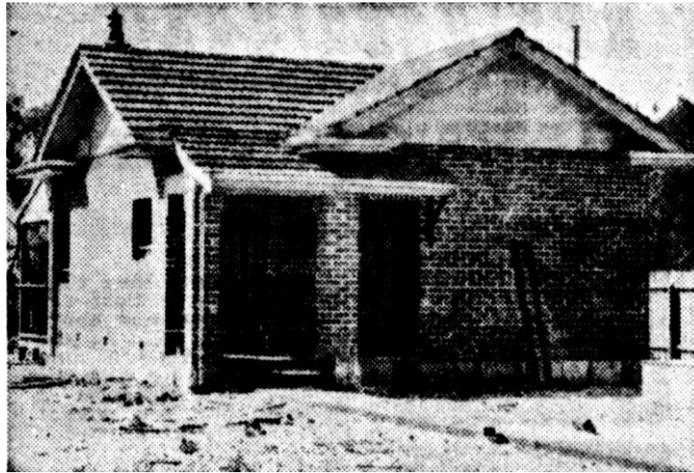
<sup>203</sup> Various newspaper articles 1944-49, located by searching Trove <http://trove.nla.gov.au> May-June 2014, including keyword search for comparative numbers of articles, 9 June 2014

appropriately, although hampered by an inadequate staff and the shortage of building materials and labour.<sup>204</sup>

The 1948 Royal Commission noted that the application process for both rental homes and building permits discriminated against two- and three-unit families, leading to cases of smaller families with 'cases of gross hardship' having their applications refused. An example cited in the Commission's report was a couple living in a roughly converted 'fowlhouse', its mud floor under water in poor weather and the occupants relying on duckboards to traverse the dwelling, who had nonetheless been denied a building permit. This particular couple received their building permit as a result of the Royal Commission. The Commissioner recommended against the practice of excluding smaller families from eligibility, and some exceptions were made in extreme circumstances.<sup>205</sup> However, it appears the policy continued in general for many years.

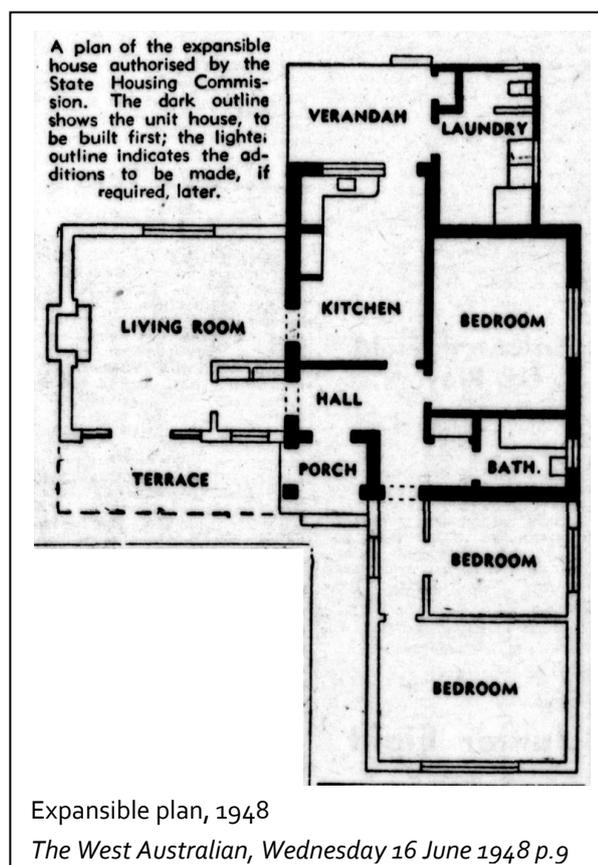
In addition to considerations of relative hardship, priority in approving building permits was given to primary producers and industrial workers.<sup>206</sup>

Early in 1947, Northam Council had been outraged to have the Workers' Homes Board permit the construction of 'half a house'. A couple, pregnant with their first child, were granted a permit to build only the back half of their home, in order to get them out of their existing inadequate accommodation. Despite their indignation, the Council allowed the home to be built, as the situation was viewed as an emergency.<sup>207</sup>



Expansible home at Belmont: two rooms with bathroom.

*Sunday Times, Sunday 19 December 1948, p.4*



Expansible plan, 1948

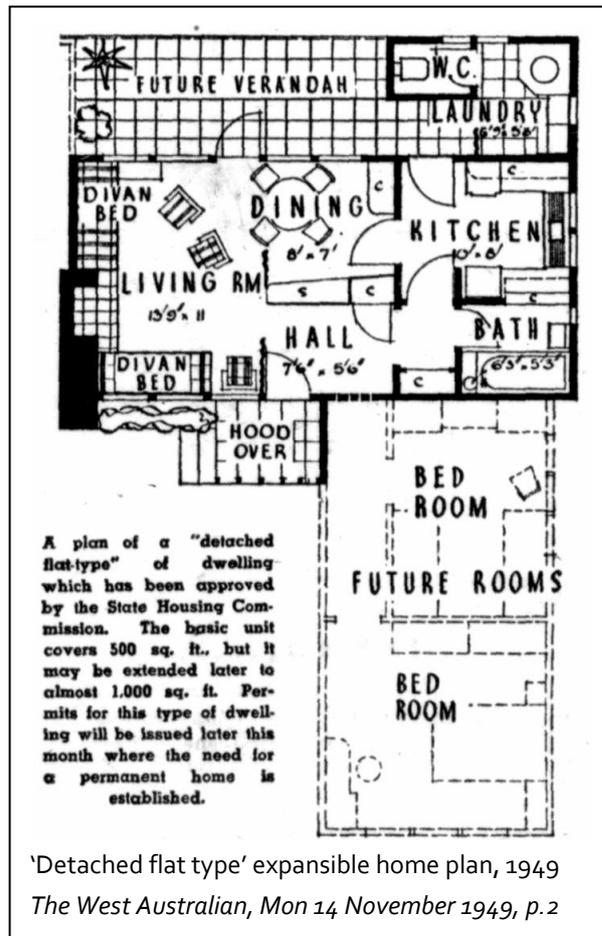
*The West Australian, Wednesday 16 June 1948 p.9*

<sup>204</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948, quote from p.6

<sup>205</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948, p.6

<sup>206</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948

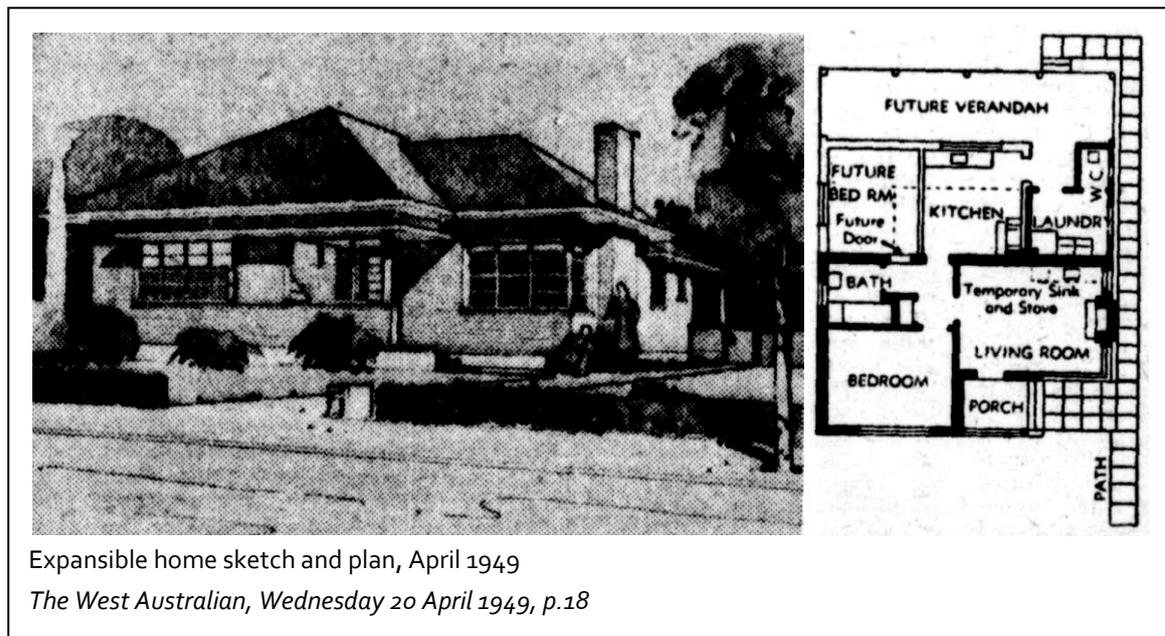
<sup>207</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 8 February 1947, p.16



'Detached flat type' expensible home plan, 1949  
*The West Australian, Mon 14 November 1949, p.2*

From 1948, 'expensible' homes were designed by the SHC, also referred to as 'detached flats'. Ninety were planned under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme in the first year, including thirty to a standard plan by a local architectural firm. This design proposed an initial house of hall, bathroom, kitchen, bedroom and external toilet/laundry, with later additions of living room, two further bedrooms, rear verandah and front terrace.<sup>208</sup> Expensible homes were promoted as suitable for married couples who could then add rooms as they expanded their families. A 1949 design included entry hall, living, dining, kitchen and bathrooms, with cupboards and cabinets serving as partitions. Divan beds were planned for the living room. Provision was made for future bedroom additions and a future rear verandah, which would connect the external toilet and laundry with the house.<sup>209</sup> Another 1949 plan began with bedroom, living room, bathroom and external toilet/laundry, with future kitchen, extra bedroom and rear verandah. Expensible homes were designed to present to the street as 'complete', with future rooms generally to be added to the rear.<sup>210</sup> The designs received

considerable media attention and, although criticised, were recognised as an expedient measure in the housing crisis.<sup>211</sup> These smaller-than-standard homes were designed to put a roof over the heads of as



Expensible home sketch and plan, April 1949  
*The West Australian, Wednesday 20 April 1949, p.18*

<sup>208</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 16 June 1948, p.9

<sup>209</sup> *The West Australian*, Mon 14 November 1949, p.2

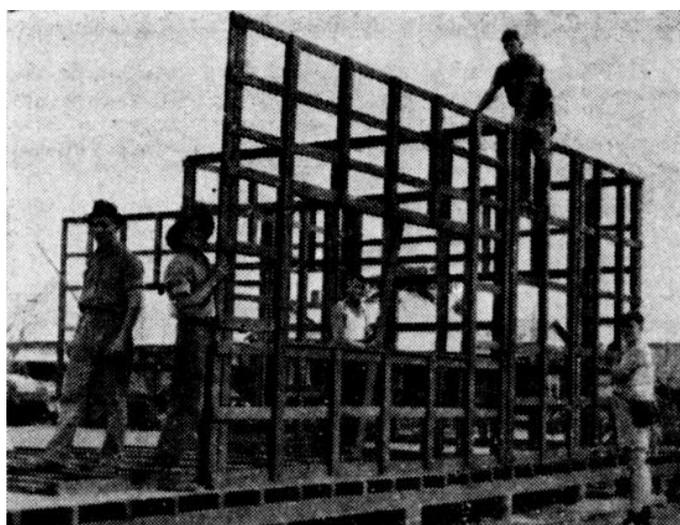
<sup>210</sup> *The West Australian*, 20 April 1949, p.18

<sup>211</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 3 July 1948, p.24

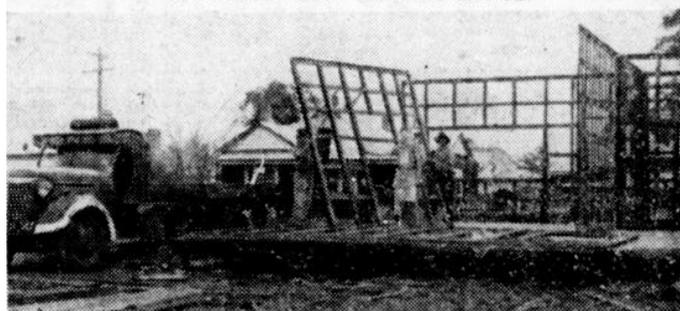
many families as possible, with promises to local authorities that they would be extended to 'full size' when the crisis period abated. It was the mid-1950s before significant work to extend the 'expandable' government rental homes was undertaken, although home owners presumably added rooms as they were able.<sup>212</sup>

A 1949 article described a two-bedroom pre-fabricated home erected for the SHC at Welshpool. It claimed the timber-framed asbestos residence was the first pre-fabricated house built in the State.<sup>213</sup> The same claim had already been made in 1945, when an experimental pre-fabricated timber house was erected by the Workers' Homes Board in Ethel Street, Guildford. Built on brick and earthenware foundations with a tile roof, it was reported to be externally complete in under a week with only five labourers, three unskilled in building trades. The house was erected 'with the goodwill of the Timber Controller, Forestry Department', and presumably was intended to encourage the construction of more timber homes.<sup>214</sup>

Between 1945 and 1950, the State Housing Commission constructed over 46% of all homes built in the State.<sup>215</sup> By 1950, in addition to its own Act and the provisions of the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, the Commission also administered the 1948-49 *Commonwealth War Service Homes Act*, the McNess Housing Trust and legislation controlling building and building material permits.<sup>216</sup> By 1951, the total number of homes being built in the State was over three times the



Ten minutes after the walls arrived.



Another angle—5 minutes later.



Two days—and the job is nearing completion. (Story on left).

Pre-fabricated house built at Guildford, 1945  
*Sunday Times*, Sunday 22 July 1945, p.14

<sup>212</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

<sup>213</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 18 Nov 1949, p.13

<sup>214</sup> *Sunday Times*, Sun 22 July 1945, p.14

<sup>215</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950

<sup>216</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950

annual figures at the end of the 1930s. The Commission had specifically encouraged owner-builders and this kind of build was increasing.<sup>217</sup>

Once building began again after the war, the construction of new homes was prioritised over maintaining the existing stock. Although Commonwealth restrictions on building were lifted in October 1945, the State implemented its own restrictions the following January to control the distribution of limited building materials. The onerous task of administering this legislation fell to the State Housing Commission, although associated costs were covered by Treasury rather than the SHC budget.<sup>218</sup> Materials continued to be in short supply, and construction tightly controlled. However, by 1950 the permit system was beginning to be loosened, as the shortage of building materials began to ease. Through the late 1940s, the SHC used imported building materials whenever possible, in order to release locally produced materials for the private building industry. Commission homes of the latter 1940s used both asbestos and fibrous plaster sheeting in their construction.<sup>219</sup>

In the early 1950s, some of the labour for SHC construction was provided by the Public Works Department Day Labour Organisation.<sup>220</sup> For example, in 1953-54, this organisation constructed 359 SHC homes. In order to address local labour shortages, the SHC also sponsored immigrants willing to work in the building industry. By 1954, this included bringing skilled plumbers from Britain to live in Australia.<sup>221</sup>

Between 1947 and 1953, the State's population increased by around 120,000, almost 24%. Housing stock increased only marginally quicker (25%), meaning that although the SHC had by mid-1953 accommodated around 50,000 people since the end of World War Two, in real terms they were making barely any headway in addressing housing needs of the State's growing population.<sup>222</sup>

Acquiring sufficient land for the new government housing programs proved difficult. Owners were often reluctant to sell, as the National Security Regulations stipulated they must accept prices pegged to 1942 rates. Many were also holding onto land in order to build for themselves, or for relatives returning from the war. In some cases, the Board went so far as to resume land to meet its quotas.<sup>223</sup> Resumption was reserved for where owners could not be located or where blocks were required for inclusion in a re-subdivision and owners 'would not sell at a reasonable price'. Returned servicemen could not be compelled to relinquish their land without approval of the Federal treasurer, and despite offers of comparable blocks elsewhere or land within the new subdivision, many held out in the hope of making profits from their land when restrictions on sale prices eventually lifted.<sup>224</sup> Some of the early large resumptions were at Bayswater (later Bedford) and South Perth, in 1945. In December 1945, following public protest, a motion was put in the Legislative Council that resumption of land for workers' homes should not be permitted, as it was being implemented under the *Public Works Act* but was not a 'public work'. The motion was narrowly defeated.<sup>225</sup> The *State Housing Act* in 1946 subsequently included measures to permit resumption for the purpose of government housing. Further land was resumed in 1946 at Kensington and Queens Park and in 1947 at Osborne Park, Mount Hawthorn and Rivervale, the latter a large parcel allowing for 422 new lots.<sup>226</sup> Problems with resumption continued for some years,

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<sup>217</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1951

<sup>218</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1946

<sup>219</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950

<sup>220</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>221</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1954

<sup>222</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>223</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>224</sup> *The West Australian*, Tues 4 December 1945, p.4

<sup>225</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 14 December 1945, p.10

<sup>226</sup> *The West Australian*, Tues 29 October 1946, p.13, and Sat 31 January 1948, p.18

with land resumption continuing to be deemed necessary. By 30 June 1950, the SHC had obtained sufficient land to construct around 10,000 homes.<sup>227</sup>

Initially after the war, the Commission constructed its homes in existing suburbs, either as infill or, increasingly, as extensions of these areas. From the late 1940s, however, it began to develop its own housing estates, constructing a mix of rental and purchase-scheme homes. New housing developments aimed to be sited in areas suitable for public and government buildings.<sup>228</sup> The new suburbs, although frequently discussed in newspapers of the day as Commonwealth-State rental housing areas, were in fact a mix of houses under the various government schemes. For example, by mid 1956, Hilton comprised 427 Commonwealth-State rental homes, as well as homes built under the War Service (242), State Housing Act (12), McNess (8) and Evictee (45) programs. Manning's houses divided as 527 Commonwealth-State rentals, 259 War Service and one State Housing Act house. Belmont included 571 Commonwealth-State rentals, 224 War Service, nine State Housing Act and 18 McNess homes.<sup>229</sup>

The first groups of public housing constructed in the 1940s were celebrated for their proximity to public transport.<sup>230</sup> However, housing developments of the post-war period increasingly assumed widespread private car ownerships. Areas between radial rail and main road links, which had previously been too far from public transport, became viable for residential subdivision. These areas also offered the large sites needed to develop new industrial precincts, and subsequently filled in with both residential and industrial areas.<sup>231</sup> The town planning assumption of private transport contributed to those who relied on public transport, including many low-income public housing tenants, being isolated and underserved in the new suburbs.

One of the outcomes of the wartime review of Australian housing was an increased attention to and professionalism in town planning, which had previously been relatively ad hoc.<sup>232</sup> Several planning ideas of the early twentieth century began to be incorporated into urban design, including 'City Functional' planning that separated use zones and creating transport corridors, 'City Social' planning emphasising housing design and provision of children's playgrounds, 'City Beautiful' ideas for civic precincts and grand aesthetics, and 'Garden City' suburbs. Post-war town planning was intricately linked with housing concerns, where earlier it had been more concerned with integrated overall urban layouts.<sup>233</sup>

The SHC, relying on design from the State Town Planning Commission, frequently used Garden City style layouts for its suburban housing developments of the post-war period.<sup>234</sup> The Garden City movement originated with the writings of British author Ebenezer Howard, whose seminal work was published in 1898. Garden cities aimed to plan a whole community as an integrated, walkable whole with extensive public green spaces and generous individual gardens to bring together 'the best of town and country living' while providing both affordable and more expensive housing.<sup>235</sup> The proportions and relationship between residential, agricultural and industrial land uses were important considerations in Garden City

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<sup>227</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-1950*

<sup>228</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1952 and 1953*

<sup>229</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>230</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 10 November 1945, p.13 (re Bassendean); *Western Mail*, Thurs 21 December 1944, p.11 (re Joondanna)

<sup>231</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.114

<sup>232</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.74-81

<sup>233</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.9, 14 & 22

<sup>234</sup> HCWA assessment documentation for P11936 *Maniana Precinct*, February 2002, p.7

<sup>235</sup> Town & Country Planning Association (UK), 'Garden City Principles', <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html> accessed 29 April 2014

planning, which marked a professionalisation of town planning.<sup>236</sup> The New Town Movement applied Garden City planning ideas to larger scale urban developments.<sup>237</sup> In Australian suburbs this manifested as low density suburban areas laid out with irregular or semicircular streets following the natural undulations of the land, uniform street frontages, and large housing lots surrounding central recreational and community amenities areas.<sup>238</sup> Garden City design dominated Australian suburban development from the 1930s to the 1950s. Although the philosophy had many planned features, some more subtle than others, the obvious indicator of Garden City planning was departure from grid-pattern subdivision, which had dominated Australian towns since European settlement, and continued to be the default for many developers.<sup>239</sup>

Such designs were first used in Perth by planners P.G.S. (Percy) Hope and Carl Klem at Dalkeith, from 1911.<sup>240</sup> Floreat and City Beach were laid out in the style on the Perth Endowment Lands in the 1920s and



Aerial photograph of Garden City design at Hurlingham Estate, South Perth, 1946

*Original captioning suggests 39 houses were completed at this time.*

*The West Australian, 26 September 1946 p.6*

<sup>236</sup> Bizzaca, Kris, with Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', prepared for the Ministry of Housing, December 2001, pp.7-8

<sup>237</sup> Wassenberg, Frank, *Large Housing Estates: Ideas, Rise, Fall and Recovery*, IOS Press, Amsterdam, 2013, p.45

<sup>238</sup> HCWA (Kris Bizzaca & Annabel Wills), Heritage Assessment for P9107 *British Empire and Commonwealth Games Village Precinct (fmr)*, 2003.

<sup>239</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.60-62, 172

<sup>240</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation, P04651 *Chisholm House (fmr)*, August 2003; Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.186-87.

Note: This book also lists Ascot Gardens, Victoria Park Station Estate, Mount Lawley Estate, Attadale, Manning, Westminster Garden City and Wembley Downs as early examples of garden city design in Perth, implying all are Hope & Klem designs from the 1920s or earlier. With the possible exception of Attadale, this list is inaccurate, although Wembley Downs and Manning are Garden City suburbs of the post-war era.

1930s.<sup>241</sup> Menora, Coolbinia (1920s) and parts of Bickton (1920s-30s) also used Garden City design.<sup>242</sup> Wundowie, near Northam, was laid out by the Workers' Homes Board on Garden City lines from 1944, the first government housing development to use the design philosophy.<sup>243</sup> Hurlingham Estate South Perth, established from 1945, was the first Metropolitan government housing estate using Garden City principles.<sup>244</sup> A 1949 aerial photograph appears to show houses completed on all Hurlingham Estate lots in the two crescent streets arcing around land set aside for a central children's playground.<sup>245</sup> Hilton Park was another early SHC use of the style. Public areas, in addition to parks, included schools, shops and other public facilities.<sup>246</sup> Willagee and Manning Park were also examples.<sup>247</sup>

The Workers' Homes Board had purchase land at Hilton through the 1940s and erected both State Housing Act and Commonwealth-State Rental homes there from 1945, with 31 Hilton Park homes completed by June 1947. The City of Fremantle released land in 1949 from the Fremantle Commonage for a 144-lot SHC residential development at Hilton Park. By 1950, 164 homes at Hilton Park had been completed. Subdivision and clearing of further commonage land for 355 more lots was nearly completed by mid-1951. Over the next five years, hundreds of homes were constructed, mostly timber-framed Commonwealth-State rentals but also War Service Homes. By the late 1950s Hilton was essentially fully constructed.<sup>248</sup>

Manning was subdivided in 1948, incorporating roads from a former army camp, with the first homes constructed from November that year. Described at the time as a 'model suburb' it was intended to have over 1,000 homes in addition to duplexes and several blocks of up to eight flats, and was reported in the media as the largest suburban development undertaken by the SHC up to that time. It was mid-1949 before the first home was completed, however. Another year later, fifty homes had been completed, with another 134 under construction and plans were prepared for a group of shops.<sup>249</sup>

Willagee was laid out in 1951, with the central community areas designed by Margaret Feilman in 1952. Although using some Garden City principles, it also retained strong grid-pattern features. The estate was located to provide housing for industrial workers in the expanding Fremantle industrial area. Many of its original houses were pre-fabricated timber homes imported from Austria and erected from 1951.<sup>250</sup> (see [Section 11.1](#)).

The SHC opted for Garden City designs where it was laying out completely new areas. However, many post-war developments used land that had been subdivided but not developed in the interwar period, and these areas tended to use grid-pattern plans.<sup>251</sup> Joondanna and much of greater South Perth followed this pattern.

<sup>241</sup> HCWA assessment documentation for P11936 *Maniana Precinct*, February 2002, p.7

<sup>242</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P03578 *Rennie Crescent Precinct Hilton*, undated

<sup>243</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P23525 *Town of Wundowie*, February 2014, based on Fiona Bush & Relix 'Wundowie Conservation Plan', 2008

<sup>244</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P03578 *Rennie Crescent Precinct Hilton*, undated

<sup>245</sup> *Daily News*, 30 July 1949, p.27

<sup>246</sup> HCWA assessment documentation for P11936 *Maniana Precinct*, February 2002, p.7

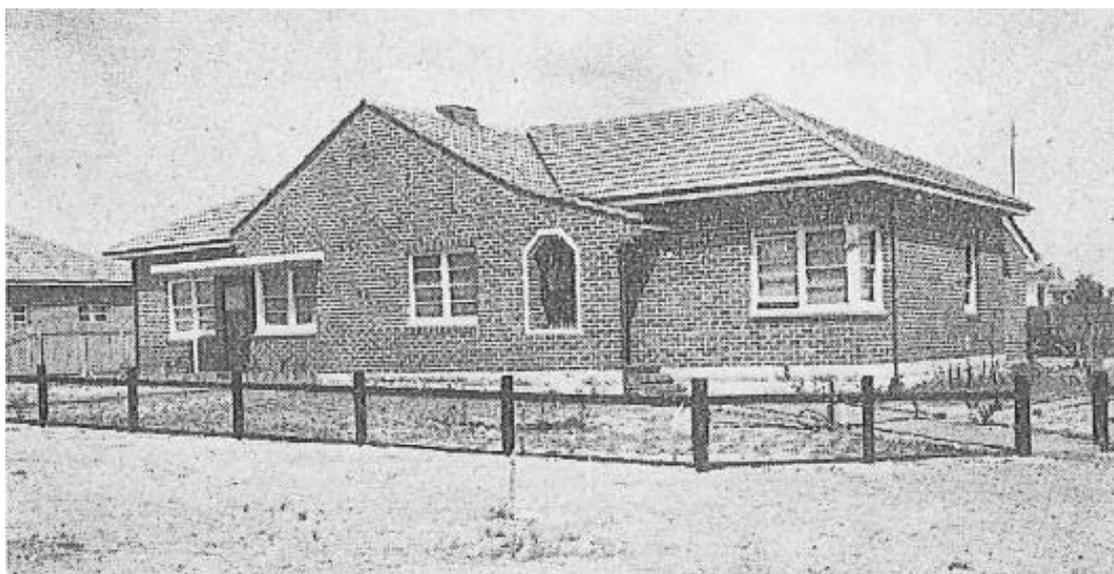
<sup>247</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, p.8

<sup>248</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P03578 *Rennie Crescent Precinct Hilton*, undated, quoting Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects '61 Houses: South Hilton', December 2001

<sup>249</sup> *Daily News*, Fri 22 October 1948, p.4; *Sunday Times*, Sun 16 July 1950, p.8

<sup>250</sup> *The West Australian*, Thurs 29 March 1951, p.5, Tues 22 April 1952, p.4, and Mon 7 July 1952, p.6

<sup>251</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.172



Early duplex, South Perth

*SHC, Annual Report, 1952 p.14*

In addition to purchasing land, the SHC also used its powers to resume land. In 1951, 8,250 acres was resumed in the Wanneroo-Mount Yokine area, the largest land resumption of its type in the State. Despite the move being unpopular, it was seen as essential to facilitate northern expansion of the suburbs without incurring excessive costs.<sup>252</sup> It was 'proposed to plan on modern lines and to undertake progressive development, hand in hand with the extension of very necessary services'.<sup>253</sup> The Commission was pursuing a policy of purchasing broad acre sites well in advance of building to allow time to develop necessary infrastructure to support constructing whole new suburban areas.<sup>254</sup> The Wanneroo land became the suburbs of Nollamara, Mirrabooka, Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola and Westminster, developed over the next twenty years.

Land resumption continued through to the mid-1950s. Land was also purchased close to where workers might gain employment, in areas of little commercial appeal, such as low-lying land or sites near to industrial areas. Pre-war industrial areas had been East and West Perth, Subiaco, Fremantle, Bassendean and Midland. From 1945, industry was also established at Welshpool, Hilton Park and Innaloo. By 1952, 86% of the city's industrial workforce was employed in these nine areas. Belmont was also being developed as accommodation for workers associated with the planned international airport.<sup>255</sup>

The 1947 *State Housing Act* included provisions for erection of special-purpose hostels, such as for factory workers.<sup>256</sup> No mention is made in annual reports of such hostels being built, and a search of Western Australian newspapers from 1947 to 1956 revealed no articles describing SHC workers' hostels. Hostels were erected to house newly arrived migrants, such as at Northam, Graylands and Point Walter, but these were the responsibility of the Immigration Department. Hostels for migrant workers appear to have

<sup>252</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.71

<sup>253</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*, p.13

<sup>254</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*

<sup>255</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.71, 74-75

<sup>256</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 16 October 1946, p.10

been established in some country areas to support industrial developments, but these also were Federally funded and do not appear to have been managed by the SHC.<sup>257</sup>

By the 1950s, the roll-out of State housing was in full swing, influenced by three main forces: the high demand for affordable housing, industries requiring a 'stable and accessible workforce', and limited funding for the massive project. As a result, housing was first supplied to workers and their families rather than the very poor. The Metropolitan area expanded rapidly, with whole new suburbs carved out of the bush, mostly comprising neat rows of small homes on quarter acre blocks.<sup>258</sup> In 1951-52, estates were prepared in readiness of house construction at Hilton Park, Manning Park, Ascot Gardens, Killarney (now Woodlands), Ashfield and Willagee.<sup>259</sup> At both Hilton and Manning, over 200 homes had already been completed, suggesting this 1952 statement refers to extensions to those estates.<sup>260</sup>

Building materials gradually became more readily available into the 1950s, as post-war industries got up to speed with supply. Many items continued to be difficult to obtain, however. Although asbestos production had markedly increased by 1951, to nearly four times pre-war levels, it could not keep pace with the building boom. Galvanised water piping, iron and porcelain enamelware were all imported from the eastern states and suffered numerous shipping delays. Bricks were in such short supply that an additional plant was under construction at the State Brickworks.<sup>261</sup> Work began on new State brickworks at Armadale in 1950, with the new plant fully operational by late 1952.<sup>262</sup> Substitutes of cement blocks and bricks were used in the interim. As cement was also used for roofing tiles, this severely taxed the cement supply, which remained well below demand.<sup>263</sup>

A 1951 booklet of SHC standard plans included 30 designs, ranging from one to three bedrooms. Most also allowed for a rear sleep-out if required. The larger two-bedroom designs and most of the three-bedroom plans included separate dining and kitchen areas. The smallest homes were 'expandable' designs (Types WS302AR, WS304A and T1B). These were designed to be erected with a bare minimum of rooms, with provision made for additional rooms in future. Generally, additional rooms were projected as bedrooms, but the Type T1B residence was planned to have two bedrooms but no kitchen, with temporary sink and stove allowances in the living room. The largest floor plan in the booklet was a three-bedroom home of 1,142 sqft (106m<sup>2</sup>) and the smallest the Type T1B expandable, at 519 sqft (48m<sup>2</sup>) (647 sqft/60m<sup>2</sup> with kitchen), but most were around 800-900 sqft (74-84m<sup>2</sup>). These measurements did not include porch, laundry, toilet, sleep-out or verandah, which generally added around 250-400 sqft (23-37m<sup>2</sup>) to the overall size. Almost all the designs included a bathroom within the main house rather than in an enclosure on the back verandah, and some also included laundry and toilet within the main house. One of the thirty plans, however, had no toilet shown, presumably intending for a separate outside WC (Type P 'Timber Framed Goldfields House'). Almost all the homes included an enclosable verandah and/or sleep-out.<sup>264</sup> This was a particular feature of Western Australian housing of the period, not generally replicated in standard plans for public housing in other States.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Trove search: keywords 'State Housing Commission hostel'; State 'Western Australia'; date '1 Jan 1947 – 31 Dec 1959' (West Australian only online to Dec 1954, no other WA papers later than 1956) <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/search?adv> 2 June 2014

<sup>258</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.70

<sup>259</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1952*

<sup>260</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*

<sup>261</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*

<sup>262</sup> Treasury file 'State Brickworks Accounts: Audit Of', SROWA Cons 957 Item 1937/1193

<sup>263</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*

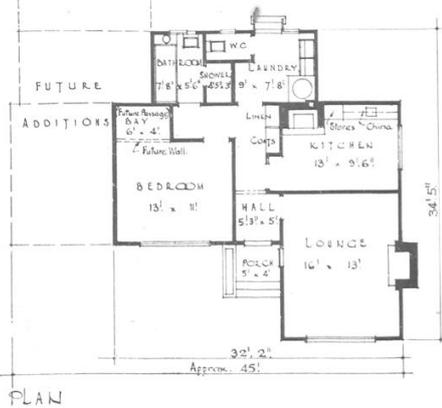
<sup>264</sup> SHC, *House Designs of the State Housing Commission of Western Australia, 1951* SLWA PR 9050/151

<sup>265</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, illustrated pages (unnumbered)

Timber Framed Expansible House Type WS302AR



PERSPECTIVE VIEW

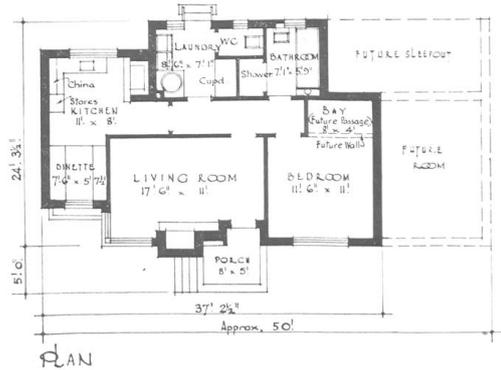


PLAN

Brick Expansible House Type WS304A



PERSPECTIVE VIEW

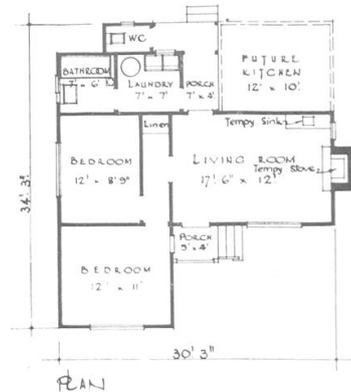


PLAN

Timber Framed House Type WS403A



PERSPECTIVE VIEW

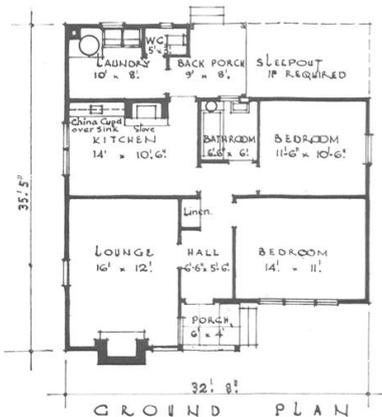


PLAN

Timber Framed Expansible House Type T1B



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



GROUND PLAN

SHC Standard Plans, 1951

SHC, House Designs of the State Housing Commission of Western Australia, 1951

Suggested orientations for the homes were given,<sup>266</sup> which took on board the 1944 Commonwealth Housing Commission recommendation that, on health grounds, all bedrooms and living areas should receive at least one hour of sunlight a day. To save materials, houses were constructed with small or no eaves.<sup>267</sup> These orientations maximised winter sun but lack of eaves also maximised summer sun, resulting in hot houses through summer. The booklet was published for use by applicants for War Service Homes Scheme or State Housing Act loans. It is likely that it also reflects plans used in the rental scheme.<sup>268</sup>

The Type 7 timber cottage, used so extensively before the war especially for McNess homes, is not included in the 1951 booklet. It last appears in annual reports in 1941. It is likely this plan was no longer used in the post-war period.<sup>269</sup>

Almost all the 1951 designs show tile roofs, with the exception of three timber-framed plans. Most houses built by the SHC in the 1940s into the 1950s were tile roofed.<sup>270</sup>

The waiting list for government housing continued to grow, despite the SHC's rapid building program. In 1951-52, approximately 250 new applications for housing assistance were received each month, in a year when 1,022 new houses were completed for the scheme. The same year, 389 new tenants were accommodated in existing homes that had been vacated by the original tenants, but it was obvious demand continued to outstrip supply.<sup>271</sup> By 1953, some country areas were beginning to keep pace with demand, but the Metropolitan area remained far over-subscribed.<sup>272</sup> In August 1953, the SHC claimed to have 11,000 outstanding applications, some of which had been waiting as long as five years for attention.<sup>273</sup> This may have been somewhat exaggerated, as it was a media statement made by SHC Chairman R.W. Brownlie in defence of the controversial decision to erect high rise flats at Subiaco. However, it gives some indication of the scale of the housing shortage even after over eight years of large-scale government-supported residential construction. By June 1954, 400 applications were being received a month. This included applicants for both rental and purchase schemes.<sup>274</sup>

Building restrictions were gradually eased, with the *Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, 1945-52*, finally allowed to lapse in December 1953, opening the way for building 'non-essential' industrial, educational, recreational and ecclesiastical buildings that had been restricted. In its eight years of operation, the *Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act* is reported as effectively managing 'an orderly transition' from post-war shortages to a regular market environment while ensuring materials were channelled as much as possible into building homes.<sup>275</sup>

By 1953, the Commission recognised 'a tendency for the public increasingly to depend upon the Commission for the solution of its housing problems'. A 'Housing Advisory Bureau' was subsequently established, allowing prospective home owners to 'select one of forty or more designs' and receive advice on a wide range of construction matters. This proved a popular service for 'a home seeker with limited capital'. For a small fee, applicants were able to purchase, if desired, the full working drawings and

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<sup>266</sup> SHC, *House Designs of the SHC*, 1951

<sup>267</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.89

<sup>268</sup> SHC, *House Designs of the SHC*, 1951

<sup>269</sup> SHC, *House Designs of the SHC*, 1951; McNess Housing Trust, *Annual Report*, 1941

<sup>270</sup> *The West Australian*, Sun 19 December 1948, p.4; SHC, *House Designs of the SHC*, 1951

<sup>271</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1952

<sup>272</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>273</sup> *The West Australian*, Mon 31 August 1953, p.5

<sup>274</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>275</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1954

specifications for the designs on display.<sup>276</sup> In the first year, the Commission produced a book of 56 homes designs and sold over 3,000 copies of the book within three years.<sup>277</sup>

In 1954-55, the Commission erected 300 homes in 31 weeks at Maniana, Queens Park. The development comprised mostly two-bedroom homes, some with sleep-outs, erected both individually and semi-detached, but also included ten blocks of four-unit single-storey flats for elderly people.<sup>278</sup> Plans to construct the development, initiated in 1953, noted it as urgent, on account of the increasing number of evictees requiring housing. A standard design was drawn for the area, to allow for rapid erection, based on timber-framed SHC plans of the time but with a light timber truss roof, with the largest homes having only two bedrooms and a sleep-out.<sup>279</sup> Maniana was sited to serve the growing Welshpool industrial area. Designed by notable architect and planner Margaret Feilman in 1953, Maniana demonstrated Garden City design. By 1959, however, the local Road Board described the area as a slum, indicating the high ideals of the Garden City had failed to manifest.<sup>280</sup>

Feilman designed several housing estates for the SHC, including at Kwinana, Nollamara and Mirrabooka.<sup>281</sup> Feilman was the PWD's first female architectural cadet at the age of sixteen, after completing school in 1937. She studied Town Planning in Britain in the 1940s and brought home British post-war planning ideas to be the first qualified and registered Town Planner in the State, and the first woman in any such role. In the early 1950s, Feilman began working in private practice. Her long association with the SHC began with her commissioned design for Kwinana in 1952, and extended until her retirement in 1984.<sup>282</sup> See [Section 11.5](#) for details on Kwinana

By 1956, SHC developments at North Innaloo, Doubleview, Brentwood, Killarney and Eden Hill were complete. Nollamara was under development and Koongamia was approximately one third completed. These suburbs were all examples of 'Housing Commission sponsored areas', along with the earlier developments at Willagee, Hilton Park, Hamilton Hill (a total 2,000 homes between the three suburbs); Manning, Melville, Millen, Bentley, Midvale and Innaloo. In country areas new suburbs had also been developed: Lockyer at Albany, Carey Park at Bunbury, Wilson Park and Cheetara at Collie, and similar areas at Northam, Narrogin and Geraldton.<sup>283</sup>

House costs quoted in the SHC's reports in 1946 and 1947 give estimates only for brick homes, suggesting this was still the preferred building material at the time.<sup>284</sup> To the end of the 1940s, the SHC constructed more than half of its houses of brick, while in the same years more than half the homes privately constructed were timber framed. This balance began to shift around 1950. By 1955, around 73% of SHC homes were timber framed, compared with only 59% of privately constructed houses.<sup>285</sup> Commonwealth-State rental homes made up the bulk of these timber-framed homes, while War Service Homes accounted for a majority of the brick residences. In 1953-54, for example, 55% of all new Commission homes were timber framed, but within this 78% of its new rentals were timber-framed,

<sup>276</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*, quotes from p.9

<sup>277</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>278</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1955*

<sup>279</sup> Various SHC letters, reproduced in Bodycoat, Ronald, 'Maniana Housing Estate: Archival Record', prepared for Landstart – DHW, September 2002, Appendix 9

<sup>280</sup> HCWA assessment documentation for P11936 *Maniana Precinct*, February 2002, p.7

<sup>281</sup> State Library of Western Australia catalogue entries for maps of new estates (various)

<sup>282</sup> Ethell, Jenny, 'Margaret Feilman', at National Trust <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa/MargaretFeilman> accessed 10 June 2014

<sup>283</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>284</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1945-47*

<sup>285</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1959*

compared with only 36% of War Service Homes.<sup>286</sup> Those who managed brick construction could often only obtain the less popular 'wire cut' bricks, and many brick houses of the era were rendered, possibly to hide these 'inferior' bricks.<sup>287</sup>

The Commission increasingly noted its attention to 'variety of design', no doubt in response to accusations that its developments had an appearance of 'mass production'. Brick veneer and brick-featured timber-framed homes were added to the style list, and a practice of interspersing brick houses into timber-framed areas was adopted. Colour schemes and siting were also varied.<sup>288</sup> Where the SHC contracted for a group of one house type within an area, these were scattered through the suburb, from as close as every third lot to only one or two per street.<sup>289</sup> Variations appear to have been applied more readily to State Housing Act and War Service Homes than to rental properties, however.

In its 1956 annual report, the State Housing Commission stated that 'for the first time since pre-war days, materials and skilled labour were more than adequate to meet demand'. In fact, materials such as timber, bricks, cement tiles, asbestos and fibrous covering were stockpiling, as there had been a contraction in the building industry during preceding year. The first *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* came to an end the same year.<sup>290</sup>

From a deficit after the war of approximately 12,800 houses, and allowing for increasing numbers of households through marriage and migration, it was estimated in 1956 that almost 60,000 new homes had been required in the post-war decade, 10,000 more than had been predicted in the 1940s. In the same period, 52,240 homes had been constructed, of which the SHC provided 21,600 (41%). Although there was still a shortage of housing, this was in part due to changes in expectations. The average number of

HOUSES BUILT DURING PERIOD 1944-45 TO 1955-56.																					
(Excluding Houses Built for and Handed over to Other Authorities.)																					
Year.	Commonwealth-State Rental.			War Service Homes.			State Housing Act.			McNess Trust.			B.P. (Kwinana), Ltd.			Eviottee Scheme.			Total.		
	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.	Metro.	Country.	Total.
1944-45	38	25	63	....	....	....	....	1	1	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	38	26	64
1945-46	175	55	230	15	1	16	....	1	1	8	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	198	57	255
1946-47	390	119	509	150	5	155	....	9	9	15	1	16	....	....	....	....	....	....	555	134	689
1947-48	643	203	846	311	15	326	....	15	15	7	....	7	....	....	....	....	....	....	961	233	1,194
1948-49	729	287	1,016	472	17	489	2	18	20	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	1,203	322	1,525
1949-50	677	275	952	569	40	609	27	13	40	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	1,273	328	1,601
1950-51	892	369	1,261	654	79	733	3	7	10	16	....	16	....	....	....	....	....	....	1,565	455	2,020
1951-52	634	388	1,022	633	94	727	8	42	50	....	....	....	....	....	....	95	6	101	1,370	530	1,900
1952-53	669	435	1,104	1,089	123	1,212	33	292	325	....	....	....	35	35	126	5	131	1,917	890	2,807	
1953-54	836	664	1,500	1,102	112	1,214	60	203	263	8	....	8	494	494	5	....	5	2,011	1,473	3,484	
1954-55	1,711	320	2,031	1,012	97	1,109	602	196	798	4	....	4	122	122	....	....	....	....	3,329	735	4,064
1955-56	1,264	315	1,579	1,123	97	1,220	644	239	883	12	....	12	2	2	....	....	....	....	3,043	653	3,696
Total	(a)8,658	(b)3,455	12,113	7,130	680	7,810	1,379	1,036	2,415	70	1	71	....	653	653	236	11	(c) 237	17,463	5,836	23,299

(a) Includes 412 Tradesmen's flats built as follows :-78 in 1949-50, 248 in 1950-51, 86 in 1951-52.

(b) Includes 40 houses built at Big Bell which were dismantled in 1955-56 and rebuilt elsewhere.

(c) Excludes 150 Temporary Eviottee Flats built in 1951-52.

Table of houses built 1944 to 1956

SHC, Annual Report, 1956, p.25

<sup>286</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1954. Note: most years annual figures do not distinguish construction materials between different SHC housing programs.

<sup>287</sup> Creek, 'You know you've got a roof over your head', in Gregory *On the Homefront*, 1996, pp.251-56

<sup>288</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1955

<sup>289</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, pp.14-15

<sup>290</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1956, quote from p.9



### 11.1 FIRST COMMONWEALTH-STATE RENTAL HOUSING SCHEME (1943-1956)

Western Australia had had an uneasy relationship with the Federal government for many years prior to World War Two, even voting in a 1933 referendum to secede. However, World War Two had a unifying effect on the nation. No doubt having a Western Australian, John Curtin, as popular wartime prime minister also helped Western Australians to feel closed to the Commonwealth. Through the war years, the Commonwealth was increasingly interventionist in its approach to the States, and much of this dominance remained after the war. From at least 1942, plans were being made Federally for combined Commonwealth-State actions to reconstruct the nation after the war.<sup>293</sup>

The Commonwealth Department of Post-War Reconstruction, operational from January 1943, set up the Commonwealth Housing Commission as one of three inquiries to prepare for the post-war period. Appointed in April 1943, the Commission was to investigate the existing housing position in Australia and the post-war housing needs. The Commission's final report, delivered in August 1944, influenced government housing policy for several decades. Among wide-ranging recommendations, it pushed for Commonwealth-State cooperation in housing policy, previously a State responsibility, and advocated a substantial government rental housing program. Although States remained cautious about embracing Federally-controlled housing policy, and were not initially responsive to the gravity and urgency of the looming post-war housing crisis, the Commonwealth persisted.<sup>294</sup>

In early 1944, the State Premiers agreed to begin work on a Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme. The scheme was 'to provide houses in groups which would be available for rental in the first instance and for subsequent purchase at a valuation'. It was to be administered by State housing authorities. Tenants were to be selected on the basis of their suffering a degree of hardship, with at last 50% of homes to be set aside for ex-Servicemen 'or their dependants', presumably for families where the serviceman had died. Rentals were to be 'economic rent (amortization of cost over 53 years at 3½ per cent, plus rates and taxes, insurance, maintenance, administration, etc)' with rebates available to ensure no family paid more than 20% of its income in rent.<sup>295</sup> Most elements of the Scheme were brought into law with the *Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement Act 1945*. Homes could be sold to occupants who obtained private finance, but the terms discouraged most tenants from purchasing their government rental home.<sup>296</sup> Commonwealth funding of the scheme was in the form of long-term loans (53 years) which States were expected to repay using rental income.<sup>297</sup>

To gauge the demand for rental homes in Western Australia, applications were invited, with the assistance of municipal authorities surveying local conditions. By 30 June 1945, 1785 applications had been received, of which over 70% wished to live in the Metropolitan area.<sup>298</sup> The State's population had become increasingly centred in Perth through the interwar years, with the Metropolitan area, around a third of the State's population prior to World War One, accounting for over half the population by 1947.<sup>299</sup>

It was recognised that the shortage of labour and materials would make construction of homes difficult and may compromise the need for 'a modern and soundly constructed home'. As the war continued, the

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<sup>293</sup> Hetherington, Penelope, 'Introduction: Western Australia in the Commonwealth 1939-1945', in Gregory *On the Homefront*, 1996, pp.1-10

<sup>294</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.47-66; 71-74, 85-90

<sup>295</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>296</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.90-93

<sup>297</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.180

<sup>298</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, p.18

Commonwealth allotted quarterly quotas to the States for construction, based on the availability of materials.<sup>300</sup> By this time, 6.5% of Australia's population lived in Western Australia, around half a million individuals.<sup>301</sup> The first quota of 75 houses was assigned to Boyup Brook, Collie, Joondanna and Claremont in April 1944. A July quota (90 houses) went to North Perth (including Joondanna), Mosman Park, Hilton, Bassendean, Northam, Merredin and Bunbury, followed by 100 houses at Bayswater, Cottesloe, Fremantle, Midland, Mosman Park, North Perth, Boyup Brook, Bunbury, Collie, Geraldton, Katanning, Tammin and Williams. The January and April 1945 quotas, in addition to expanding some of these areas, added South Perth, Victoria Park, Busselton, Donnybrook, Kojonup, Pinjarra, Tambellup and Waroona.<sup>302</sup>

In mid-June 1944, it was announced that construction on the first Commonwealth-State homes would begin 'within the next few days' at Collie and Boyup Brook, with tenders for the Metropolitan houses to be called soon after. The country homes were to be timber and asbestos with tile roofs, a mix of four- and five-room cottages, costing on average £863 at Collie and £900 at Boyup Brook. These two centres had been chosen as their industries were considered vital for the war effort.<sup>303</sup>

Fifteen homes were underway at Collie by July 1944. In response to complaints that the houses were substandard, the Mayor of Collie issued a strong statement of support for the scheme, despite having formally protested about lowered ceilings, claiming 'these houses are built to last for 50 years. They are not jerry built, ramshackle, or out of date. They are so good that instead of having 15 we would like 115 of the same kind'.<sup>304</sup>

The first Metropolitan Commonwealth-State rental houses were under construction at Claremont (Graylands) and North Perth (Joondanna) by September 1944. Both suburbs had been allocated 25 homes, but only 38 had been completed by June 1945 (23 at Joondanna, 15 at Graylands). The locations



State Housing Commission residences, Collie, October 1947  
SLWA collection, 008015D

<sup>300</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1943-45*

<sup>301</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement, 2004*, p.17

<sup>302</sup> WHB, *Annual Report, 1943-45*

<sup>303</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 14 June 1944, p.2

<sup>304</sup> *Albany Advertiser*, Thurs 3 August 1944, p.4

were chosen based on the information received in the survey of municipal authorities, but it was acknowledged that the data gathered was incomplete and further work was required to determine where best to allocate homes.<sup>305</sup>

Construction did not keep pace with the allocation of quotas. The first contract was signed in June 1944, three months after the first allocation. By 30 June 1945, 475 homes had been allocated under the Commonwealth-State Rental scheme over 15 months but only 72 houses were completed and occupied, at Joondanna, Claremont (Graylands), Boyup Brook, Collie and Bunbury. A further 123 were under construction, largely in the Metropolitan area. The homes, two- and three-bedroom structures, varied in cost, but as an indication a two-bedroom brick home in Joondanna Heights had cost £920 and a three-bedroom £984.<sup>306</sup>

In December 1944, the first three completed Metropolitan homes, in Osborne Street Joondanna, were open to the public for inspection. The group were built by Plunkett Builders Ltd under WHB supervision. They were a five-room and two different four-room houses, all brick and tile, with internal bathrooms, built-in linen cupboards in the hallway, and rear verandahs including laundry and toilet. 'Economy of space and future maintenance costs' were reported as design considerations. Kitchens were designed to be 'roomy' as it was assumed they would double as dining rooms. There was criticism that the second and third bedrooms, all approximately 100sqft (9.3m<sup>2</sup>), were very small. It was noted that these plans were also to be used at Claremont, Mosman Park, Hilton, Bassendean, Boyup Brook, Collie, Northam and Merredin, using brick in the Metropolitan area and timber in country towns.<sup>307</sup> By August 1945, timber framed homes were being built at Hilton, the only Metropolitan suburb not using brick for public housing at this point.<sup>308</sup>

The scheme was 'fraught with difficulties' in its early stages. Not only had almost all building industry tradesmen enrolled for war service, but there were also insufficient workers to produce sufficient quantities of materials such as bricks, cement, asbestos or plasterboard. The Workers' Homes Board expended some effort in providing workers to these industries, including sponsoring applications for release of service personnel. It was also difficult to obtain 'certain items of builders' hardware, P.E. [porcelain enamel] ware, galvanised iron piping', all of which were in short supply across the country, but particularly so in Western Australia due to a lack of shipping. It was recognised that the increasing release of serving personnel would begin to alleviate the labour shortage, but it would also rapidly increase the demand for housing.<sup>309</sup>

The Commonwealth-State rental homes were constructed in groups. Although this was reported by the Workers' Homes Board as intended to facilitate community interest in the care and maintenance of their properties, it was clearly also a cost saving measure. The Board paid attention to establishing lawns and gardens and encouraged tenants to care for them by providing 'expert advice' on their planting and care, as maintaining gardens was seen as important to the success of the scheme.<sup>310</sup> The Board believed the rental scheme would cater for occupants for a 'phase of home life' but did not appear to anticipate catering for life-long tenants.<sup>311</sup>

In notes sent to local government authorities in 1945, the Workers' Homes Board outlined the rental scheme. It noted that attempts were being made to increase design variety but restrictions limited total

<sup>305</sup> *The West Australian*, Thurs 28 September 1944, p.4; WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>306</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>307</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 15 December 1944, p.4; *Daily News*, Fri 15 December 1944, p.8

<sup>308</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 11 August 1945, p.15; *The West Australian*, Tues 4 December 1945, p.4

<sup>309</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>310</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

<sup>311</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1943-45

floor area and homes were basically two types, either four or five rooms. Where possible, especially in the Metropolitan area, bricks were used, and elsewhere timber framed dwellings clad in weatherboard or asbestos sheeting were erected, lined with plasterboard. Some complaints were made that the ceilings were too low and likely to cause hot, poorly ventilated and unattractive homes. The Board asserted, however, that the regulation 9'6" (2.90m) was sufficiently high and, at any rate, it was the height prescribed by Commonwealth war restrictions.<sup>312</sup>

The issue of lower ceilings took some time to iron out. Various bodies, including local councils and the Returned Soldiers League, lodged formal complaints, mostly on the grounds that Western Australia's warm climate required higher ceilings to make homes liveable and keep occupants healthy. In Guildford and some other areas, local government authorities tried to refuse planning permission for Commonwealth-State residences as their building regulations required 10' (3.05m) (eg. Nedlands, Collie, Northam) or even 10'6" ceilings (Melville). Perth, which had bylaws requiring 10'6" (3.20m) ceilings, cooperated by amending its regulations to allow ceilings a foot lower in government houses, as did Fremantle. The Board continued building ceilings at this height, at times even without permits, as Commonwealth legislation over-ruled local bylaws. The WHB had already built some houses to these standards in South Perth in the 1930s without residents' complaints. In the end, the cost and material savings of lower ceilings won out and they became standard for government rental homes, with costs savings estimated in 1945 as £27 for a brick house and £17 for timber. However, higher ceilings remained the requirement for privately built residences in many areas, which some private builders resented. In Perth, even homes built on private land under other government schemes were refused permits with lower ceilings. Eventually, Councils recognised that they could not maintain two different standards, and gradually the prescribed ceiling height was lowered for private building in line with the government rental standard.<sup>313</sup>

It has been claimed that the first public housing estate in Australia was at Rivervale.<sup>314</sup> This is inaccurate. The first significant government rental housing scheme had been in South Australia, from 1936, with a smaller version in Victoria from 1939. The South Australian Housing Trust's model in particular influenced the shape of the first Commonwealth-State Rental Housing scheme.<sup>315</sup> Notes on some of the earliest Western Australian government rental developments follow. Information has not been located for all the earliest developments, as searches have focussed on those where DOH retains early properties.

Joondanna, where some of the first Commonwealth-State rental homes in Western Australia were built from 1944, had been subdivided before the war, but was largely vacant land north of Green Street. By September 1945, Joondanna was reported as 'where the war housing scheme in this State has made most progress', with thirty homes occupied, 22 under construction, plans for around 50 more in place, gardens being established and street trees being planted.<sup>316</sup> The second 50 homes, approved October 1945, were in the area bounded by Bantock, Millet, Baden, Osborne, Green, Highland and Eton Streets.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> WHB, 'An Outline of the War Housing Programme', February 1945

<sup>313</sup> *The West Australian*, Mon 24 July 1944, p.4; *Daily News*, Tues 13 June, 1944, p.5; *The West Australian*, Wed 14 June 1944, p.2; *Geraldton Guardian and Express*, Wed 2 August 1944, p.2; *The West Australian*, Sat 16 September 1944, p.6; *Daily News*, Wed 20 September 1944, p.7; *The West Australian*, Tues 10 October 1944, p.4; *Daily News*, Wed 7 February 1945, p.9; *Daily News*, Tues 20 February 1945, p.9; *Geraldton Guardian and Express*, Wed 9 May 1945, p.4; *The West Australian*, Tues 11 September 1945, p.3; *The West Australian*, Thurs 23 January 1947, p.7

<sup>314</sup> HCWA database record P16862 *First State Housing Area in Australia*, <http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/Public/Search/PlaceNoSearch?placeNo=16862> accessed online 3 June 2014

<sup>315</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.40

<sup>316</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 8 September 1945, p.13

<sup>317</sup> *Daily News*, Thurs 4 October 1945, p.3

The initial homes at Graylands Estate, Claremont, were designed by the contractors.<sup>318</sup> The area chosen was a triangle of land adjacent to the railway, bounded by Alfred Road, Ashton Ave and Stubbs Tce.<sup>319</sup> In March 1945, the first Graylands homes were nearly complete. One critic described them as 'dog boxes', particularly due to their small bedrooms, but the WHB defended the homes as a suitable attempt to alleviate the housing crisis within wartime building restrictions, and claimed the homes had living areas larger than the prescribed minimum standards.<sup>320</sup> By 1946, however, government housing in this area was being built to the standard plans used elsewhere.<sup>321</sup> There was initially some difficulty with the Claremont Municipal Council refusing to share the cost of road building to service new houses, with the Workers' Homes Board in March 1946 threatening to cease all building in the area, causing a loss of over fifty homes. Subsequently, the Council met half the road costs, as in other areas.<sup>322</sup>



SHC homes in Graylands, 1950

*SLWA collection, 221342PD*

Tenders were called in March 1945 for the first Commonwealth-State rental homes in Bassendean. The fifteen homes were to be built on Chapman and Eileen Streets and comprised seven each of four- and five-room residences and a duplex.<sup>323</sup> The duplex comprised two four-room units, and was constructed as a trial to 'test the utility value of the two-unit type'. It cost considerably less per unit than the other houses in the group.<sup>324</sup> No other duplexes were constructed by the SHC up to at least mid-1946, although 594 homes had been completed and another 50 commenced by that time.<sup>325</sup> The fifteen Bassendean homes were partly built at June 1945. A year later, 17 homes had been completed and a further nine were underway, all of brick.<sup>326</sup> An inspection of the first homes completed, in November 1945, noted they were each individually designed and featured spacious rear verandahs. It was also noted that designs had been improved from those implemented the year before at Joondanna, particularly with regard to the arrangement of rooms.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>318</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 8 March 1946, p.11

<sup>319</sup> *Daily News*, Mon 8 August 1949, p.14

<sup>320</sup> *Daily News*, Mon 19 March 1945, p.10

<sup>321</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 8 March 1946, p.11

<sup>322</sup> *The West Australian*, Tues 12 March 1946, p.7; *Daily News*, Tues 26 March 1946, p.7; *The West Australian*, Tues 26 March 1946, p.6

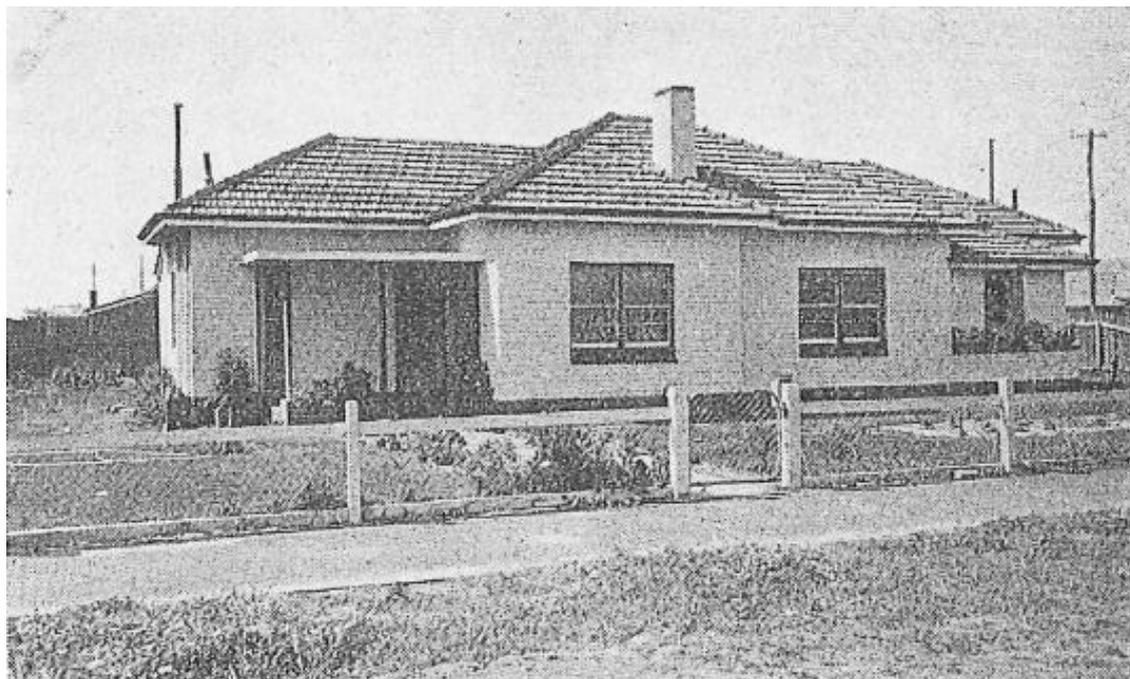
<sup>323</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 7 March 1945, p.4

<sup>324</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 10 November 1945, p.11

<sup>325</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 1 June 1946, p.23

<sup>326</sup> WHB, *Annual Report*, 1946

<sup>327</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 10 November 1945, p.13



Early duplex, South Perth, c.1952

*SHC, Annual Report, 1952 p.14*

The Workers' Homes Board in mid-1945 purchased the Hurlingham polo grounds, between Suburban Road and the river in South Perth, to provide a government housing estate. Designed by Town Planning Commissioner D.L. Davidson with a semicircular layout, the subdivision planned for 64 residences, and the first twenty homes were under construction by August 1945. The new subdivision, Hurlingham Estate, included parks and playgrounds and was described as a 'miniature township'.<sup>328</sup> Houses in the estate were reported to be larger than those in the first housing groups. At least some two-bedroom homes included both a dining room and a 'kitchenette'. Internal walls were constructed using bricks on edge as a cost-saving measure, as it was estimated this reduced the average number of bricks required for a five-room dwelling from 27,000 to 23,500, a saving of £30 to £40 at a time when these homes were costing a little over £1,000.<sup>329</sup> Much of the work was completed by the PWD using day labour.<sup>330</sup>

Development at Rivervale (listed as Belmont in early WHB/SHC statistics) began in 1945-46, with six homes completed and another 50 under construction by June 1946. As described above, a total of 213 public rental homes had been completed in the State by this time, including groups of 49 in North Perth (including Joondanna), 41 in Claremont and 39 in Mosman Park, and construction was underway on over fifty homes each at South Perth and Joondanna. Prior to Belmont being developed, 195 homes had been commenced elsewhere under the Commonwealth-State Rental scheme, with 72 of those completed prior to July 1945, indicating Rivervale was not only not the earliest housing estate in Australia, it was at least the seventh such estate in the Metropolitan area.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>328</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 11 August 1945, p.15

<sup>329</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 24 October 1945, p.8

<sup>330</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 25 September 1946, p.11

<sup>331</sup> WHB, *Annual Reports*, 1943-45 and 1946



Houses in Orrong Road, Belmont (Rivervale), 1950.

*SLWA collection, 255578PD*

Figures for development at Belmont include three areas: in the east of the Roads Board (towards Maida Vale), the north ('Ascot', north of Epsom Ave, now Redcliffe) and the south (Rivervale). The earliest public housing development in the Belmont area appears to have been in what is now Rivervale, with newspaper photographs in August 1946 showing houses under construction in Armadale and Fitzroy Roads. The Rivervale SHC subdivision was bounded by Chamberlain, Acton, Roberts and Orrong Roads. This area was reported to comprise entirely weatherboard, asbestos and tile homes, while the smaller 'Ascot Gardens Estate' was referred to as the 'brick area'. No provision was made for a school within the Rivervale subdivision, with the nearest primary school (Carlisle) almost 1km from the closest edge of the estate until a Catholic school was opened at the western edge of the suburb in 1952. Further government-supported housing began filling in between Rivervale and Ascot Gardens from around 1951.<sup>332</sup>

Of the Commonwealth-State rental homes constructed by early 1946, almost all were of brick, many with stone foundations. However, the number of timber-framed residences under the scheme was increasing. Some areas, especially Hilton, were planned to be entirely timber-framed, mostly clad in fibro but with some weatherboard houses 'for variety'. At North Cottesloe, a group of nineteen 'more pretentious type' houses was planned, 'to conform with the type of house already in the suburb'. These homes were intended 'for renting to people suffering hardship in the higher income range', and as higher value properties they returned higher rents. All post-war rental housing was designed to the same standard four- and five-room Workers' Homes Board plans that were used for home-purchase schemes, provided they met strict Commonwealth restrictions.<sup>333</sup> With the exception of the trial duplex at Bassendean, all homes were free-standing well into 1946.<sup>334</sup>

<sup>332</sup> *The West Australian*, 19 August 1945, p.8; Sat 22 April 1950, p.12; and Tues 20 February 1951, p.4; <http://www.staugustines.wa.edu.au/principal.html> accessed 3 June 2014

<sup>333</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 8 March 1946, p.11

<sup>334</sup> *The West Australian*, Fri 8 March 1946, p.11; *Daily News*, Sat 1 June 1946, p.23

As the war ended and the Workers' Homes Board became the State Housing Commission, building accelerated despite supply problems. Between July 1945 and June 1947, the Commission completed construction on 758 homes under the Rental scheme, with another 606 underway. Together with the 72 completed prior to July 1945 this made a total of 1,436 homes commenced since the scheme began. Most of these (77%) were in the Metropolitan area, in thirteen suburbs, with the largest concentrations at Belmont (133), Nedlands-Clairemont (116), Mosman Park (137), North Perth (139), Osborne Park (125) and South Perth (238), together accounting for over 80% of the Metropolitan homes. In country areas homes were dispersed through 26 towns, with the highest numbers at Collie (41) and Bunbury (71).<sup>335</sup> By 1950, the numbers at Collie and Bunbury had increased to 120 and 151 respectively. Forty-six country towns by that time had Commonwealth-State rental scheme homes. Large groups had been erected at Northam (79) and Wundowie (99). Forty or more scheme homes were at Albany, Big Bell, Geraldton, Merredin and Wittenoom Gorge, as groups had been erected to support particular industries rather than just in existing population centres. (See [Section 11.5](#) Housing for Industry) In the Metropolitan area twenty suburbs were represented, half with concentrations of 150 or more homes. The largest numbers were at South Perth (659), Belmont (514), Bayswater (370), Osborne Park (281) and Claremont-Graylands (275).<sup>336</sup> At Collie and Northam, many of the new residents were post-war migrants taking up industrial jobs, and this was likely the case in other centres also.<sup>337</sup>

Pitt Street, South Perth (now Kensington) was noted in October 1947 as the location of the 1,000<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth-State rental home in the State, which was opened by Premier and Minister for Housing, Ross McLarty.<sup>338</sup> The first tenant, Mrs G. Boyd, had applied for a rental home in 1944, and prior to being allocated the Pitt Street house lived for three months at the Melville Army camp with her five children and ex-serviceman husband.<sup>339</sup>

Houses were meant to be allotted using a points system that considered factors such as the present housing of an applicant, number of children in the family, and war service.<sup>340</sup> The 1948 Royal Commission found that this priority system was not always applied.<sup>341</sup>

Returned service persons had priority in the allocation of Commonwealth-State rental homes. In 1948, Prime Minister Chifley instructed that 'up to 50%' of rental properties be reserved for returned service persons and their dependants. These were prioritised ahead of those living in homes that were insanitary, dangerous or condemned. In Western Australia, the actual percentage of rental homes granted to returned service personnel averaged from 60% to 70%, far beyond Chifley's instruction, presumably as applicants also met other criteria for eligibility.<sup>342</sup> While half of the new homes under the rental scheme each year were allocated to approved applicants in order of their application, a quarter were reserved for cases deemed urgent and a further quarter for workers in key industries, especially the manufacture of building materials, including 'nominated Migrant Building Tradesmen'.<sup>343</sup> However, other migrants reported having to wait twelve months after arrival to put their name on the waiting list for a Commonwealth-State rental home, which was sufficient for some to give up and return home.<sup>344</sup>

<sup>335</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1945-47*

<sup>336</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-1950*

<sup>337</sup> HCWA, GHPDP preliminary reviews, P24594 *House, 12 Bessell Crescent Collie*, 22 February 2013 and P23983 *House, 15 Withnell Street, Northam*, May 2012

<sup>338</sup> *Daily News*, Wed 1 October 1947, p.21

<sup>339</sup> *The West Australian*, Sun 4 October 1947, p.17

<sup>340</sup> *Western Mail*, Thurs 21 December 1944

<sup>341</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC, 1948*

<sup>342</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.60-61

<sup>343</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951*, quote from p.7

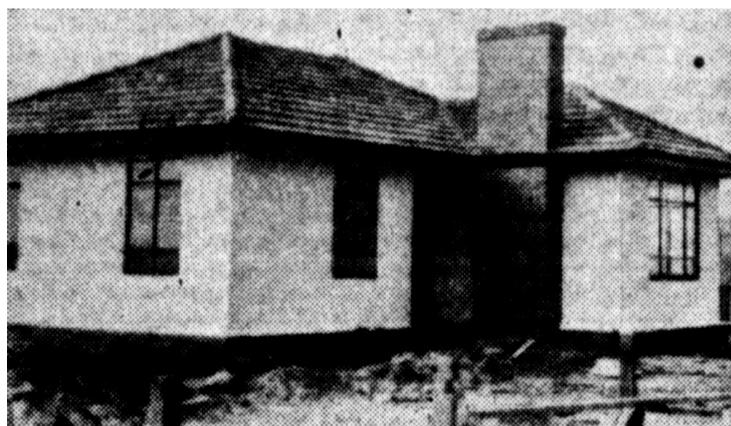
<sup>344</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 9 November 1949, p.3

By 1948, fifteen to twenty applications for government rental properties were being received by the SHC every day (300-400 per month). Applicants often had to wait several months to even have their living conditions inspected – a crucial criterion of eligibility for housing assistance. Some were found to be living in extremely poor conditions, such a family of seven living on an undivided rear verandah, exposed to the weather. Others lived in condemned buildings.<sup>345</sup>

Although in the initial period of construction under the Commonwealth-State scheme there was a variety of designs, by 1950 the SHC was reporting on the use of 'the standard type home' in this program.<sup>346</sup> Further, these modest homes had very little variation between States. By 1950, all States except South Australia were building homes under the Commonwealth-State agreement.<sup>347</sup> Neither South Australia nor Queensland had joined the original agreement, but both signed on within the first ten years.<sup>348</sup> South Australia had proportionally the largest public housing program of any of the States, with the greatest long-term interest in providing rental accommodation, guided by Thomas Playfield, Premier from 1938 to 1965 and also Minister for Housing. Public housing was a key strategy in that State's push for industrial development.<sup>349</sup>

The rental homes of the post-war period are remembered as 'very, very basic'. Wet areas were unlined, windows had fly wire only in the kitchens, sinks had either pine or terrazzo draining boards, very few power points were supplied, and heating was by wood stoves or open fireplaces. However, for many tenants the alternative was homelessness, and as such they are remembered as being extremely grateful for any house at all.<sup>350</sup>

A newspaper article in July 1948 showed a pre-fabricated concrete home in Oxford Street, South Perth, that had been imported in sections from Melbourne for erection by the SHC.<sup>351</sup> No concrete homes are recorded in annual reports of the period, suggesting this was an unusual or experimental home.<sup>352</sup>



Pre-fabricated concrete house in Oxford St, South Perth, 1948

*Reportedly brought in sections from Melbourne.*

*The West Australian, Saturday 10 July 1948 p.10*

Between 1949 and 1952, timber-framed 'Flats' were also built as 'temporary housing' for

'Migrant and Australian Tradesmen connected with the Building Trade'.<sup>353</sup> These were erected at Beaconsfield, Belmont (Redcliffe), Fremantle and North Midland.<sup>354</sup> By the late 1950s, these flats were

<sup>345</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948

<sup>346</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1945-1950

<sup>347</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950

<sup>348</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1951

<sup>349</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.133

<sup>350</sup> Dawes, Ivan, 'A piece of history: Rent collecting', in SHC, *In House*, Vol.4 No.1 Jan 1987 p.3 (Dawes was an SHC rent collector of the 1940s and 1950s)

<sup>351</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 10 July 1948, p.10

<sup>352</sup> DOH property lists, February 2014

<sup>353</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1951 and 1956, quotes from 1951-52 p.7 and appendix 'Tenancies – Arrears of Rental'

considered inadequate and began to be removed. Units from Belmont were relocated in small numbers to 'widely separated estates', where they were re-erected as duplexes. Their Belmont sites were refilled with brick-veneer homes.<sup>355</sup> In the 1960s more Belmont flats were relocated to country areas, with the last moved in 1966. Twenty remaining in Fremantle at the time were handed to the Immigration Department for temporary housing of State-sponsored migrant families.<sup>356</sup> The Midland flats were demolished in the mid-1970s and the Beaconsfield flats at the end of the 1970s.<sup>357</sup>



Tradesmen's Flats at Redcliffe, 1975, prior to demolition.

*SHC, Annual Report, 1975*

A contract was signed in 1951 to import 900 timber-framed homes from overseas, to be erected by a local building company with expert Austrian tradesmen assisting. The Commission brought 341 Austrian tradesmen to the State to work on the project. The homes were supplied by Thermo Units Ltd of London in association with Thermobau of Austria. Half the homes arrived in 1951, and were erected at Willagee from January 1952. The first homes were ready for occupation in April 1952. Groups were planned for several Metropolitan suburbs as well as country areas. However, delays were experienced when the second shipment was quarantined on account of siren wasps.<sup>358</sup> The Railways Department took possession of 150 of the homes, and 200 of them were erected by the PWD.<sup>359</sup> Austrian pre-fabricated homes were erected at Willagee, Hilton Park, Manning Park, Ascot Gardens and some country towns. Each house took about a month to erect.<sup>360</sup> There were two designs: TIU1, a rectangular plan with steeply pitched gable roof, and TIU2, a roughly square plan with projecting front wing and hipped roof.<sup>361</sup>

<sup>354</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959, 1966, 1976, 1977. It is possible some were built elsewhere as no complete list has been located to date.

<sup>355</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>356</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1966

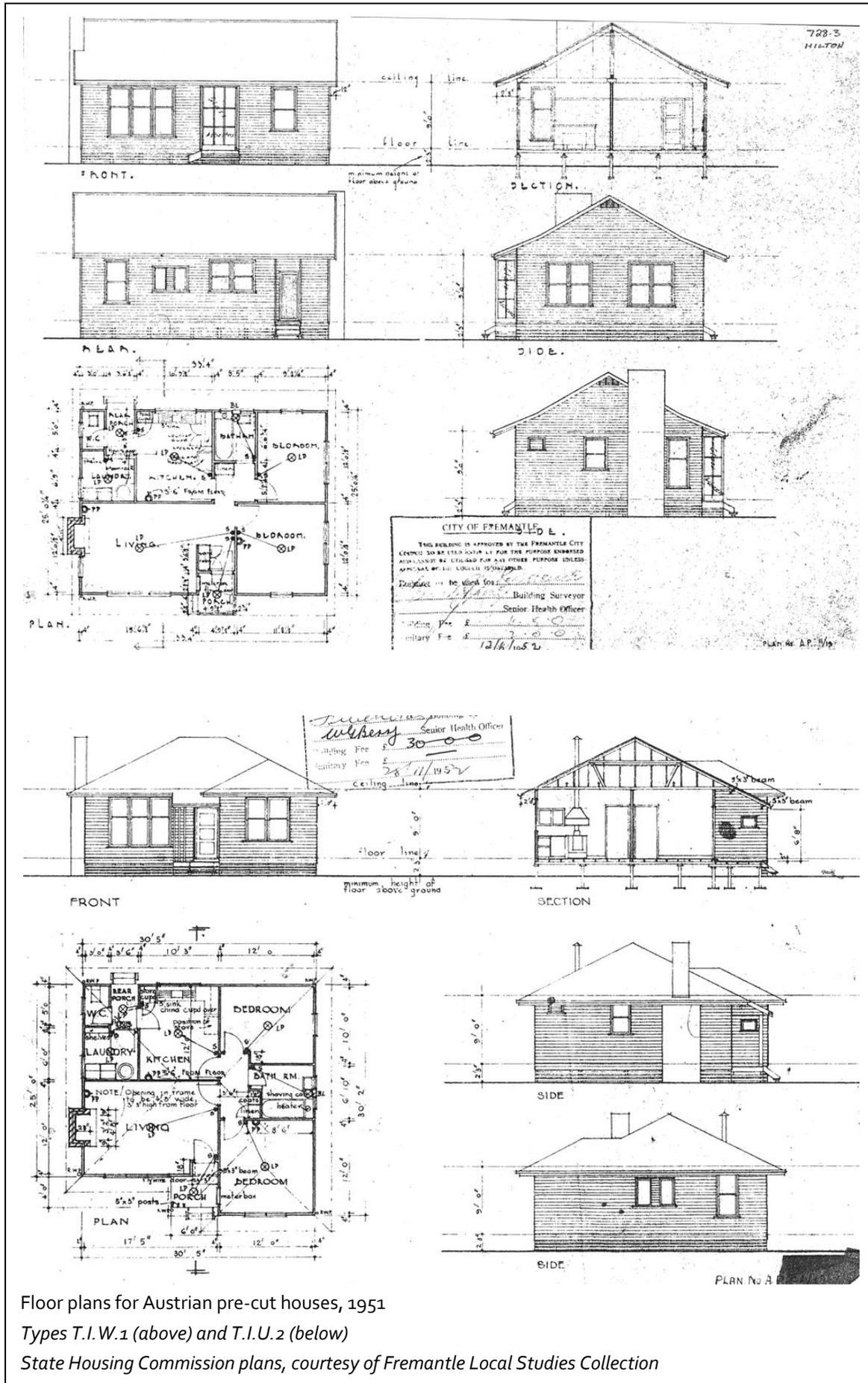
<sup>357</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>358</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1952

<sup>359</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>360</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.53&55

<sup>361</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, p.12



Floor plans for Austrian pre-cut houses, 1951

Types T.I.W.1 (above) and T.I.U.2 (below)

State Housing Commission plans, courtesy of Fremantle Local Studies Collection



Austrian pre-cut house, Willagee, 1952  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1952, p.18*

The Austrian workers were initially housed about ten to a house in the unfinished buildings they were working on at Willagee. There was considerable tension between the housing needs of sponsored migrant workers, who had been promised accommodation, and local labourers who were on long waiting lists for housing assistance. The demand for labourers in the building industry was so great that these workers were able to use the threat of industrial action to press their own interests, especially their housing needs. However, there simply was not enough housing to meet everyone's demands and the SHC was required on several occasions to sensitively negotiate away from actually meeting workers' demands, as these demands were both legitimate and, in the circumstances, impossible.<sup>362</sup>

Under war time provisions, private rents had been fixed since 1939 by the *Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act*. In 1951, the State government finally moved to remove these rental controls. Replacement legislation, the *Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act*, both increased rents by ten percent and made it easier for landlords to evict tenants and relet at higher rates.<sup>363</sup> The Act also made it much easier for private owners to evict tenants for the purpose of gaining possession of their houses. The changes were given much publicity and as a result 'something approaching mass hysteria developed'.<sup>364</sup> The number of applicants for government rental housing increased rapidly, both from those actually being evicted and those fearful that their accommodation was no longer secure. The SHC's Tenancy Section, which was overstretched and self-identified as somewhat disorganised due to staff upheavals at

<sup>362</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.55-58

<sup>363</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.63

<sup>364</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951* – Tenancy Section report (appendix, no page numbers)

the time, reluctantly admitted that applicants for government housing faced a long wait, and changed its procedures on receiving applications so as not to 'encourage a hope of early assistance'.<sup>365</sup> When the *Rents and Tenancies Emergencies Provision Act* lapsed in April 1954, the number of applicants for evictee housing immediately leapt, with 1,240 registered in 1953-54, more than double the previous year.<sup>366</sup> The following year, however, the number of private evictions began to decline.<sup>367</sup> In 1955-56, it was down to 259 families, all of whom were quickly accommodated by the Commission.<sup>368</sup>

In order to house the sudden influx of evictees, the SHC built 237 homes through the Metropolitan area in just over two years between 1951 and 1953, with 150 put up in the first twelve months. The homes were in Ashfield (19), Bayswater (21), Hilton (45), Midland (20), Mosman Park (13), Scarborough (73), Swan View (11) and Willagee (35).<sup>369</sup> They used M, E and 17B standard plans, all three-bedroom plans. None of these were designed to be 'expansible housing', but tenants soon made it clear that the houses were too small. Provision was made to extend them, despite this in many cases costing more than the value of the original house. In 2001, at least twenty Type E2 evictee cottages remained in Hilton, particularly in Instone and Butson Streets and Grigg Place.<sup>370</sup>

Restrictions of Commonwealth funding from 1952 reduced the rate at which government rental properties could be built. The standard plans were amended to make the homes even more basic than



SHC houses under construction at Belmont, April 1950

SLWA collection, 221389PD

<sup>365</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1951* – Tenancy Section report (appendix)

<sup>366</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*

<sup>367</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1955*

<sup>368</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>369</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>370</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, p.13 Appendix 6, Figure 6, p.6

they had been, to cut costs and increase the total number that could be erected. Commonwealth funds were also tied to conditions that houses be built in industrial areas, and subsequently this was a focus of SHC building under the rental program.<sup>371</sup>

Up to this point the Commission had been housing families, maximising the number of individuals housed. A 'family' was generally taken to be a heterosexual couple and their children. From around 1953, as the bulk of these nuclear families were adequately if not permanently sheltered, the needs of other family units began to be considered. Early flats were developed to cater for smaller families, including single parents and elderly couples, and from 1953-54 pre-cut single-bedroom homes were also developed.<sup>372</sup>

Hundreds of tenants under the rental scheme applied to purchase their rental homes, as permitted by the legislation. In 1950-51 alone, 508 sales were completed and around 1,500 further applications were processed.<sup>373</sup> Amendments to the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* in 1955 allowed tenants to purchase their homes with only five per cent deposit and repayments over 45 years. Subsequently an increasing number of rentals were sold into private ownership.<sup>374</sup>

The *Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Agreement Act (1945)* expired on 30 June 1956, and was replaced by the *Housing Agreement Act (1956)*. The major differences in the new Act were that it moved focus away from rental properties to encouraging home ownership and divested power to the States to determine the terms on which homes were to be offered to applicants.<sup>375</sup>

By June 1956, as the first *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* drew to an end, 12,113 homes had been built under the scheme, of which 71.5% were in the Metropolitan area. The homes were in 44 suburbs and 111 country towns. The largest Metropolitan groups were at South Perth (including later Kensington) (769), Ascot (669), Willagee (613), Belmont (571), Maylands (527), Innaloo (463), Hilton Park (427), Bayswater (425), Killarney (later Woodlands) (418), Bentley (356), Manning (300), Millen (later East Victoria Park/Saint James) (296), Graylands (293) and Doubleview (263). The largest country groups were at Collie (393), Bunbury (373), Albany (326), Geraldton (232) and Northam (210). Hamilton Hill (178 homes) and Kwinana (143 scheme homes in addition to 653 built for BP) were both listed as country settlements at the time, as were Armadale, Kelmscott, Kenwick, Swan View and Wanneroo, although with the exception of 15 homes at Armadale and 40 at Swan View, SHC presence in these areas was not in rentals at the time. Wundowie (126 homes) and Wittenoom Gorge (152) were notable as comparatively large groups of scheme rental properties in towns with otherwise very small populations.<sup>376</sup> See [Section 11.5](#) and [Section 19](#) for more details eg Wundowie

The Commonwealth-State Rental Housing scheme accounted for the majority of the Commission's housing during this decade. From the 1945 to the end of the 1940s, 71% of SHC homes constructed were under the rental scheme. Over the whole first decade to June 1956, rental scheme homes accounted for 52% of all residences built by the Commission, as other government housing schemes began to regain momentum from the early 1950s.<sup>377</sup> Although there were some flats and apartment complexes erected (see [Section 12.1](#)), the Commission largely focussed on single detached family homes for the rental program in the first post-war decade.

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<sup>371</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>372</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1954

<sup>373</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1951

<sup>374</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

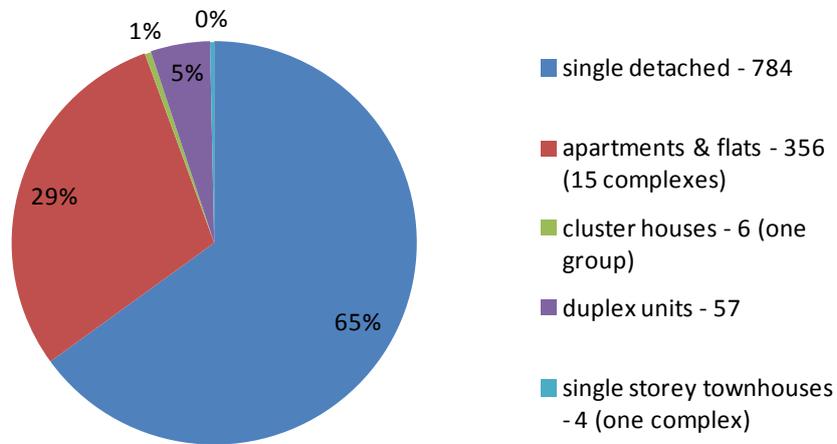
<sup>375</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956

<sup>376</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956

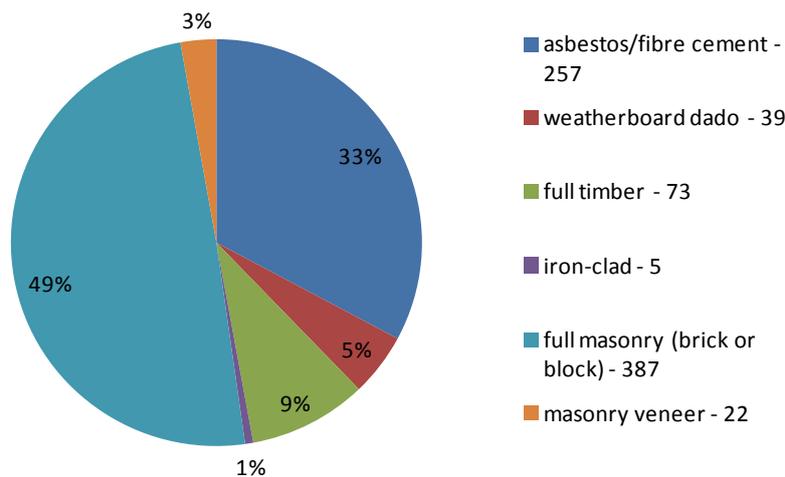
<sup>377</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956, esp table p.25

*Places remaining in 2014:*

In 2014, DOH retains 1,208 housing units from the period 1944-55, as follows:



Over 100 of the single detached residences were acquired by the Department more than five years after construction, suggesting they may not have originally been constructed by the SHC. The 784 single detached residences divide by construction material as follows:



These figures show 48% light-weight timber-framed and 52% masonry houses.

**Early Commonwealth-State rentals**

DOH retains only a handful of houses from the earliest 1944-45 period of construction. These are two from 1944 (Collie and Wundowie) and nineteen from 1945 (Groups in Joondanna, South Perth and Bassendean, and single houses in Mosman Park, Bunbury, Geraldton and Beaconsfield). At Rivervale, erroneously identified as the earliest housing estate, DOH retains four 1947 residences.

**Duplexes**

In 2014, DOH retains approximately twenty-four 1940s duplexes (36 total housing units). Some of these have private owners for half the duplex. Half of the units are family homes, including one in Bassendean known to be the first duplex constructed for SHC. Aside from the 1945 Bassendean duplex, the earliest are from 1948, in Como. Sixteen of the units are for aged persons and two for singles. The smaller duplexes were probably constructed as McNess homes.

#### Pre-fabricated concrete home

No twentieth century concrete homes are retained by DOH in 2014.

#### Austrian imported houses (TIU<sub>1</sub> and TIU<sub>2</sub>)

Four examples remain in DOH ownership in Hilton, two of each type. No 1951, 1952 or 1953 full weatherboard homes remain in DOH ownership in Willagee, Manning or Redcliffe (formerly Ascot Park), suggesting these four in Hilton may be the only Metropolitan examples of the pre-fabricated Austrian homes imported in 1951-52 remaining in DOH ownership. It is not known in which country areas they were erected, but eight homes in Narrogin and two in Albany may also be extant examples.

#### Groups of 1944-55 homes in DOH ownership

Sixteen towns or suburbs retain groups of 1944-1955 residences in DOH ownership. Some of these are small groups but closely located (Bassendean – 9, Beaconsfield – 8, Narrogin – 15, Northam – 16, Scarborough – 17, Wundowie – 12, White Gum Valley – 12 free standing or duplexes and 17 flats in one complex, from 1955). Others are larger groupings (Bedford – 53, Collie – 77, Como – 64, Doubleview – 46, Hilton – 39, Innaloo – 25, Manning – 34, Saint James – 47). By far the largest group from this period in one suburb is at Kensington, where 120 housing units remain in DOH ownership, mostly dating from 1946 to 1949. Earlier houses from the period are mostly brick and tile; later houses, or early country houses, are more likely to be timber framed and asbestos-clad.

#### Garden City layouts

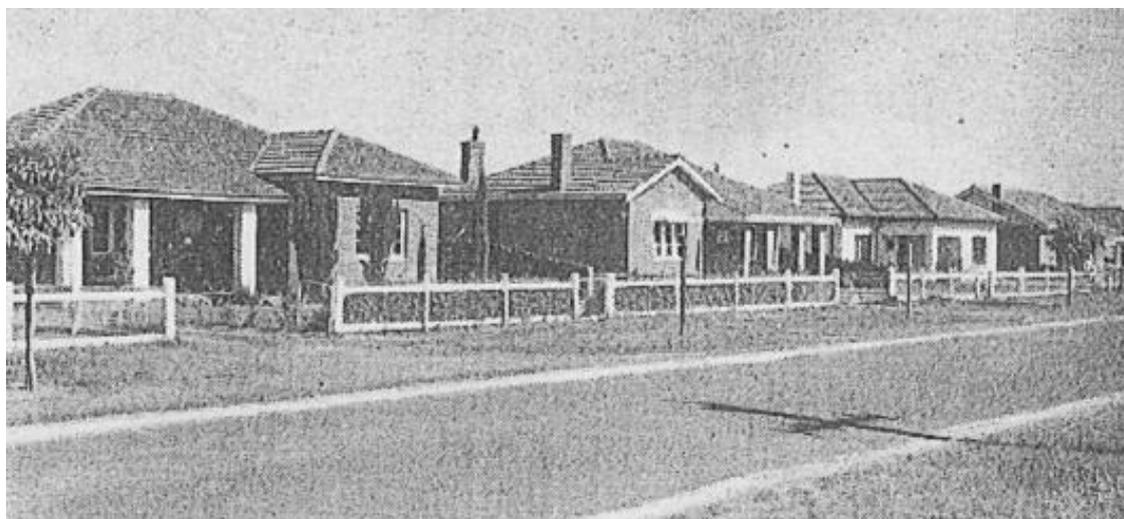
The earliest Garden City street layouts in areas originally subdivided by the SHC are evident at South Perth, Collie and Wundowie. At South Perth, the central park area in the crescent was filled in with flats in the early 1960s. Hilton and Manning also retain Garden City layouts, from slightly later in the 1940s. Manning is one of the most developed Garden City layouts in the State, featuring several interlocking crescents with numerous parks. Unlike many Garden City layouts, Manning appears to have had a second section, north of Manning Road, also developed on Garden City principles some years later.

## 11.2 WAR SERVICE HOMES (1919-1973)

War Service Homes, originally established to provide for servicemen returning from World War One, were later extended to include those serving in World War Two, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.<sup>378</sup> Eligible applicants had to have served overseas in the Australian defence forces, including women of the nursing services, Citizen's Military Forces and women's auxiliary services, and widows of eligible ex-servicemen.<sup>379</sup>

The *War Service Homes Act 1948/49* provided finance for the erection or purchase of homes for returned service persons. Funds were provided by the Commonwealth but the scheme was administered by the SHC.<sup>380</sup> Popular areas for constructing War Service Homes included Scarborough, Wembley, Victoria Park, Floreat Park, South Perth, Doubleview, Mount Pleasant, Applecross, Hilton, Yokine and Manning. War Service provisions were more generous than other government loan schemes, resulting in War Service Homes being of higher standard than SHC-funded homes, especially as restrictions on building materials eased. In Western Australia, the SHC providing land for War Service Homes at cost price. There was a general view that war service gave applicants the right to priority in accessing housing.<sup>381</sup>

The number of War Service Homes constructed year to year increased exponentially, from just sixteen in 1945-46 to 155 in 1946-47, 326 in 1947-48 and 489 in 1948-49. The greatest increase was between 1952 and 1953, when War Service Homes completed in the year leapt from 727 to 1212, a two thirds increase in twelve months. War Service construction peaked in 1956, with 1,220 homes, before dropping to less than half that number the following year.<sup>382</sup> Although many residents were very happy with their new homes, the rush to build and shortage of materials in some cases gave poor results, such as green timber creating warped floors, sand cement render causing walls to fret or general poor workmanship creating problems.<sup>383</sup>



War Service Homes built as a group, c.1952, Swanbourne  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1952, p.21*

<sup>378</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1969*

<sup>379</sup> Creek, 'You know you've got a roof over your head', in Gregory *On the Homefront, 1996*, pp.251-56

<sup>380</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-1950*

<sup>381</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.60-61; Creek, 'You know you've got a roof over your head', in Gregory *On the Homefront, 1996*, pp.251-56

<sup>382</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports, for the periods 1947-1961*

<sup>383</sup> Creek, 'You know you've got a roof over your head', in Gregory *On the Homefront, 1996*, pp.251-56



War Service Home, Mount Pleasant, c.1953

*SHC, Annual Report, 1953, p.12*

From around 1951, some War Service Homes were constructed through 'self-help group schemes where ex-servicemen band together and by a community effort erect their own homes with considerable saving of labour costs'.<sup>384</sup> Between 1951 and 1953, 858 homes were built by groups, nearly a third of all War Service Homes constructed in the period.<sup>385</sup> Hundreds of War Service Homes were constructed by group schemes through the 1950s (eg.237 in 1953-54, 397 in 1954-55, 487 in 1957-58). The popularity of the approach began to wane by the late 1950s, dropping from 50% of War Service Homes in 1957-58 to only 7% in 1959-60.<sup>386</sup> Some records of the War Service Homes scheme use 'group homes' to refer to house and land packages, where a group of homes were constructed together by one lead contractor.<sup>387</sup> It is not clear from the records whether all the figures relating to 'groups' relate to owner-builder self-help schemes, or if some figures include these contractor groups.

One owner-builder group scheme of six houses was constructed at Toorak Road, Rivervale, between 1949 and 1951. In order to avoid delays caused by high-demand building materials, the group elected to use local granite for the homes, a very unusual choice at the time.<sup>388</sup>

Owner-building was a significant trend across Australia in the post-war period, with more owner-built homes than public rental housing constructed in the first decade. It was a significant contribution to the increase in owner-occupied houses nationally from 53.4% in 1947 to 63.3% in 1954. Owner-builders

<sup>384</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*, quote from p.20

<sup>385</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*

<sup>386</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1951-60

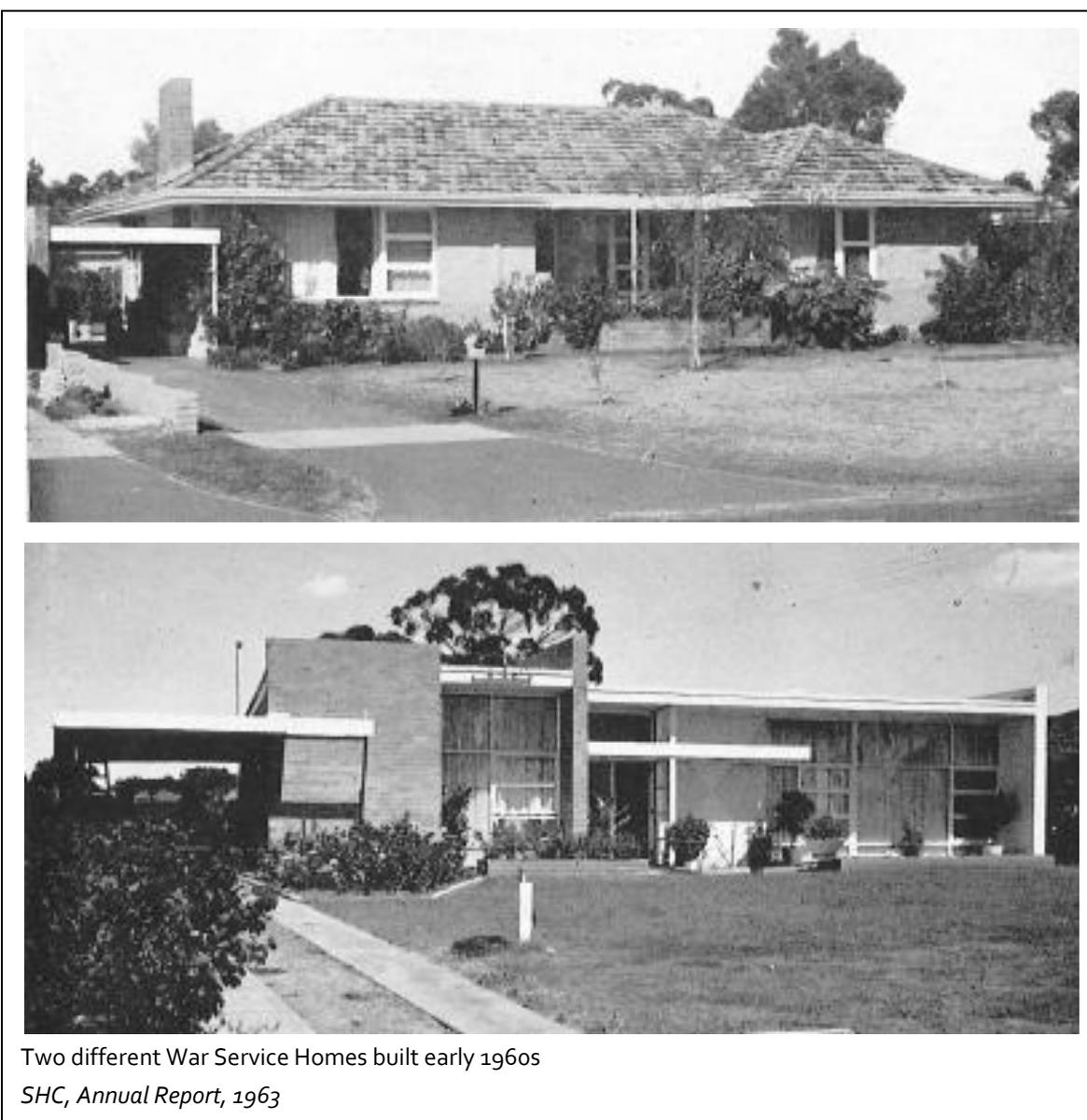
<sup>387</sup> Creek, 'You know you've got a roof over your head', in Gregory *On the Homefront*, 1996, pp.251-56

<sup>388</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P23642 *Toorak Road Housing Scheme, Rivervale*, November 2011

typically erected homes on vacant lots subdivided in the interwar period. The proportion of owner-builder homes declined after the 1960s.<sup>389</sup>

By 1956, the largest concentrations of post-war War Service Homes were at Floreat (634), Scarborough (623), South Perth (473), Applecross (453), Victoria Park (364), Manning (259), Mount Pleasant (245), Hilton (242), Belmont (224) and Mount Yokine (209). These ten suburbs accounted for over half the Metropolitan War Service Homes of the period. A further ten suburbs had between 100 and 200 War Service Homes, including some adjacent to areas noted above, such as Attadale (101, near to Applecross and Mount Pleasant), White Gum Valley (100, adjacent to Hilton) or Doubleview (193, bordering Scarborough), creating very large regional concentrations.<sup>390</sup>

War Service Homes of the post-war period were particularly concentrated in the Metropolitan area, with less than 9% built in country areas between 1944 and 1956, compared with 25.5% of Commonwealth-State rentals and 39.5% of State Housing Act homes. Country concentrations of War Service Homes were



<sup>389</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.112-15

<sup>390</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1956

at Bunbury (142), Collie (87) Albany (49) and Geraldton (34).<sup>391</sup>

The number of War Service Homes constructed peaked through the early 1950s at around 1,200 per year between 1952 and 1956. From there the annual build numbers declined, dropping under 200 per year from 1961-62 and averaging less than 100 per year between 1968 and 1973, despite service personnel returning from the Vietnam War in this period becoming eligible for the scheme. From 1945 to 1973, 12,046 War Service Homes were constructed in Western Australia, of which 7,810 (65%) had been completed by mid-1956.<sup>392</sup>

War Service Home loans were originally capped at £1,250 repayable over 37 years. By 1969 the scheme allowed for loans of up to \$8,000 repayable over 45 years.<sup>393</sup>

By the mid-1960s, most funds supporting War Service Homes went towards purchase of existing homes rather than construction of new dwellings.<sup>394</sup>



War Service Home, c.1970  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1971*

Administration of War Service Homes (renamed Defence Service Homes in 1973) was handed back to the Commonwealth in November 1973, at the request of the SHC, ending an arrangement of 52 years. In this period of operation, the SHC assisted 32,797 ex-servicemen to purchase homes, 14,438 of which (44%) were built by the Commission.<sup>395</sup>

*Places remaining in 2014:*

Five of the original six homes remain in the 1949-51 group at Toorak Road, Rivervale.<sup>396</sup> It is likely other groups remain but as they are in private ownership they have not been identified for this report.

<sup>391</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1956.

Note: this report's figures have been adjusted to move Kwinana and Hamilton Hill from the country statistics, where they were included in 1956, to the Metropolitan statistics, where they more appropriately sit today.

<sup>392</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>393</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969

<sup>394</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1966

<sup>395</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

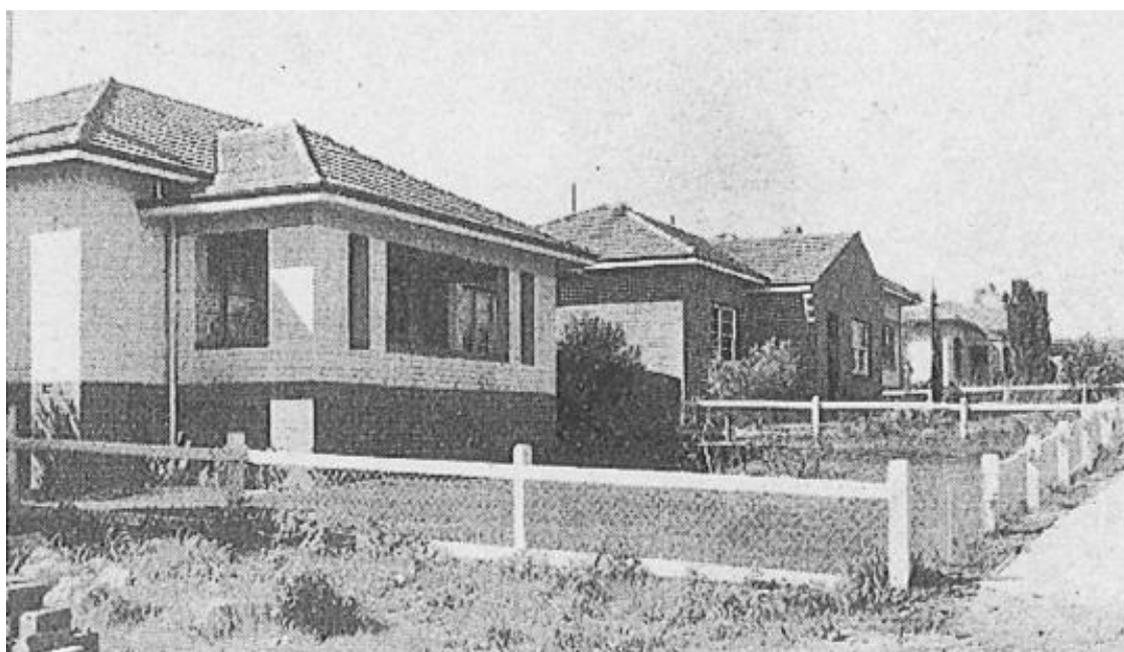
<sup>396</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P23642 *Toorak Road Housing Scheme, Rivervale*, November 2011

### 11.3 STATE HOUSING ACT (PURCHASE SCHEMES) (1945-1956)

Rental and War Service homes were prioritised by the SHC following World War Two. Only 21 Leasehold and Freehold applications were approved in the two years to June 1946, mostly in the Goldfields region, and of these only seven had been completed by June 1946. Potential applicants under these pre-war schemes were instead encouraged to apply for rental or war service homes, or a permit to build privately. The Commission's holdings of Leasehold and Freehold properties declined by several hundred as returned servicemen transferred to War Service Homes or used their army payout to discharge their remaining mortgage. Some loans were also discharged as repayment periods were completed.<sup>397</sup>

Freehold and Leasehold homes continued to have a wider variety of design than Commonwealth-State rentals. In the late 1940s, they were mostly erected in Kalgoorlie, Boulder and Fremantle. The Goldfields were seen to have 'peculiar circumstances', while Fremantle had one of the fastest growing worker populations in the State on account of the increasing number of factories in the area. It was anticipated that this aspect of the SHC's work would restart in earnest through the 1950s, with a particular focus on country areas.<sup>398</sup>

The *State Housing Act* was amended in 1951 to increase the income cap for 'eligible workers' from £500 to £750. Restrictions on building materials and building permits also began to loosen. The number of homes being built under the scheme subsequently increased.<sup>399</sup> In 1952-53, 325 State Housing Act residences were built, more than twice the total number built in the preceding eight years.<sup>400</sup> In 1953-54 more State Housing Act homes were constructed in the year than in the previous decade combined.<sup>401</sup>



State Housing Act purchase-scheme homes, Graylands, c.1951

*SHC, Annual Report, 1952, p.12*

<sup>397</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1945-47*

<sup>398</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-1950*

<sup>399</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, for the period 1950-53*

<sup>400</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*. Note: this does not include 237 homes built for evictees, included from 1961 in State Housing Act figures for 1951-53

<sup>401</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*



State Housing Act purchase-scheme homes, Shenton Park, c.1951

*SHC, Annual Report, 1952, p.12*

A variation on the State Housing Act loan schemes was the provision of 237 houses between 1951 and 1953 to be made available on special 25-year terms to those evicted from private rentals following legislation changes.<sup>402</sup> (See [Section 11.1](#)) By 1953, the repayment period had been extended to forty years.<sup>403</sup>

In 1950-51, the Commission began plans for the local production of pre-cut timber framed homes. These were being produced by mid-1951 and were intended to meet the need for Freehold and Leasehold scheme homes. Approximately 150-160 existing mortgages under the *State Housing Act* were being discharged every year, with the Commission's holdings down to around 750 remaining homes.<sup>404</sup>

Pre-cut homes typically comprised two or three bedrooms, kitchen, living room and sometimes a dining room, with wood or fuel stoves, fireplaces and laundry. Influenced by Modernist design, they lacked decoration. These homes sold well, despite critique from the WA Women's Parliament, who believed having all bedrooms accessed through the lounge would create awkward social situations, failed to find a wall space in the lounge large enough for a couch, and complained that a window looked onto the laundry that could easily have been placed differently to view the garden.<sup>405</sup>

Initially, pre-cut houses were used in country areas (although c.1952 photographs indicate they were also used at times in the Metropolitan area). Pre-cuts were delivered by the Commission to country towns, 'cut out ready to erect and complete in every detail', and as such were later referred to as 'labour only' homes. Several timber companies were contracted to produce the houses, with the Commission retaining responsibility for despatch and erection. Wherever possible, country builders were used so as not to further deplete the limited Metropolitan labour supply. The houses could be put up very quickly – sometimes in as little as two weeks, but more ordinarily taking about six weeks, or up to twelve weeks where only small teams could be gathered for the work. In the first six months of scheme, pre-cut homes were erected in 53 country towns.<sup>406</sup> Construction of the pre-cut homes was described as follows:

<sup>402</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1952 and 1956*

<sup>403</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1953*

<sup>404</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1951*

<sup>405</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.51-52

<sup>406</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1951*, quote from p.16

*The complete framework, together with tar, ant caps and nails, is delivered from the Mill, cut to size, checked, thickened and gauged. Progress of every builder is carefully watched and the second consignment, timed to arrive as the framework is completed, is sent from Perth. On this load are all of the materials necessary to complete the house. 407*

In 1951-52, 219 pre-cut homes were erected and a further 152 had been delivered and were under construction. Some were single builds in outlying towns, while others were large groups, such as at Collie, where 120 pre-cut homes were erected. In all, pre-cut homes made up 41% of the country residences funded by the SHC in 1951-52.<sup>408</sup>

The pre-cut housing scheme for country areas was facilitated by the expansion of road transport in the 1950s. With its minimum handling and mill-to-site transport options, in most cases road transport allowed pre-cut homes to be delivered in only two loads as intended.<sup>409</sup>

Mid-1953, SHC was sending eleven pre-cut houses a week to country areas, claiming 'uniformity is being avoided by the development of alternative designs with changes of types annually or more frequently'.<sup>410</sup> The Commission's idea of variety appears fairly limited, however, as the following year they proudly announced six standard designs to choose from for the hundreds of applicants receiving a pre-cut home, plus the 'North-West Cyclonic and Original Australian types'.<sup>411</sup>

The pre-cut housing method, which had worked so successfully in country areas, was initiated in the Metropolitan area from 1954. In the first six months of its use, 402 pre-cut houses were delivered to Perth suburban locations, with 176 completed in this time. The Commission believed it was addressing concerns about uniformity as 'careful planning is provided for alternate siting, which will result in pleasing variation'.<sup>412</sup>



Pre-cut houses, Belmont, c.1952

*SHC Annual Report, 1951-52, p.18*

<sup>407</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*

<sup>408</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1952*

<sup>409</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*

<sup>410</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*, quote from p.23

<sup>411</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*

<sup>412</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*, quote from p.23



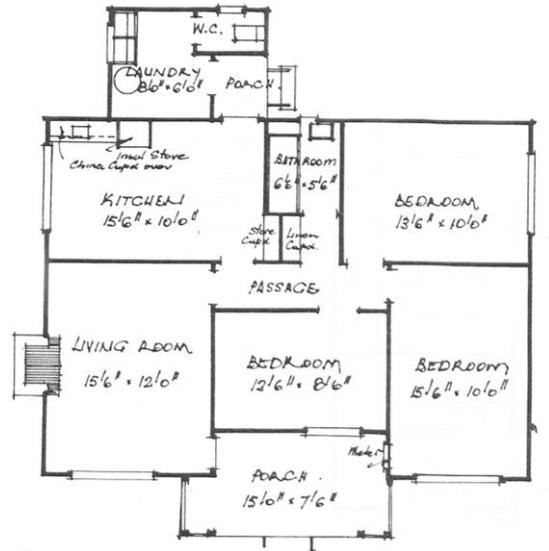
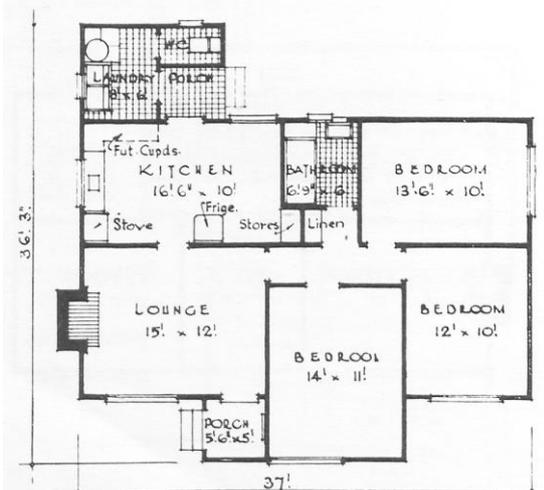
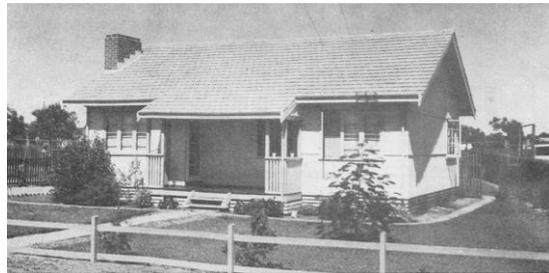
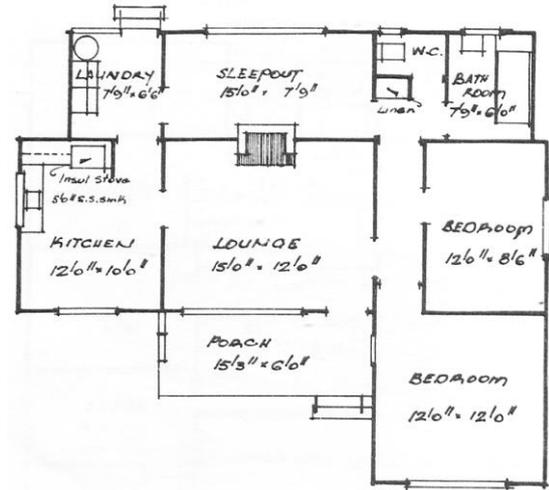
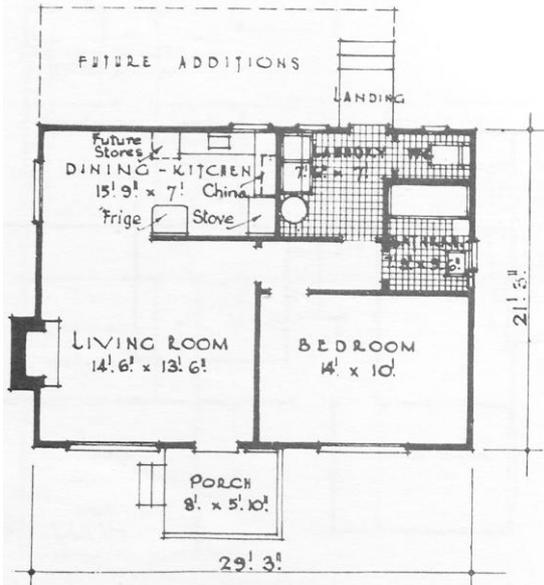
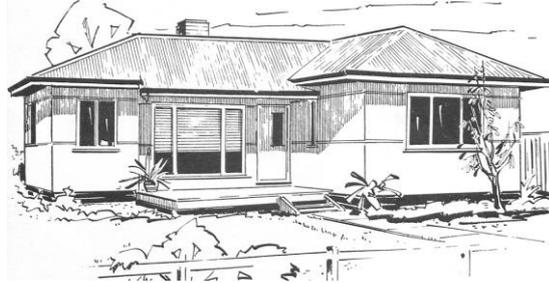
Pre-cut houses under construction, and three different completed designs

*L-R from top left: pre-cut frame being loaded at the mill; frame erected ready for roof; roof on, second load arriving; Type 33A, 2 bedroom; Type 72A, three-bedroom; Type 20A, more spacious two-bedroom SHC, Annual Report, 1954*

By mid-1955, ten pre-cut designs were in use. Some new areas, such as Brentwood and Willagee, comprised almost entirely pre-cut homes. The ten designs included two Northwest special types, one design for Aboriginal housing, and seven 'good type dwellings' ranging from one to three bedrooms.<sup>433</sup>

The pre-cut housing scheme was discontinued in January 1956, on account of the general contraction of the building industry in this period, except for homes in the Northwest. In the five years the scheme had operated, 3,717 pre-cut SHC homes were erected, of which 2,371 were in country areas. In Brentwood,

<sup>433</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955, quote from p.18. Note: this reference to Willagee as a 'new area' must refer to a secondary subdivision, as Willagee had been developed from 1951. Brentwood first appears in SHC statistics in 1954-55

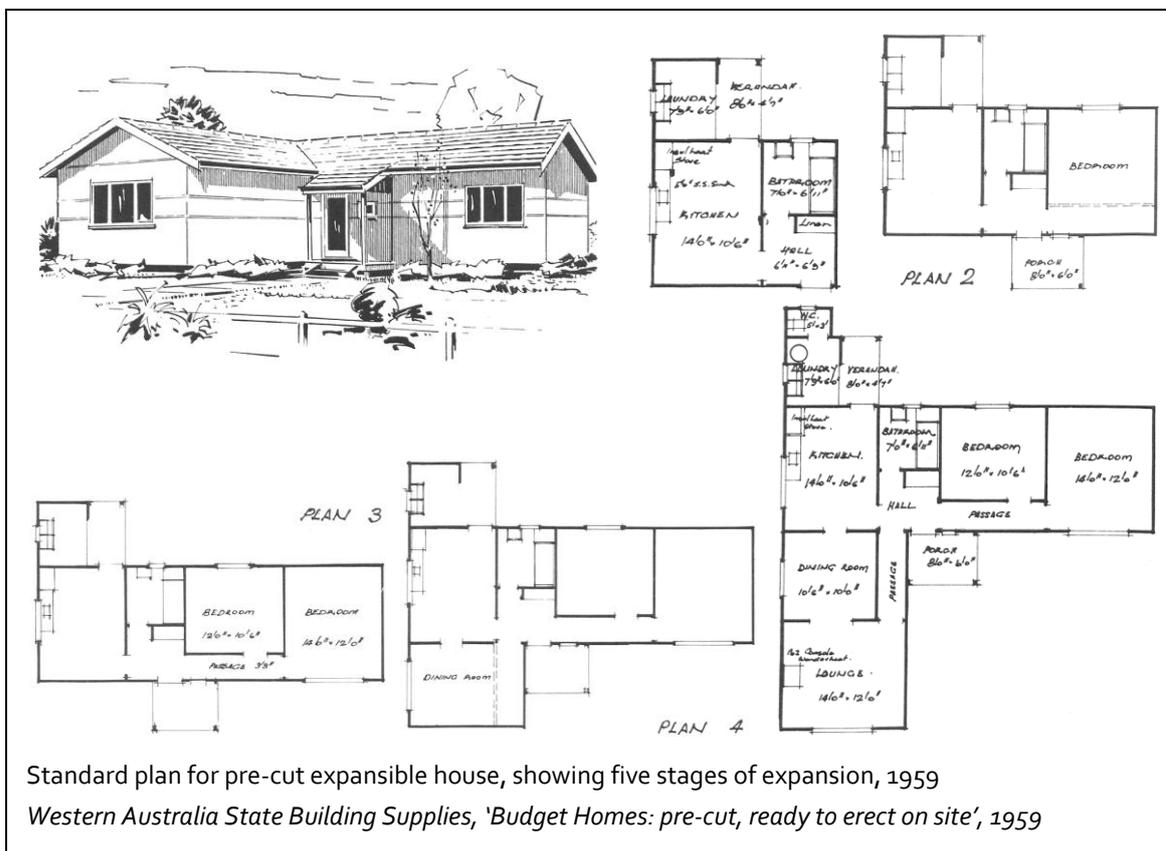


Standard plans for pre-cut houses, 1959

L-R: Types 306, 24A, 77A and 78A

Western Australia State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes: pre-cut, ready to erect on site', 1959

pre-cut homes were used almost exclusively. Between July 1954 and June 1956, 313 homes were built in Brentwood, mostly in the second year, of which 224 were under the *State Housing Act* and the other 89 were Commonwealth-State rentals.<sup>414</sup> In 1959, State Building Supplies issued a booklet of eleven standard plans for pre-cut homes to make available to the general public the low-cost designs that had been used by the government. Everything except electrical fittings was supplied, with clear instructions so that while it was 'recommended' to have a builder supervise it was 'not necessary'.<sup>415</sup> It is likely that after the building industry picked up again, by the late 1950s, pre-cut homes were also used again by the SHC.



By the mid 1950s, finance had become available to expand the Commission's activities under the *State Housing Act*, which continued the original 1912 schemes to assist people into home ownership.<sup>416</sup> Only about 150 of these homes had been built in the first seven years following the war. By comparison, nearly 6,000 Commonwealth-State rentals and over 3,000 War Service Homes were constructed in the same period.<sup>417</sup> By 1956, the highest concentrations of post-war State Housing Act homes were at Brentwood (224), North Innaloo (204) and Willagee (181), and in country areas at Collie (163), Northam (94), Albany (69) and Bunbury (54).<sup>418</sup>

Places remaining in 2014:

Place relating to this chapter are mostly in private ownership and have not been identified for this report.

<sup>414</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955 and 1956

<sup>415</sup> Western Australia State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes: pre-cut, ready to erect on site', 1959

<sup>416</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

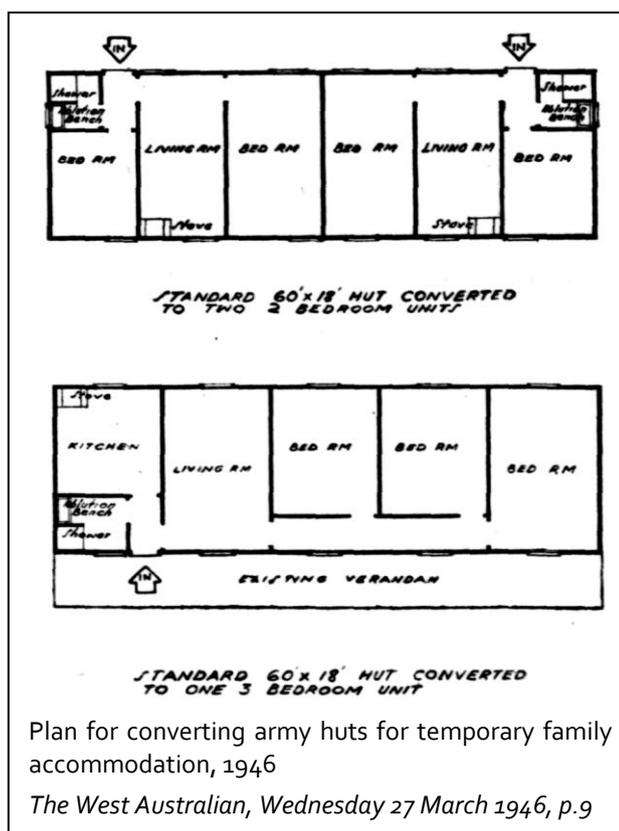
<sup>417</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>418</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1956

### 11.4 ARMY CAMPS (1946-1958)

The SHC took over army camps as they became available and repurposed them as emergency accommodation, beginning in 1946.<sup>419</sup> Huts were 60x18ft (18x5.5m), and were converted with plasterboard and asbestos partitions into either a three-bedroom family house or two 2-bedroom units. As they were intended to be temporary, they were not fitted out to the standard of permanent residences and used much salvaged material in the conversion works.<sup>420</sup> By October 1946, six months into the scheme, ninety families had been housed at the former army camps.<sup>421</sup>

The converted accommodation 'provided little more than bare necessities' and in addition to the existing army, navy and air force huts, similar small units were built.<sup>422</sup> Rents were fixed at around £1 per week. The Commission noted that 'whilst the conditions of living do not afford the same standards as are available in individual homes, the flats have nevertheless provided shelter for many families who would otherwise be without accommodation'. Tenants in these former camps were moved into rental accommodation as it became available. By 30 June 1950, there were 353 families accommodated in converted flats at Hilton Park East, Vail [also Vale] Park Fremantle, Leighton, Naval Base Woodman's Point, Wembley and Allawah (South Guildford).<sup>423</sup> The Guildford camp was on land that had been a traditional Aboriginal camping area, but the Commission explicitly prioritised the 'desperate' plight of white families, especially those being evicted, above the housing needs of Aboriginal families.<sup>424</sup> At their peak, the repurposed army camps provided 525 housing units.<sup>425</sup> By mid 1954, 375 units were still in use.<sup>426</sup>



Conditions in the former army camps were poor, with increasing complaints about health and sanitation. A 1947 newspaper article described 'converted, congested ex-army huts' that were 'like slums', with large populations of children giving 'a general picture of mingled parental apathy and despair'.<sup>427</sup> Tenants lived in overcrowded conditions, with examples cited of ten people in a four-room hut. Buildings were unlined, extremely cold in winter and hot in summer, with shared ablution blocks and wash houses. Promised as temporary emergency accommodation, the huts had accommodated some families for over a year.

<sup>419</sup> Audit of 1946-47 accounts, pp.7-8, appended to SHC, *Annual Report*, 1945-47

<sup>420</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 27 March 1946, p.9

<sup>421</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 16 October 1946, p.10

<sup>422</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>423</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1947-1950, quote from p.10

<sup>424</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.93

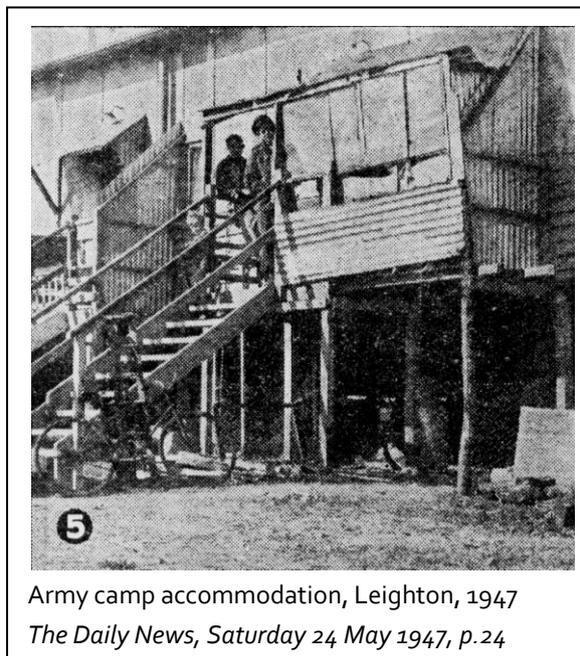
<sup>425</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>426</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1954

<sup>427</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 24 May 1947, pp.6&24

Residents were quoted as saying they had 'almost given up hope of living like normal people again'.<sup>428</sup> While residents objected strongly to the 'slum' reference, as they perceived this to be a slur on their character, they stated that 'privacy is an unknown quality here as even the lavatories are without doors; nor are the huts weatherproof ... winter wash days are a horror with wind and rain whistling into the wash house'. However, others wrote to the paper to express gratitude for any shelter and deny the existence of slum conditions. Some huts were noted to be tidily presented, with neat gardens established.<sup>429</sup>

Army camp tenants were treated as 'special cases', needing 'guidance', and the problems of squalor largely blamed on tenants' poor domestic habits. Efforts in 1951-52 to improve conditions at the largest camp, East Hilton (Melville, at the corner of South Street and Stock Road), emphasised community social initiatives rather than addressing the physical problems of shared ablution blocks, poor water supply and overcrowding. Little changed, and rental arrears increased. Tenants were subject to 'incessant inspections' which in part judged their 'suitability' to receive a proper SHC rental home.<sup>430</sup>



Army camp accommodation, Leighton, 1947  
*The Daily News, Saturday 24 May 1947, p.24*

Following changes to tenancy legislation in 1951, Treasury made special funding available to allow SHC to erect small cottages for evicted families. Some of the emergency funding was used to rapidly construct 150 three-room cottages (also referred to as 'emergency flats') at Allawah Grove and Woodman's Point as temporary rental accommodation for these families, presumably at the former army camps in these locations. Together with 101 permanent homes, constructed through the Metropolitan area for gradual purchase, and regular emergency provisions at the army camps, 471 evicted families were housed in the first year of the special funding.<sup>431</sup> By the following year, around half the occupants of the army camps were evictees. Evictees were not charged economic rents, and Treasury met the loss, as it was deemed this scheme was 'more in the nature of a social service than a housing matter'.<sup>432</sup>

In 1954-55, the SHC relocated residents from the 'Base Flats' in Fremantle and demolished what it perceived as a 'slum'.<sup>433</sup> From 1955, it was proposed to dispose of the former Army accommodation as alternative emergency accommodation became available.<sup>434</sup> Sixty-nine units were sold the following year.<sup>435</sup> Although intended as emergency accommodation, by the mid-1950s some families in the former army camps had lived there several years, with the Chief Health Inspector describing their conditions as such that 'should not be tolerated in any community'.<sup>436</sup>

<sup>428</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 24 May 1947, pp.6&24

<sup>429</sup> *Daily News*, Sat 31 May 1947, p.19

<sup>430</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.65-69 quotes from p.65&69

<sup>431</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1952

<sup>432</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953, quote from p.29

<sup>433</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

<sup>434</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

<sup>435</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956

<sup>436</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.68-69, quote from p.69 quoting Chief Health Inspector's letter to Fremantle City Council, 8 October 1956

By June 1957, the former army camps were in advanced stages of being closed down. Vale Park and Leighton were no longer in use. The Government had requested all these camps be decommissioned by December 1958.<sup>437</sup> By 30 June 1958, only 37 families remained in camp accommodation. The buildings were largely sold to charitable organisations including the Mentally Incurable Children's Association, Slow Learners Group, Hawkevale, Stoneville, Clontarf, National Fitness Council, churches and the Progress or Parents & Citizens Associations of SHC estates.<sup>438</sup> All tenants were moved on by the end of 1958 and the camps closed.<sup>439</sup> In 1959-60, the last units were sold, concrete foundations were removed and the accounts for the program closed.<sup>440</sup>



Repurposed former army camp at Melville, 1947

*The Daily News, Saturday 24 May 1947, p.24*

*Places remaining in 2014:*

Evidence of the former army camp housing facilities is believed to have been completely removed.

<sup>437</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>438</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1958

<sup>439</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>440</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1960

## 11.5 HOUSING FOR INDUSTRY (1944-1970S)

Even before the end of World War Two, the SHC was providing housing to support government industrial development, such as housing for the flax mill at Boyup Brook. In the post war years, the 1940s town of Wundowie was established to support the government's charcoal iron plant, and hundreds of SHC homes went up for workers at the Collie coal mine, as well as suburbs to support industrial areas in general, such as Welshpool and Fremantle. The government also provided specific housing support to several large private industrial schemes.

Where single-industry towns were developed in post-war Australia they were generally small, even by country standards.<sup>441</sup> However, much housing to support industry expanded existing towns.

A flax mill was established at Boyup Brook in 1941 to supply Britain with essential war materials, such as boots, rope and parachute harnesses, after Britain's European flax supply was cut off. Its workforce included members of the Australian Women's Land Army (ALWA), along with migrant workers, as so many agricultural labourers had enlisted in the military.<sup>442</sup> Housing was a problem, with the Commonwealth eventually funding huts in 1943, which were erected by the PWD.<sup>443</sup> Women of the ALWA, some as young as sixteen, lived in dormitories or boarded with local families.<sup>444</sup> In 1944, Boyup Brook was identified as one of areas most severely short of housing, and as a result it was in the first allocation of houses under the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* in 1944.<sup>445</sup> Families working on the flax mill had previously been 'living in temporary shacks erected on the recreation reserve under conditions which, as well as being uncomfortable, [were] in some cases unhealthy'.<sup>446</sup> Thirty-one rental homes had been completed by mid-1951. By 1956, there were 50 post-war rental homes, along with one War Service home and 18 State Housing Act homes.<sup>447</sup> Boyup Brook was one of the few flax mills in Australia to survive beyond the war, operating until the 1965.<sup>448</sup>

Housing at Collie added to the existing town, which had been gazetted in 1897 following the discovery of coal in the area. Coal mining was already a well established industry in the town by the 1940s, and several companies operated on the coalfield.<sup>449</sup> The coal industry as considered vital to the war effort but a lack of housing in the town was making it difficult to retain workers.<sup>450</sup> Some of the first Commonwealth-State rental homes in Western Australia were built at Collie in 1944.<sup>451</sup> By June 1947, 41 of these rental homes had been completed in Collie. By 1950 this number had reached 120 and by 1956 it was 393. A further 87 War Service Homes and 163 State Housing Act homes were also completed between 1945 and 1956. The latter was 17% of State Housing Act homes completed outside the Metropolitan area in that

<sup>441</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.127

<sup>442</sup> HCWA, Below Threshold Documentation P16791 *Boyup Brook Flax Mill*, October 2010

<sup>443</sup> *The West Australian*, Sat 24 April 1943, p.2

<sup>444</sup> HCWA, Below Threshold Documentation P16791 *Boyup Brook Flax Mill*, October 2010

<sup>445</sup> *Westralian Worker*, Fri 20 October 1944, p.1

<sup>446</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 14 June 1944, p.2

<sup>447</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1951 and 1956

<sup>448</sup> HCWA, Below Threshold Documentation P16791 *Boyup Brook Flax Mill*, October 2010

<sup>449</sup> HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register documentation for P00552 *All Saints Anglican Church, Collie*, February 1998; Premier Coal, 'History', at <http://www.premiercoal.com.au/CompanyProfile/History.aspx> accessed 13 June 2014

<sup>450</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 14 June 1944, p.2

<sup>451</sup> *Albany Advertiser*, Thurs 3 August 1944, p.4

period.<sup>452</sup> More homes were provided at Collie in the post-war decade than any other non-Metropolitan centre except Bunbury.<sup>453</sup>

From 1944, the State Government established a charcoal iron plant at Wundowie, in the Shire of Northam, the only such plant ever operated in Western Australia. It was part of policies to increase the State's economic independence and decentralise industry. Laid out in 1944, the town of Wundowie demonstrated Garden City principles, using civic, communal and green spaces to separate the residential and industrial sections of the new settlement. Residential streets were arranged in semicircles around the civic core. Work began in 1946 and, although fifty homes were required to support the start-up industry, only 35 had been constructed by mid-1947 and the SHC was unable to fund more that year.<sup>454</sup> However, by 1950, 99 homes were completed.<sup>455</sup> Additional streets were laid out in 1951, following a grid-pattern rather than the Garden City curves.<sup>456</sup> By 1957, the SHC had constructed 141 homes at Wundowie.<sup>457</sup> The charcoal iron plant and refinery at Wundowie were closed in the mid-1960s. Smelting works closed in 1985, at which time the SHC still owned most of the houses (153 of 175). A foundry remained operational in 2014, but the SHC had reduced its housing stock in the town to 50 homes.<sup>458</sup>



SHC town at Wundowie to support government charcoal iron plant, c.1958

*SHC, Annual Report, 1958, p.8*

Wittenoom was one of the SHC's first housing developments to support a single private industry. Large-scale mining of blue asbestos began commercially at Wittenoom in 1943, when Lang Hancock sold his small 1930s operation to Colonial Sugar Refining Co Ltd (CSR). In order to expand operations to support the building boom in the State, CSR requested assistance from the government to establish a support town. The resulting town was a joint venture begun in 1947, with the SHC providing all workers' housing.<sup>459</sup> From 1948 to 1952, the SHC constructed 160 rental homes at Wittenoom, of which around 80% were completed from 1950 on. Another 28 houses were constructed in the early 1960s. All the government housing was Commonwealth-State rental, although a few appear to have been sold into

<sup>452</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1945-47, 1947-50, 1956*

<sup>453</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>454</sup> HCWA preliminary review, *P23525 Town of Wundowie, 2014*

<sup>455</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-1950*

<sup>456</sup> HCWA preliminary review, *P23525 Town of Wundowie, 2014*

<sup>457</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>458</sup> HCWA preliminary review, *P23525 Town of Wundowie, 2014*; DOH property lists, February 2014

<sup>459</sup> Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia <http://www.asbestosdiseases.org.au/the-wittenoom-tragedy.html> accessed 13 May 2014; Australian Asbestos Network <http://www.australianasbestosnetwork.org.au/Scripts/shadowbox/players/shadowbox-mp3.js> accessed 19 September

private ownership in the early 1950s.<sup>460</sup> At its peak, before other mining took off in the Pilbara, Wittenoom was the largest town in the region.<sup>461</sup> The mine operated until 1966, when it was closed for economic reasons, although health concerns about the impact of asbestos dust had been raised much earlier. By this time, an estimated 20,000 people had lived at Wittenoom. The town was officially closed from the late 1970s on health grounds.<sup>462</sup>

Addressing the post-war building materials shortage was a vital consideration in support for industry, and influenced government involvement at Wittenoom. It also led to provision of homes to accelerate the timber industry. As by its nature timber milling required populations in regional areas, government housing assistance improved changes of attracting and retaining a timber workforce. Timber townships of 20 to 30 houses were established in the bush at Palgarup, Tone River and Donnelly River (the first a Millars' mill, the other two Bunnings'), and existing mill towns were expanded at Nannup, Denmark, Walpole, Northcliffe and most significantly Manjimup. By 1957, the latter had 101 additional homes supplied.<sup>463</sup> The Donnelly River settlement involved construction in 1950-51 of 29 homes as part of an agreement with Bunning Brothers Pty Ltd, who were establishing the mill.<sup>464</sup> The Forests Department also constructed hundreds of workers' cottages for government timber workers in numerous locations. See [Section 18](#).

Forty houses were built at Big Bell between 1947 and 1949 to support the gold mining town, which had only been established in 1936. The mine closed in 1955 and almost immediately all forty government rental residences were dismantled and relocated elsewhere.<sup>465</sup>

In 1952, the *Oil Refinery (Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., Ltd) Act* was passed, initiating an oil refinery at Kwinana. The State Housing Commission was charged with building a neighbouring suburb to house the refinery workers, to comprise a thousand homes erected over three years. Twenty-six contractors set to work in 1953 and the first 35 houses were handed over to the Company (Anglo-Iranian Oil, later BP) in May 1953.<sup>466</sup> By June 1954, 641 houses and a shopping complex had been completed at Medina, the central suburb of the new town, and a second suburb of Calista was being developed.<sup>467</sup> The promised 1,000 homes did not eventuate, with construction ceasing in 1955 after 653 houses were completed. Initially Kwinana was listed as a country town, but by the end of the 1950s it was included in Metropolitan statistics.<sup>468</sup>

In the early years of construction and establishment, Kwinana was visited by Metropolitan residents as a sort of tourist attraction. The scale of the government's new settlement, at that time relatively isolated from other suburbs, impressed many visitors.<sup>469</sup> It was designed along 'New Town' lines, the outworking of Garden City principles for creating separate communities in the green belts around major cities.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1947-67

<sup>461</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.130

<sup>462</sup> Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia <http://www.asbestosdiseases.org.au/the-wittenoom-tragedy.html> accessed 13 May 2014

<sup>463</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>464</sup> HCWA (Jacqui Sherriff), Register documentation for Po8198 *Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct*, June 2007, p.5

<sup>465</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1947-50, 1954-55 and 1955-56; [http://www.australiasgoldenoutback.com/Listing/Big\\_Bell\\_Ghost\\_Town](http://www.australiasgoldenoutback.com/Listing/Big_Bell_Ghost_Town) and [http://www.westaustrianvista.com/Big\\_Bell.html](http://www.westaustrianvista.com/Big_Bell.html) accessed 13 June 2014

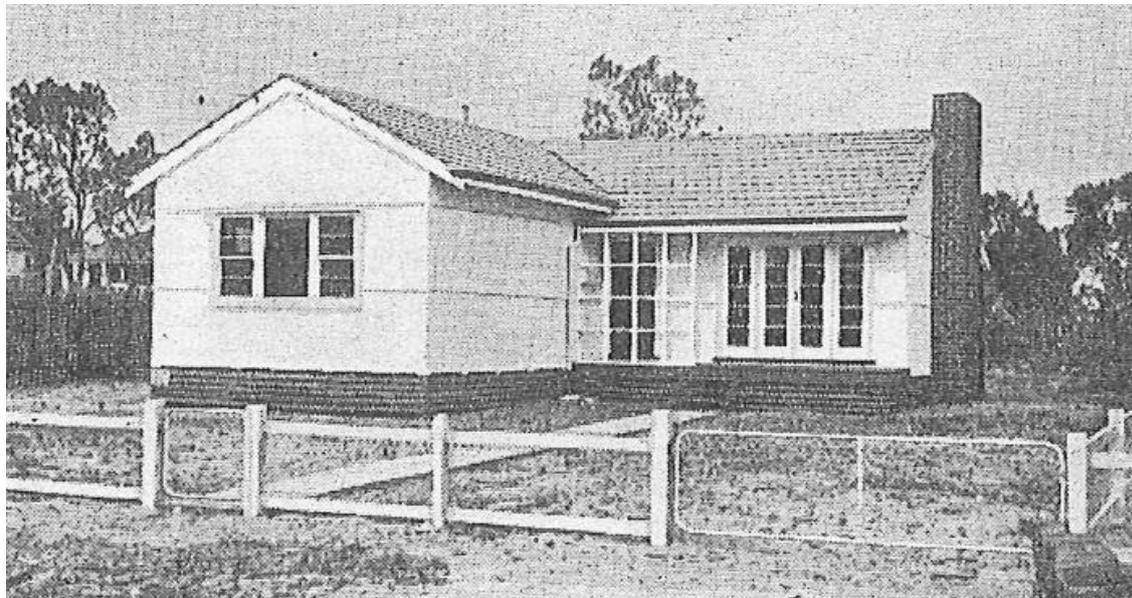
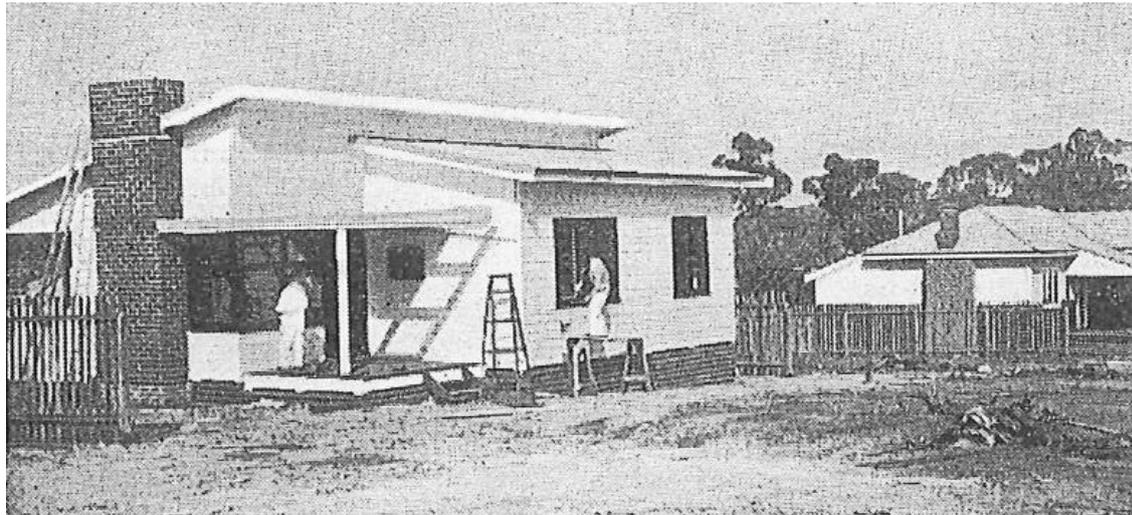
<sup>466</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1953

<sup>467</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1954

<sup>468</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956 and 1960

<sup>469</sup> HCWA preliminary review for P17306 *Medina Townsite*, 2005, amended Sept 2007

<sup>470</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.116



Houses newly erected at Medina, 1953

*SHC, Annual Report, 1953, p.26*

In October 1952, the State government announced plans for a BHP steel mill at Kwinana.<sup>471</sup> The plant was opened in October 1956, providing further demand for workers' housing in the area. Government provision of infrastructure and housing was an important factor in the establishment of major industries at Kwinana, which in turn made other industries viable and boosted the industrial development of the State.<sup>472</sup>

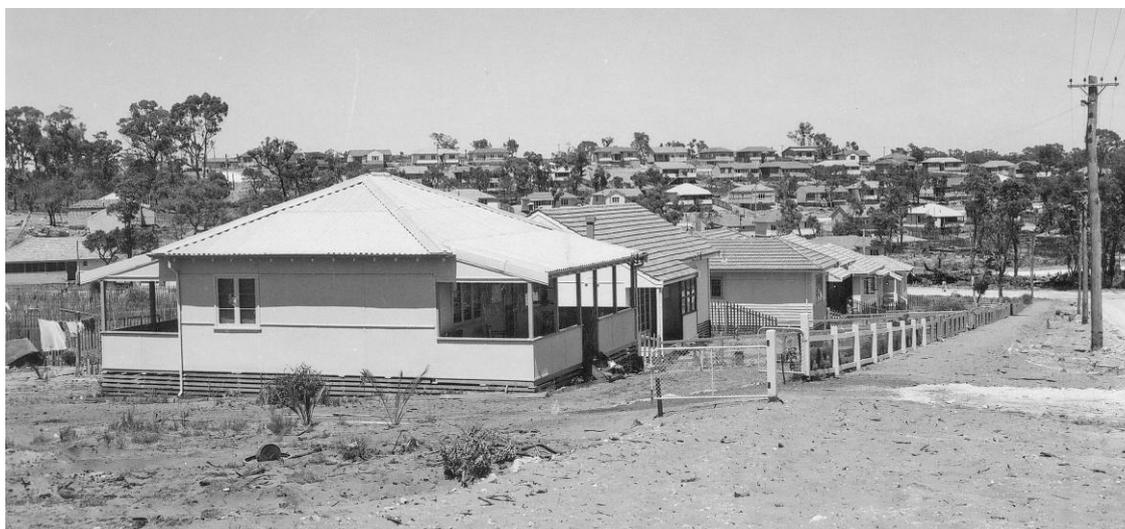
Most of the homes associated with Kwinana were constructed under specific legislation relating to the oil refinery, and as such were not part of existing schemes such as the Commonwealth-State Rental Scheme, War Service Homes, or the State Housing Act home loan provisions. From 1 July 1955, the SHC began taking back responsibility for the Kwinana Housing Scheme, which had originally been constructed by SHC but handed over to the BP refinery.<sup>473</sup> By June 1959, the SHC had taken over almost all the Kwinana

<sup>471</sup> *The West Australian*, 22 October 1952, p.1 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49059493>

<sup>472</sup> SLWA Ephemera Collection Listing – PR14528/BRO (BHP documents); Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.114

<sup>473</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1956*

houses from the BP Refinery, a total of 579 timber-framed and 37 brick homes. A further twelve brick homes were to come into SHC control the following year. As industry at Kwinana had not expanded as anticipated, around thirty Kwinana homes were generally vacant in this period.<sup>474</sup>



Houses at Medina, 1954

*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection, 011049D*

In 1960, BP announced it would be expanding the Kwinana refinery with new processing plant to produce lubricating oils. This was welcomed by the SHC, as many of its 616 homes in Medina and Calista were vacant at the time.<sup>475</sup> In addition to the homes built originally for BP, the Commission built another 267 homes under its regular provisions for a total of 920 homes by 1966.<sup>476</sup>

From 1961-62, the SHC began constructing homes at Bunbury for employees of La Porte Titanium Ltd, after the company signed an agreement to that effect with the State. Six homes were erected in the first year, and a further 29 the following year.<sup>477</sup> As at Kwinana, these homes were erected under a specific government agreement rather than existing government housing legislation.

In 1962-63, SHC built twelve homes at the new Karnet prison farm and thirty homes at Carnarvon for employees at the NASA tracking station. Plans were also underway to house employees of Esperance Fertilisers Pty Ltd at Esperance and BHP's new iron ore mine at Koolyanobbing.<sup>478</sup>

In May 1963, an agreement between Australia and the USA was signed to allow the US Navy to build a large communications station at North West Cape. The Commonwealth and State government equally contributed to establish a support town at Exmouth for civilian Australian workers. The US Navy also contributed finances to the town's development, funding houses for married American navy personnel and paying for the State school. It was originally anticipated a population of around 1,500 would eventuate. By 30 June 1965, the first 14 houses had been completed and another 30 were under construction. A further 130 funded by the US Navy and 129 funded by the State and Federal governments were to be completed by December 1966, in readiness for the Station to be commissioned in 1967. A

<sup>474</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1959*

<sup>475</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 19-60*

<sup>476</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>477</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1962; 1963*

<sup>478</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1963*

hostel for 130 single persons was also completed with Commonwealth funding. Houses were designed to withstand cyclones.<sup>479</sup>

Funding continued to be put towards industrial housing. At Koolyanobbing, 55 houses were built with government funding by June 1966, to support the BHP works in the town. A further six houses were financed by BHP, and seven by other government departments. At the same time 74 houses had been built at Bunbury to support La Porte Titanium Company and 40 at Esperance in association with the fertiliser works.<sup>480</sup>



Housing for BHP at Koolyanobbing, 1967

*SHC, Annual Report, 1967, p.13*

By the late 1960s, Western Australia was shifting towards being a 'highly specialised and trade-dependent' economy dominated by mining and mineral processing. The advent of domestic jet travel from the early 1960s reduced the State's isolation. Agriculture, which had underpinned the State's economy, also remained strong, but secondary industries were limited.<sup>481</sup>

The Commonwealth government had in 1960 lifted a 22-year embargo on export of iron ore and subsequently, in response to strong overseas demand, development of iron ore mining in the Pilbara rapidly expanded.<sup>482</sup> New towns were created, and existing centres expanded. Government housing numbers increased rapidly, to keep up with the rush of demand for accommodation, with the largest concentration at the new SHC estate of South Hedland.

As mining expanded in the Pilbara, demand for housing also increased, both for workers directly employed in the mines and government and service industry workers supporting the new towns. By mid-

<sup>479</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1965, 1966, 1967*

<sup>480</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>481</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement, 2004*, p.19

<sup>482</sup> Faulkner, Danielle, *The History of GEHA: 40 years of housing government employees in western Australia 1966-2006*, Department of Housing and Works, Perth WA, 2007, pp.3-5

1975, the SHC had erected 3,149 residences 'North of the 26th Parallel', of which 454 were Aboriginal housing units and 946 were government employee housing. Of all Northwest SHC residences, 1105 (35%) had been built between 1970 and 1975.<sup>483</sup> For more on Northwest housing see [Section 20](#).

Unlike earlier mining booms which focussed on one mineral (usually gold), the 1960s into the 1970s saw Western Australia develop significant industries extracting iron ore, nickel, bauxite, oil, natural gas, mineral sands, solar salt, potash, langbeinite and talc, with gold also re-emerging from the 1980s.<sup>484</sup>



Terrace housing at Medina, 1968

*SHC, Annual Report, 1968*

The mining boom of the late 1960s reinvigorated the Kwinana industrial area. Further housing sites to support Kwinana were developed in 1968-69, creating the new suburb of Orelia, and Parmelia was to follow in 1970-71.<sup>485</sup> At Orelia, about 70% of the newly subdivided land was offered to private individuals and developers for the establishment of houses within a limited time frame.<sup>486</sup> From the mid-1990s, Kwinana was one of the first two areas selected for 'New Living' redevelopments. See [Section 16.1](#).

In 1974 a new statutory body was established to provide country employers with housing for vital employees. The Industrial and Commercial Employee Housing Authority was overseen by the SHC in the same manner as GEHA.<sup>487</sup> In its first two years of operation, it provided 17 houses and had another 16 under construction. These were mostly individual houses in country towns rather than housing groups.<sup>488</sup> The new Authority allowed employers to control housing for their employees, whose income may have made them ineligible for a standard SHC home, and ensured housing could be supplied consistently for

<sup>483</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the period 1969-75

<sup>484</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, p.22; Lands & Surveys Department WA, *Western Australia: An atlas of human endeavour*, 1979, pp.90-99; McKay, B., Lambert, I & Miyazaki, S, 'The Australian Mining Industry: from Settlement to 2000', at ABS <http://www.abs.gov.au> accessed 29 April 2014

<sup>485</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969, 1971

<sup>486</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

<sup>487</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975

<sup>488</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

these industries regardless of employee movements. By June 1985, the Authority had provided 272 regional houses, of which 173 were in the Northwest.<sup>489</sup>

The Industrial and Commercial Employee Housing Authority operated until it was repealed in 1998 by the *Country Housing Act*.<sup>490</sup>

As timber mills closed or downsized, SHC disposed of its housing in mill towns. Tone River and Donnelly River Mills were both closed in 1978. At Donnelly River, the Department of Tourism took over the whole settlement as a tourist complex from 1981.<sup>491</sup> In 1984-85, the Commission sold all its twenty 1950s weatherboard homes at Palgarup, as the timber mill in the town closed in 1983. Tenants were given first option to purchase, conditional on agreeing to remain resident in the house.<sup>492</sup>

*Places that remain in 2014:*

DOH properties in towns that supported post-war industries are:

Collie	One 1944 residence (first year of Commonwealth-State Rentals); 252 housing units in total, of which 77 date from 1944 to 1955 and most others date from 1975 on.
Wundowie	One 1944 residence (first year of Commonwealth-State Rentals); fifty units in total, including eight from the 1940s and nine from the 1950s. The Town of Wundowie (P23525) is included in the HCWA's assessment program.
Boyup Brook	The earliest DOH residence remaining dates from 1965.
Big Bell	No longer a town
Wittenoom	No longer a town
Esperance	361 housing units, dating from 1964 to 2013, with six from the initial roll-out of housing between 1963 and 1966 to support the superphosphate works.
Exmouth	145 housing units, including forty dated 1965 to 1970.
Carnarvon	513 housing units, but none dated 1962-63, when the NASA station was being constructed.
Karnet	6 houses, all 1950
Koolyanobbing	No DOH properties
Bunbury	393 housing units, plus 261 in Carey Park and 246 in Withers. In the combined Bunbury area, 34 DOH homes remain from 1963-1967, the period homes were built to support La Porte Titanium Ltd.
Kwinana	436 housing units in the combined area of Medina, Calista, Parmelia and Orelia, of which eleven are from the 1950s, all at Medina and Calista.

Timber mills (SHC housing – NOT Forests Department unless transferred to DOH):

<sup>489</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.120-21

<sup>490</sup> Country Housing Authority (CHA), *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>491</sup> HCWA (Sherriff), Register documentation for Po8198 *Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct*, June 2007, pp.7-8

<sup>492</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

Donnelly River	Thirty-seven workers' cottages are preserved as part of Po8198 <i>Donnelly River Mill and Town Site Precinct</i> , which is entered into the State Register of Heritage Places. It is in government but not DOH ownership.
Tone River	Small settlement remains but no houses in DOH ownership
Palgarup	Small settlement remains but no houses in DOH ownership
Pemberton	Two DOH cottage from the 1950s and 27 homes dated 1975 to 1999. A large group of mill workers cottages built by State Sawmills from 1913 to the 1950s is entered into the State Register of Heritage Places as P11381 <i>Pemberton Timber Mill Workers' Cottages Precinct</i> . These were never SHC housing.
Nannup	15 units, with seven dated 1955 to 1962.
Walpole	13 units, mostly more recent, with two from 1957 and two from 1973.
Denmark	93 units, dated 1979 to 2012
Northcliffe	Four houses, all more recent
Manjimup	177 units, with a fairly even date spread from 1948 to 2013

Many former Forests Department houses are also extant and in government ownership but are not DOH properties (eg. Jarrahdale, Dryandra).

*For details of houses remaining in Pilbara mining towns see [Section 13](#) and [Section 20](#).*



the budget to fund loans from building societies through the Home Builders Account, with this amount rising to 30% for the remaining years.<sup>494</sup> A requirement for the States to immediately repay the Commonwealth upon selling a Commonwealth-funded property was removed, allowing more attractive home purchase arrangements for rental properties.<sup>495</sup>

The new Act was a five-year agreement.<sup>496</sup> It was intended to be updated every five years. Each 'update' involved prolonged negotiations which at times delayed the signing of a new agreement, or led to agreements covering shorter periods. The 1961 agreement continued along much the same lines as that of 1956.<sup>497</sup>



SHC homes in Geraldton, 1957

*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection, 008448D*

Following the 1956 Agreement, the Commission financed homes it was not involved in constructing, through building society loans, second mortgages and special provisions for some War Service Homes. By 1958, over 40% of the homes the Commission funded were built privately.<sup>498</sup> The Commission issued funds with as little as a 5% deposit with repayment periods of up to 45 years. Private lenders at the time were reported to require 20-40% deposit and repayment within 25 years.<sup>499</sup>

Up to the 1956 Agreement, less than 7% of the 96,000 Commonwealth-State rental homes built nationally had been sold. Western Australia had the highest rate of sell-off, at 14.7%. Following the 1956 Agreement, the sale of public housing accelerated, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. The number of new public housing units constructed each year was also reduced.<sup>500</sup> In Western Australia,

<sup>494</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>495</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, pp.108&118

<sup>496</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>497</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, pp.134-38

<sup>498</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1958*

<sup>499</sup> WA State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes', 1959

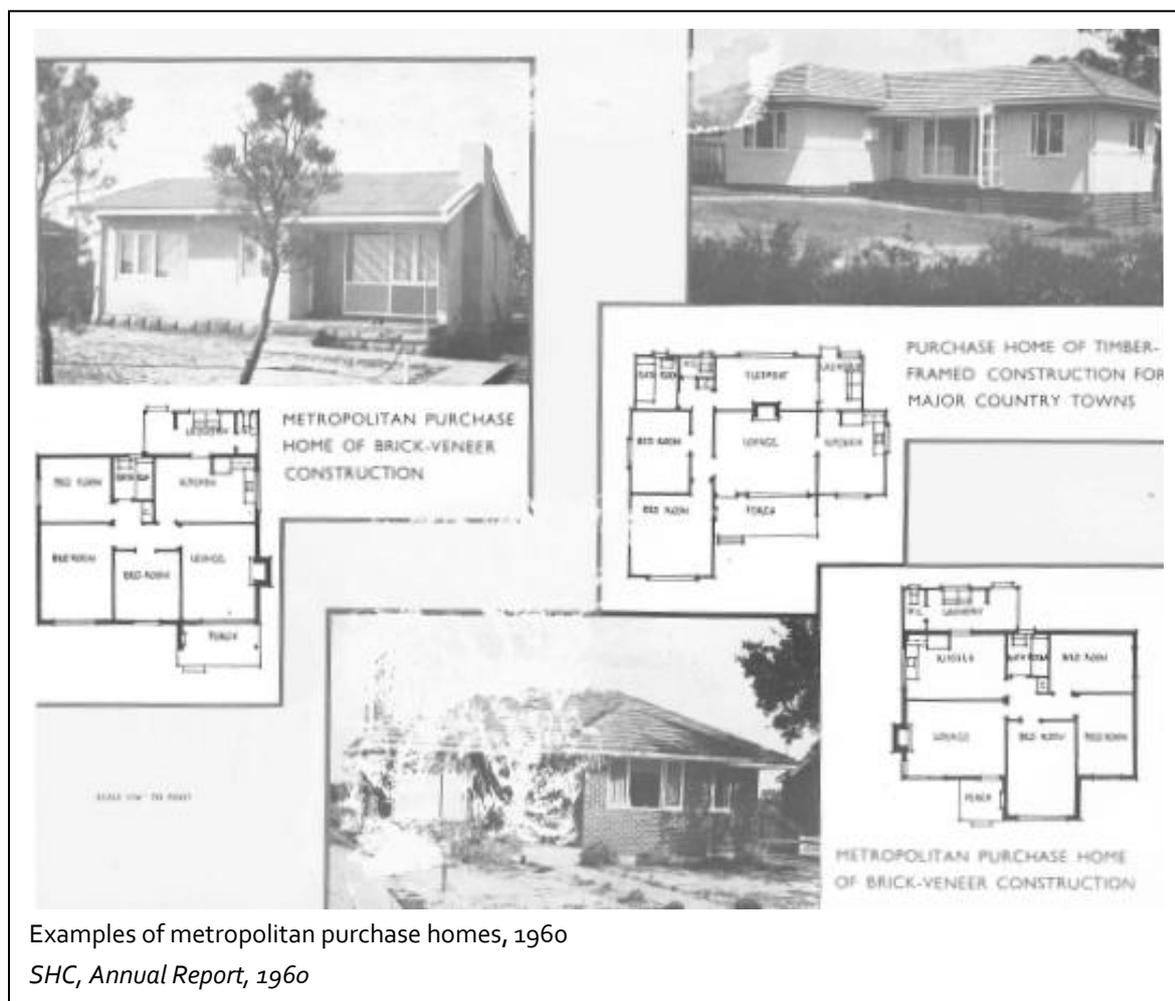
<sup>500</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012*, pp.118-19

construction of homes under the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* halved between 1956 and 1957, and did not return to 1956 levels until the 1970s.<sup>501</sup>

The shift to funding private home ownership coincided with, and may have partly caused, a significant drop-off in the rate of home building in the State. With government building reducing to 35% of total new homes in the State in 1956-57, the total number of houses, government and private, dropped by around a third, and it was eight years before that figure again reached the level it had been at in 1955-56.<sup>502</sup>

The new Act no longer provided for rental rebates, but the SHC decided to continue offering rental rebates were necessary under the same conditions as the previous Agreement.<sup>503</sup> The Commission was keen to convince the public that it was not primarily a rental agent, noting in 1958 that over half the homes it had constructed in the post-war period were being purchased by their occupants. However, the vast majority of its clients could raise only very small deposits towards owning their home. As such, SHC continued to focus on designing and building modest homes affordable for low income earners.<sup>504</sup>

The Commission continued to develop new house designs. Cost restrictions of the post-war decade began to lift, and more brick designs were developed. In 1955-56, the Commission noted it was building



Examples of metropolitan purchase homes, 1960

*SHC, Annual Report, 1960*

<sup>501</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>502</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.76-77

<sup>503</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>504</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1958*

homes in 'silica pastel shade bricks' and attempting to repaint its more drably coloured 1940s estates in fresher colour schemes. In 1955-56, 33% of SHC homes were constructed in brick or brick veneer.<sup>505</sup> Tightening of the building industry in 1956-57 put many tradesmen out of work, but also led to more competitive prices. As a result, the Commission could afford to build a greater number of houses in brick. In 1956-57, 48% of SHC homes completed were brick (38%) or brick veneer (10%). Few country homes were of brick, although some were erected in Bunbury.<sup>506</sup>

In its 1957 Annual report, the SHC proudly identified having constructed 25,000 houses, 324 multistorey flats and 124 housing estates, across all its housing schemes. Around 23% of the homes were in country areas. The 25,000<sup>th</sup> home since the war was completed in June 1957.<sup>507</sup> As the economy expanded into the second half of the 1950s, pressure for commercial, office and industrial premises resulted in many rental properties being demolished, especially in inner-city areas, with evicted tenants seeking Commission assistance.<sup>508</sup>

The key client group of the Commission by the end of the 1950s was still low-income families. While the goal of home ownership was maintained, a substantial percentage of SHC clients were not in a financial position to work towards home ownership, or were transient, and as such required rental premises. Newly married or aged pensioner couples also largely depended on Commission assistance for affordable housing.<sup>509</sup> Specific housing for the aged was introduced in 1958. See [Section 12.4](#).

Brick veneer was increasingly favoured by the SHC, being used for more than half of all SHC homes by 1961 and becoming the primary material used by the Commission in its Metropolitan estates by the mid-1960s.<sup>510</sup> However, it remained unpopular with private builders and as a result became a characteristic feature of government homes.<sup>511</sup>

Early post-war housing developments began to be viewed as too monotonous in style.<sup>512</sup> The Commission repeatedly asserted that it was doing its best to include as much variety into its low-cost designs as it could afford, with typical defences such as this from 1958:

*'Design variations in low cost housing are not as great as popularly imagined, but the Commission by giving very careful thought to siting, cladding, roof structures and materials, and painting is able to avoid monotony of appearance.'*<sup>513</sup>

However, several decades later the SHC designs of the 1950s and 1960s were referred to by SHC staff as 'a series of boxes designed by in-house architects with standard designs'.<sup>514</sup> Commission homes were generally smaller than privately built homes. Features such as garages, double sinks, breakfast bars, television space, built-in storage areas and bathrooms with separate baths and showers were common in even modest private homes but generally omitted from SHC homes.<sup>515</sup>

<sup>505</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956

<sup>506</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>507</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957

<sup>508</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1958

<sup>509</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>510</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

<sup>511</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.77-78

<sup>512</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>513</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1958, quote from p.16

<sup>514</sup> Lou D'Alessandro, Ministry of Housing Director, quoted in 'Architects of Change', in *Builder*, April-May 2000, p.13

<sup>515</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.78-80

A 1959 booklet of plans for pre-cut housing, produced by State Building Supplies, included eleven standard house plans, including one 'expansible' design and two Northwest standards, and a pre-cut garage. Two of the plans allowed for a lounge heater instead of a fireplace. The expansible house was shown starting with only one main room (later the kitchen), entry hall, bathroom and rear laundry and toilet, with provision to add two bedrooms, dining room, lounge and porch.<sup>516</sup>

Gardens had always been acknowledged as a key feature in the upkeep of low-income houses. For many years, installation and maintenance of gardens was considered the householders' responsibility and the Commission reported favourably where tenants were establishing gardens. As the Commission increasingly developed housing estates, it began paying more attention to putting in building surrounds. Trees were included in planning for SHC estates, and gardens were laid out at SHC flats.<sup>517</sup>

By 1960, applications for rental accommodation in the Metropolitan area were largely being met through vacancies in existing properties, and the rate of constructing new rentals slowed. In 1959-60, 2,142 rental properties were taken up, with 1,844 of these being vacated homes and only 298 being newly constructed dwellings.<sup>518</sup>

From the mid-1950s, Perth's suburban development was guided by the 1955 'Plan for the Metropolitan Region, Perth and Fremantle', prepared by Gordon Stephenson and J.A. (Alistair) Hepburn, which formed the basis of the 1963 Metropolitan Region Scheme. Stephenson and Hepburn's plan encouraged suburban expansion that assumed car travel and was based around retail shopping malls. Linear transport corridors separated by green wedges shaped the growing city, reflecting a trend across Australia. The plan aimed to facilitate growth in an orderly fashion, with expanded regional highways and rail links, and provided for significant decentralisation of industry and services.<sup>519</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the SHC purchased large tracts of undeveloped land that for the next decades were both the site of SHC development and a major source of income for the Commission as portions were sold.<sup>520</sup> Resumption of land for Perth Airport in the early 1960s required replanning of housing areas around Cloverdale, as the Commission lost quite a lot of its land for the airport's public open space.<sup>521</sup>

From 1959-60, the Commission allowed private builders to purchase vacant fully serviced sites within SHC housing estates at value, provided a house was erected within twelve months. It was hoped this would bring architectural variety into the estates.<sup>522</sup>

In 1960-61, the Commission began laying out a new housing subdivision at City Beach, on part of the City of Perth's endowment lands, for use as the Commonwealth Games Village. Houses were to be sold to private owners after the Games, which influenced the siting and design of the residences. Following an architectural competition, 150 homes were built.<sup>523</sup> Thirteen designs were used, in keeping with SHC policy of creating variety in its housing estates, with the first building work beginning late in 1961. It was the first time a Commonwealth Games host country had constructed a purpose-designed athletes'

<sup>516</sup> WA State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes', 1959

<sup>517</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956

<sup>518</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1960

<sup>519</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.24-26, 149-51

<sup>520</sup> SHC, *In House*, Vol.4 No.4 Nov 1987 p.2

<sup>521</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1961

<sup>522</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1960

<sup>523</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1961

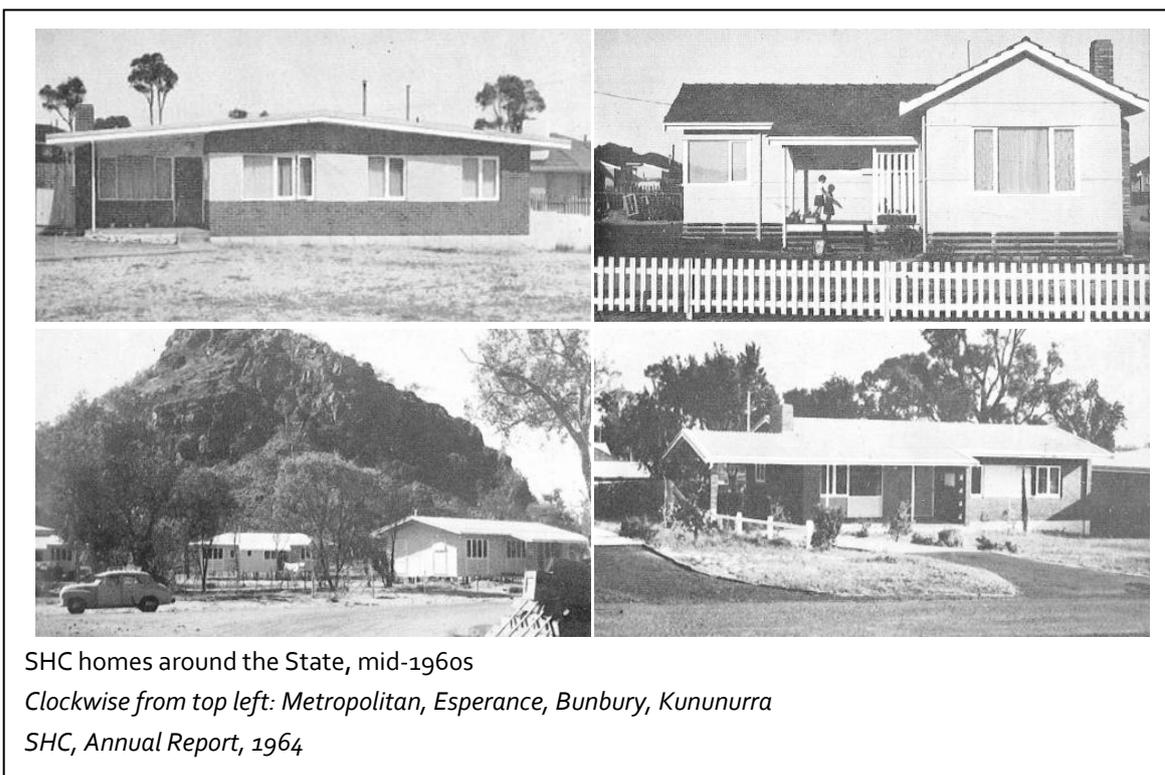
village.<sup>524</sup> By 1963, following the Games, all 150 homes had been sold into private ownership.<sup>525</sup> The Commonwealth Games Village was developed in keeping with 'Garden City' design principles.<sup>526</sup>

In 1960-61, split-level designs were adopted for SHC homes on sloping sites.<sup>527</sup> From 1961-62, the Commission instituted a 'preselection' scheme to increase the choice applicants had about details of their new homes and as another measure to increase variety in SHC estates. However, applicants were still choosing from within a range of SHC standard designs and fittings.<sup>528</sup>

Although applicants for SHC homes were given a measure of choice in the planning of their new home, the Commission was very strict about ensuring the chosen features were within the budget of the client. Many requested brick or brick veneer homes but were given timber-framed dwellings as they were not deemed able to meet the repayments on a brick home.<sup>529</sup>

The Commission's architectural services were drawn on by numerous government departments, and the Rural and Industries Bank, for assistance with various low-cost building projects, including offices and hostels as well as housing.<sup>530</sup>

The SHC from time to time provided housing specifically for 'key migrant personnel', mostly in the Metropolitan area through the provisions of its existing schemes.<sup>531</sup>



SHC homes around the State, mid-1960s

*Clockwise from top left: Metropolitan, Esperance, Bunbury, Kununurra*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1964*

<sup>524</sup> HCWA (Bizzaca & Wills) Heritage Assessment for Pg107 *British Empire and Commonwealth Games Village Precinct (fmr)*, 2003

<sup>525</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1963

<sup>526</sup> HCWA (Bizzaca & Wills) Heritage Assessment for Pg107 *British Empire and Commonwealth Games Village Precinct (fmr)*, 2003.

<sup>527</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1961

<sup>528</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1962

<sup>529</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1966

<sup>530</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1962

<sup>531</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1963

By 1961, over 80% of the homes built by the Commission were sold 'on a purchase basis' rather than being let to tenants.<sup>532</sup> In the first decade of the scheme to provide government funding to building societies for them to provide home loans for small to moderate size homes, £8,603,652 was allocated. In 1964-65, £1,195,000 was allocated under the scheme, providing home loans for 382 families. A further 237 families obtained loans under the *Housing Loan Guarantee Act*, where the Treasurer guaranteed their private finance.<sup>533</sup> By 1966, the government was financing around 25% of all homes in the State, significantly more than the national average of 18% government finance.<sup>534</sup> However, the percentage of houses and flats in the State that the SHC was actually constructing was nearer to 18%.<sup>535</sup> As most of the government-built residences that were sold were in more desirable locations, and almost entirely free-standing houses, the move to home purchase schemes both reduced the location options available to future public housing tenants and increased the proportion of public housing that was higher density.<sup>536</sup>

By 1963, it was felt the 'ideal building site' was approximately 60ft (frontage) by 132ft, although estates allowed various size blocks to cater for different designs, include cottage flats and duplexes.<sup>537</sup>

By the mid-1960s, improvements were being made to SHC homes to improve resident comfort. New developments proudly described the provision of reticulated hot water systems. The Commission also began installing hot water systems into its earlier houses.<sup>538</sup> Other improvements included stainless steel sinks and low-level flushing facilities. Initially these improvements were for homes under purchase, but gradually they were also implemented in rental properties. Tenants 'who during the past have fulfilled their tenancy obligations' were able to apply to have worn-out gas, kerosene or chip heaters replaced in rental properties. In addition to new homes, the Commission constructed or provided funding for



SHC home in Karrinyup, November 1966.

*Ken Hotchkin, used with permission, SLWA collection, 280035PD*

<sup>532</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1961

<sup>533</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

<sup>534</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 19-66

<sup>535</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967

<sup>536</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.109

<sup>537</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1963

<sup>538</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1964

extensions to existing homes 'where increases in the family have made additional accommodation essential'.<sup>539</sup> By 1968, hot water systems were being installed in around 400 SHC rental homes each year.<sup>540</sup>

Although homes for purchase were built under the *State Housing Act* and rental homes under the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements*, they were built together in groups with no distinction in design between the two categories. Rental homes continued to be available for purchase by tenants at minimal deposits. Tenants exercising their option to purchase received a credit 'equal to the principal repayment element contained in the rent which he has paid', and this credit could be used for the deposit.<sup>541</sup>

For many years the Commission assisted local Shires by providing rental accommodation earmarked for shire employees. From 1966-67, this practice was phased out, and these properties reverted to the general rental housing stock. In place of providing these rentals for Shires, the Commission provided incentives for local authorities to provide their own housing, including concession-rate architectural and supervision services. Within three years the amount borrowed by local authorities for housing trebled.<sup>542</sup>

The Commission operated on such a large scale throughout the post-war years that it played 'an important role in both creating and sustaining economic activity throughout the State'. It took seriously its responsibility to be a stabilising force in the building industry, and adjusted its operations accordingly.<sup>543</sup>

Western Australia's population continued to grow steadily from the 1940s through to the mid-1960s, averaging 2.8% increase per year. This was significantly higher than the national average of 1.9% population growth in the same period. Manufacturing industries slowly developed through the period, and housing associated with these industries was a feature of the second post-war decade. An alumina refinery opened in 1961, supplementing the oil refinery and steel mill at Kwinana. In 1963-64, manufacturing accounted for 46% of the State's production, its all-time peak, as the discovery of iron ore was soon to change the balance towards mining.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

<sup>540</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>541</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967, quote from p.8

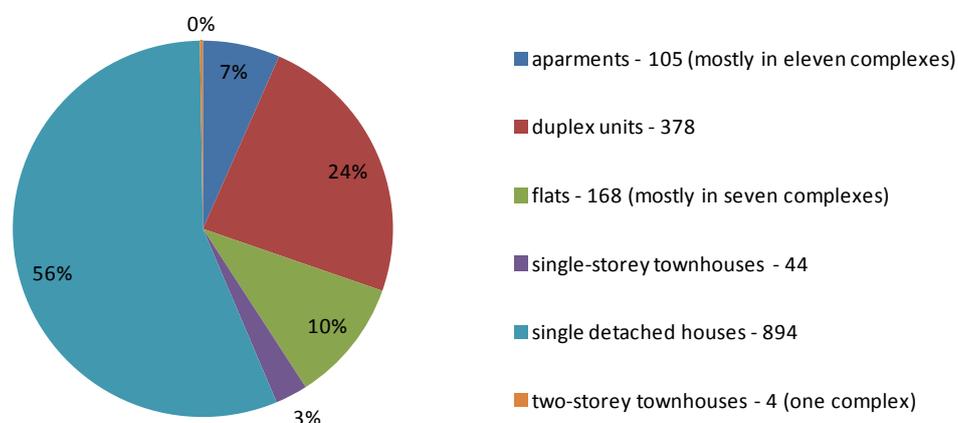
<sup>542</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

<sup>543</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985, quote from p.2

<sup>544</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, pp.20-21

*Places that remain in 2014:*

At 31 May 2014, DOH retained 1,593 housing units from the period 1956 to 1965, including both those built by the department and those acquired later. These divide as:



A further 45 housing units are included in community housing stocks. Almost all are non-standard dwelling types or have no dwelling type listed.

## Groups of 1956-1965 housing in DOH ownership:

Twenty-five towns or suburbs retain groups of residences from this period. The largest group is at Nollamara (126 units). Adjacent Balga and Westminster (a renamed section of old Balga) retain another 104 units. All three suburbs have mostly single detached residences or duplexes from this period. Other suburbs with over fifty units are Carlisle, Cloverdale, South Perth and West Perth. South and West Perth and over half the units in Carlisle are flats and apartments in a total of eight complexes.

Smaller groups are at East Victoria Park (8), Embleton (27), Exmouth (24), Forrestfield (19), Hamilton Hill (36), Karrinyup (48), Manjimup (20), Narrogin (43), Northam (24), Port Hedland (18), Rangeway (Geraldton) (40), Saint James (30), Tom Price (16), Wagin (11), Willagee (29), Wundowie (18), Wyndham (18) and Yarloop (7). DOH retains larger numbers than this in several suburbs but they do not appear to be closely located and have therefore not been included in this list.

## 12.1 EARLY FLATS (1948-1960S)

In other States, especially New South Wales, flats were a substantial portion of the post-war public housing program.<sup>545</sup> Western Australia, however, steered away from flat developments in the 1940s. Among submissions to the 1948 Royal Commission into the State Housing Commission was a proposal for construction of blocks of flats. Although outside the remit of the inquiry, Commissioner Moseley made favourable note of the idea as a means of addressing housing shortages.<sup>546</sup>

Flats had been constructed in Perth from at least the 1920s, particularly above shops. From the 1930s, many purpose-built blocks of flats were developed, especially by Harold Krantz and, in the post-war years, his firm Krantz & Sheldon. In central Perth, so many young couples chose to live in the flats in the 1930s that the building industry complained that it was being negatively impacted by the trend. A small number of serviced luxury apartments were constructed but on the whole flats were built as an economical way to provide affordable middle-class housing. Large older houses were also converted into flats and it was these in particular that deteriorated into slums during the 1930s Depression, sparking a Royal Commission in 1938 into Perth's municipal administration. Subsequent recommendations to demolish substandard buildings in Central Perth were not implemented until the mid-1950s, on account of the war and ensuing building materials shortages. As a result, the public association between flats and slums was very strong in the post-war years. Understandably, there was a great deal of concern when the SHC moved towards constructing flats for its low-income clients, as this was viewed as a recipe for slum creation. Many planners and architects, however, saw flats as the obvious and necessary solution to the housing crisis of the time.<sup>547</sup> The increasing cost of Metropolitan land also led the SHC towards higher density housing developments.<sup>548</sup>



First two-storey SHC flats, South Perth (Kensington), 1948

*SHC, Annual Report 1951 p.8*

<sup>545</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, illustrated pages (unnumbered)

<sup>546</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948, p.16

<sup>547</sup> Gregory, Jenny, *City of Light: A History of Perth since the 1950s*, City of Perth, Perth WA, 2003, pp.54-59; HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register documentation for P06102 *Site of Buildings, Burt Way*, East Perth, pp.4&6

<sup>548</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.70

A 1948 newspaper article reported that the first two-storey SHC flats were under construction at the corner of Collins and Oxford Streets South Perth. The block was to comprise six flats for small 'two and three unit' families.<sup>549</sup> A photograph of these flats, along with another unidentified but very similarly designed South Perth block, was printed in the 1952 SHC annual report. They are the first hint of flats in annual reports.<sup>550</sup> The unidentified block is probably the block of eight flats at 62 Birdwood Ave (cnr Bland St) Como, listed by DOH as a 1948 building.<sup>551</sup>

From around 1953-54, the SHC began to actively provide accommodation for two-unit families and families with adult children, who previously had not qualified for SHC assistance.<sup>552</sup> This included couples and single parents, the latter referred to as 'widows with children' or 'deserted wives' until well into the 1970s.<sup>553</sup>

The Commission's first significant venture into multiple flat dwellings was at 'Wandana', Subiaco, beginning in 1954. Despite some public controversy about the move, SHC asserted that 'no city in the world has been able to develop without the supplementary use of multiple flat dwellings'<sup>554</sup> and it was particularly important to meet the needs of couples and smaller families. The three-storey block was to be ready by 1955 and the ten storey block, containing 242 flats, was occupied in 1956. The site was seen as a perfect location for flats, being walking distance from the city and overlooking Kings Park, in a fully serviced area.<sup>555</sup>

Wandana was designed for the SHC by Krantz & Sheldon. Defending the SHC's choice to build flats, Harold Krantz wrote in 1953 that 'properly controlled flats projects ... will never



Wandana, Subiaco, 1956  
SHC, Annual Report, 1956

<sup>549</sup> *The West Australian*, Sun 19 December 1948, p.4

<sup>550</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1952

<sup>551</sup> DOH Property lists, February 2014

<sup>552</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955

<sup>553</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.83

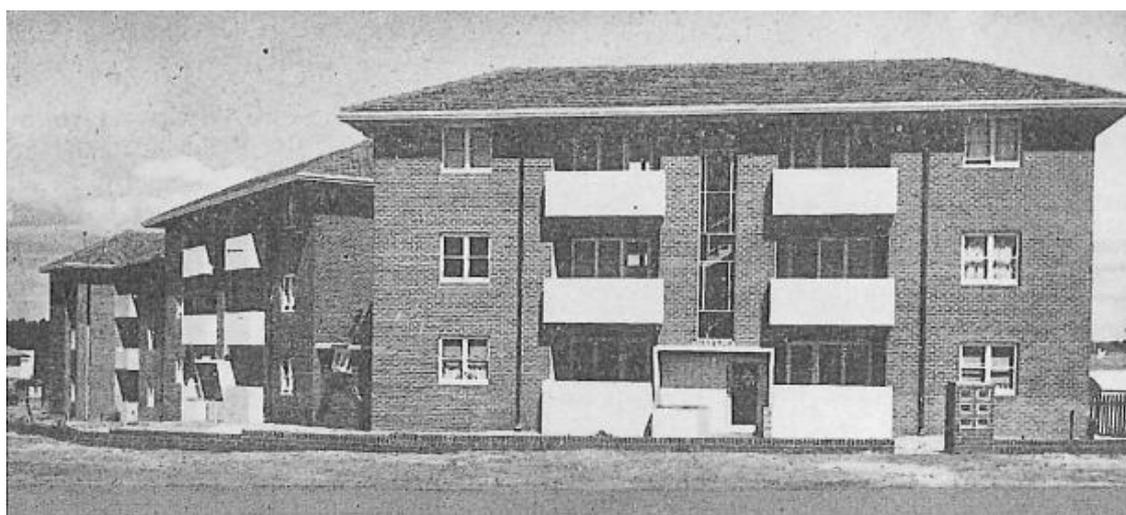
<sup>554</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1954

<sup>555</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, 1954, 1956

deteriorate into slums' as 'slums develop from properties which cannot be adequately maintained because of low returns'.<sup>556</sup>

Krantz & Sheldon remained the predominant designers of flats in Perth through to the 1970s, with some estimates suggesting the firm designed as much as 90% of Perth's flats up to this time. In response to limits on building materials, and to keep maintenance to a minimum, their designs pursued functionalism and included features such as minimal decoration, unpainted timbers, face brickwork, cream painted finishes.<sup>557</sup>

Wandana was landscaped by John Oldham, including a children's playground in the inner courtyard, and extensive use of native plants.<sup>558</sup> Use of native vegetation was characteristic of Oldham's landscape



Flats at Como (above) and Rocky Bay, North Fremantle (below), 1956 & 1957

*Demonstrating the use of near-identical plans for blocks of flats*

*SHC, Annual Reports, 1956 and 1957*

<sup>556</sup> HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register documentation for P09186 *Wandana Apartment Block*, March 2001, quoting Harold Krantz, p.4

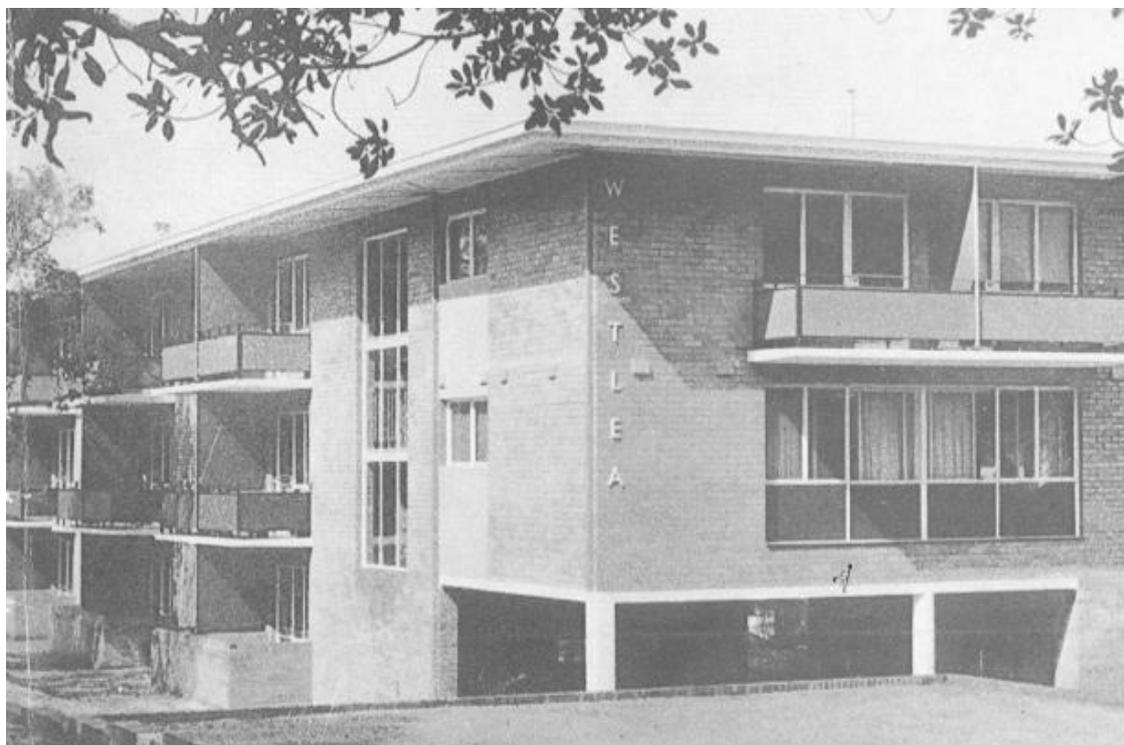
<sup>557</sup> HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register documentation for P06102 *Site of Buildings, Burt Way*, East Perth, pp.4&6; HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register documentation for P09186 *Wandana Apartment Block*, March 2001, p.4

<sup>558</sup> HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register documentation for P09186 *Wandana Apartment Block*, March 2001, p.5

designs. He was one of the founders of landscape architecture as a profession in Australia. Wandana was one of his first commissions as a landscape architect. From 1959, Oldham was the State's first Government Landscape Architect, employed by the PWD. His government work included landscaping schools, hospitals, dams and the Narrows freeway interchange.<sup>559</sup> He was involved in the garden design of several SHC apartment complexes.

With the success of Wandana at Subiaco, smaller two- and three-storey blocks of flats were erected at White Gum Valley, North Fremantle, Como and South Perth. In country areas, the Lotteries Commission assisted with establishing some SHC flats.<sup>560</sup> At North Fremantle, four three-storey apartment blocks were erected at Rocky Bay in 1956-58 (Myuna Flats).<sup>561</sup>

From the late 1950s, multistorey flats were erected for elderly residents, beginning with Graham Flats in West Perth (1959).<sup>562</sup> In 1961-62, planning was underway for a three-storey block of 72 bedsit units for 'elderly pensioner women' at Stirling Highway, Swanbourne (also identified as Cottesloe or Claremont). It was noted that native trees on the site would be preserved.<sup>563</sup> See *Section 12.4*.



Westlea flats, Claremont, 1964

*SHC, Annual Report, 1964, front cover*

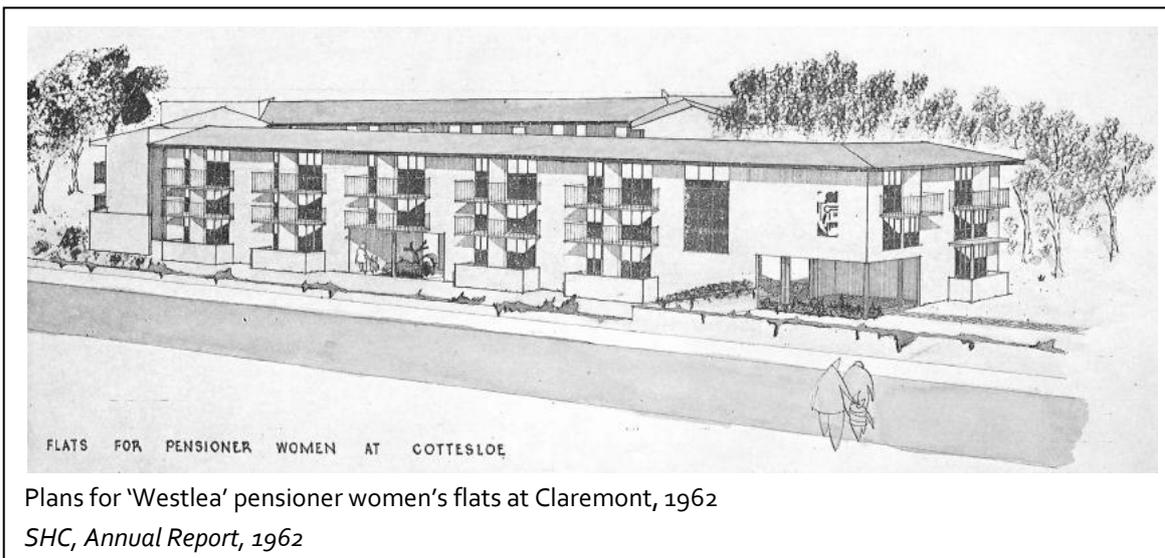
<sup>559</sup> Erickson, Dorothy, 'John Bramston Russell Oldham b.1907 Perth WA' at Design & Art Australia Online, 2011 <http://www.daao.org.au/bio/john-bramston-russell-oldham/biography/>? Accessed 12 June 2014

<sup>560</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1956*

<sup>561</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>562</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1959*

<sup>563</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1962*



Plans for 'Westlea' pensioner women's flats at Claremont, 1962

SHC, *Annual Report*, 1962

By 1960, around 8% of all residential units constructed nationally in the year were flats.<sup>564</sup> Through the decade, more and more flats were built, until in 1969, 41% of the homes under construction were flats.<sup>565</sup> This shift to extensive higher density housing is described in [Section 13.1](#).

*Places remaining in 2014:*

For DOH purposes, 'flats' have communal laundries and 'apartments' have individual laundries.

From the 1944-55 period, DOH retains 53 apartments in seven complexes (South Perth x3, Kensington, Mount Claremont, Fremantle, Maylands) and 303 flats in seven complexes (Como x3, Perth, Subiaco, White Gum Valley, Kensington). This includes the two original 1948 blocks of flats, still in full DOH ownership.

From the 1956-65 period DOH retains 105 apartments in about 20 complexes (some only partially owned by DOH) and 168 flats in seven complexes (Carlisle x2, Como, West Leederville, West Perth, South Perth, Claremont). Most are for aged residents, including Westlea, Southlea and Talbot Lodge. Those for non-aged residents were acquired some time after construction, and where they are earmarked for youth or families they are generally one or two units within a larger non-DOH complex.

All 1944-1965 flats and apartments in DOH ownership are in the Metropolitan area. The earliest non-Metropolitan flats or apartments date from 1969, at Esperance.

<sup>564</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.131

<sup>565</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969

## 12.2 ARMED FORCES HOUSING (1956-1989)

Under the 1956 Act, the SHC began providing housing for serving members of the armed forces. In 1956-57, 79 of these homes were built: 23 for the Army at Mount Yokine, 30 for the Air force at Cloverdale and 26 for the Navy at Fremantle.<sup>566</sup> The Commission was careful to site these homes in areas where they believed homes could be relet in the event that the armed services relocated. The following year, additional homes were built at Mount Claremont, East Fremantle, Willagee and Northam.<sup>567</sup>

Homes continued to be provided by the SHC for Defence personnel into the 1960s. Under the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement Act*, after 30% of the SHC's Commonwealth allocation had been provided to building societies, five per cent of what remained was to be used for Defence housing. The Commonwealth matched this funding, and also provided for additional features and fittings above SHC standard to bring the homes up to standards expected for Defence personnel. Aside from these extra features, the Defence homes were ordinary SHC standard designs located in SHC estates. By June 1965, 355 homes had been provided under this scheme.<sup>568</sup>



Armed Services housing, 1965

*SHC, Annual Report, 1965*

In 1965-66, flats for navy personnel were built at Leeuwin base, East Fremantle ('Tingira Flats').<sup>569</sup>

By the mid-1970s, the Commission had provided 1059 dwellings for the Defence forces, including multi-unit flats at Fremantle. The demand for Defence housing tapered off, with many existing homes vacant, and few new residences were built. In 1974-75, forty Defence homes were transferred to the State as surplus to Defence requirements.<sup>570</sup> As Defence homes were built to higher standards than regular Commission rental properties, this allowed some families to acquire more comfortable accommodation through the Commission. As more and more Defence homes were left vacant, the Commission continued over many years to lobby for their return to State housing stocks. By 1985, the Commission (renamed Homeswest) was renting 582 dwellings to the Defence forces and by 1986 had arranged the transfer of another 55 homes to Homeswest tenants.<sup>571</sup>

<sup>566</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

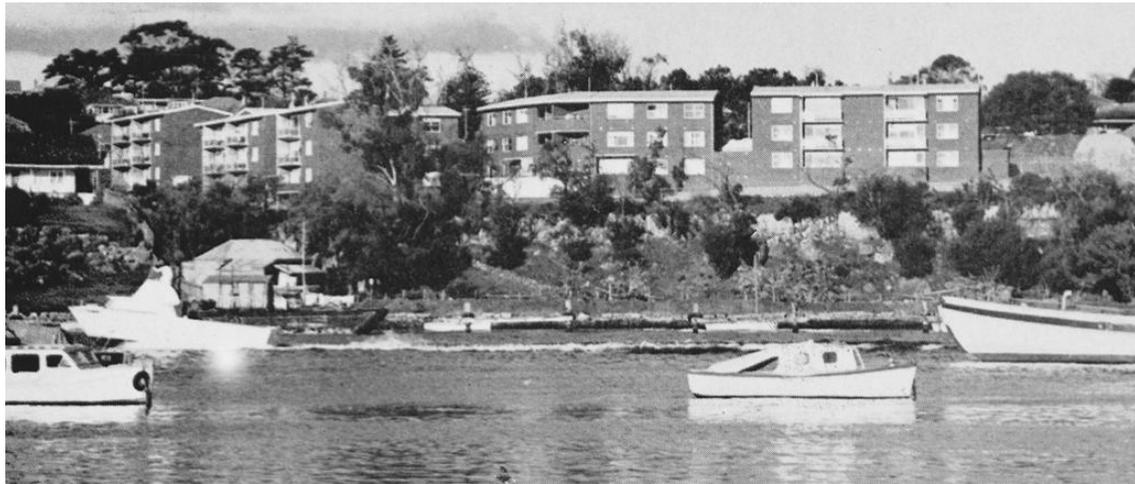
<sup>567</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1958*

<sup>568</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1965*

<sup>569</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>570</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>571</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*



Tingira navy flats, East Fremantle, 1966

*SHC, Annual Report, 1966*

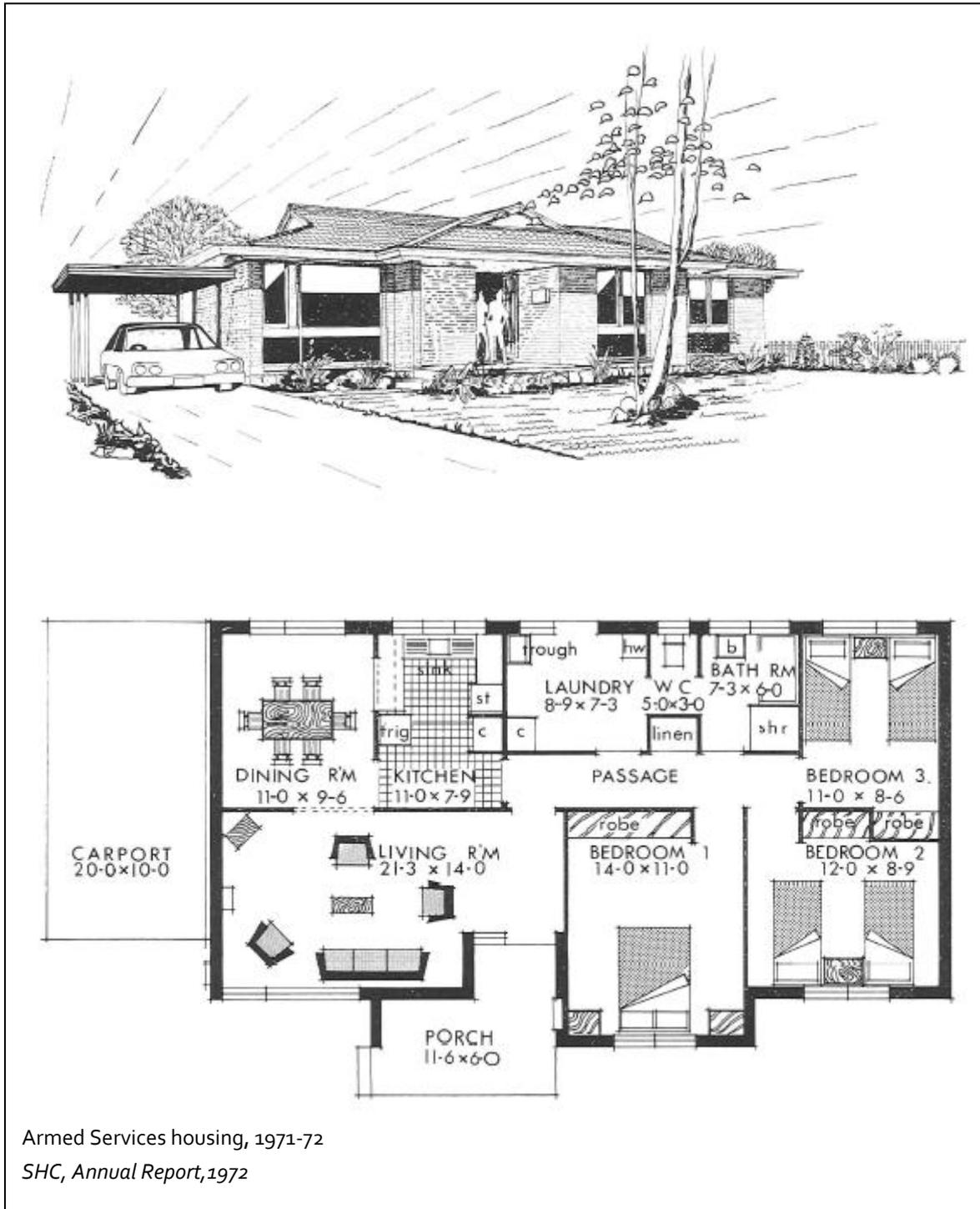
In 1989, the Defence Housing Authority was formed. The Commonwealth and State governments subsequently agreed to equally divide existing defence housing acquired under the 1972 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (Servicemen)* between Commonwealth and State housing authorities. In Western Australia, there were 475 properties involved, of which 240 were returned to Homeswest following valuations. Most of these were in Balga, Coolbellup, Girrawheen, Koongamia and Nollamara, with a smaller number in Swanbourne, Wembley Downs, North Beach, Scarborough and Dianella<sup>572</sup> It appears the Commonwealth retained a larger share of properties in more affluent areas, especially coastal locations. This may be due to the location of Defence bases.



Armed Services housing, 1971-72

*SHC, Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>572</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*



*Places remaining in 2014:*

It is not possible to tell from DOH spreadsheets which of their properties were formerly housing for the armed services. However, it is likely that some of these homes remain, especially in the five suburbs where SHC retained the most service housing (Balga, Coolbellup, Girrawheen, Koongamia and Nollamara).

### 12.3 SHOPS (1950S-1980S)

Under the 1946 *State Housing Act*, the new State Housing Commission was given authority to purchase land for the purpose of shops and either construct the shops themselves or lease the vacant land to private contractors to erect and operate retail facilities to SHC standards. This clause was included in the Act after concerns were raised by local government bodies about the impact of rapid, large housing development in their jurisdictions.<sup>573</sup>

The Commission began construction of shops to service its larger housing estates. Each group comprised a strip of six shops. The first recorded in annual reports were erected at Mosman Park, Belmont, Midvale and Bunbury, with a further two in Bedford Park and South Perth added in 1951-52 and another under construction at Manning Park the same year.<sup>574</sup> However, newspaper reports from 1949 indicate one group of Metropolitan shops was already under construction then and early 1940s plans for Hilton included shops.<sup>575</sup>



SHC Shops, Midvale (above) and Belmont (below), c.1951  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1952, p.16*

<sup>573</sup> *The West Australian*, Wed 16 October 1946, p.10

<sup>574</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1952*

<sup>575</sup> *Daily News*, 30 July 1949, p.27 (location of shops not specified); Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001



SHC Shops, Medina, c.1954

*SHC, Annual Report, 1955*

A nine-shop group was built at Medina in 1953 as part of the establishment of the townsite to support Kwinana. The following year, two shops with residences were planned for Collie.<sup>576</sup>

By 1963, shopping centre sites within SHC estates were being sold at auction rather than being developed by the Commission.<sup>577</sup>

As many housing developments were developed in stages over several years, in 1968-69 the SHC developed designs for transportable shops, to allow some shopping facilities to be erected for the first residents before sufficient houses were built to make permanent shopping facilities economically viable.<sup>578</sup>



Temporary shops at Orelia, 1970

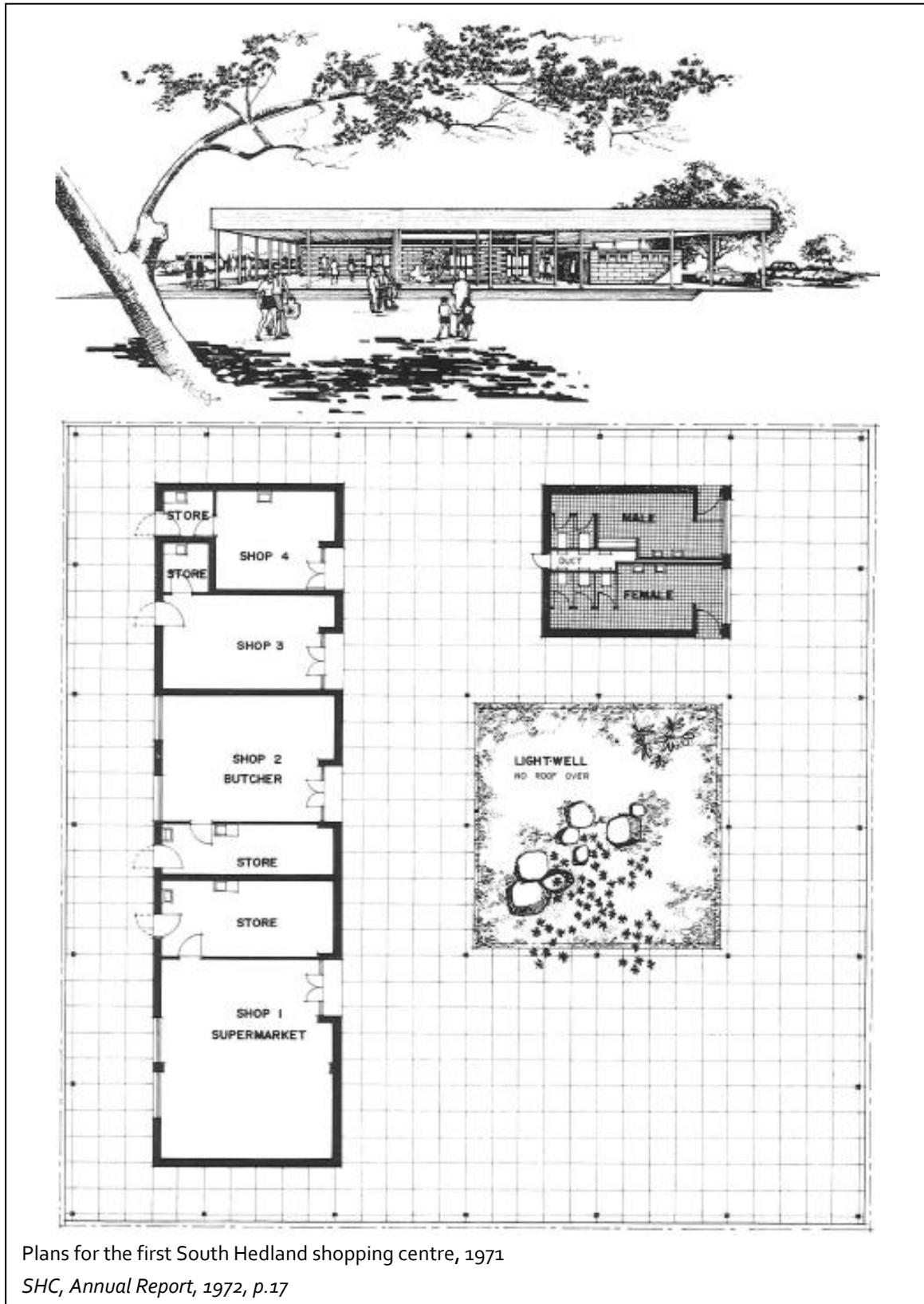
*SHC, Annual Report, 1970, p.15*

<sup>576</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1953*

<sup>577</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1963*

<sup>578</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1969*

Temporary shops continued to be used in new housing developments into the 1970s. By mid 1972, they were sited at Orelia, Balga and Girrawheen.<sup>579</sup>



<sup>579</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1972, quote from p.31

At South Hedland, a Commission home was in use as a shop. There had been no private interest in constructing shops for South Hedland, so the Commission took on planning a shopping complex under a 'large parasol roof', featuring a landscaped central area, with shops to be rented out upon completion.<sup>580</sup> A South Hedland shopping centre was officially opened in October 1972, with plans to extend it soon after.<sup>581</sup>



New South Hedland shopping centre, 1972

*SHC, Annual Report, 1973, p.11*

Transportable shops and a medical-dental centre were erected by SHC in 1972-73 at Lockridge.<sup>582</sup>

It was anticipated in 1972 that a large district centre would soon be needed at Mirrabooka to serve the estimates 150,000 residents in the Nollamara, Balga, Girrawheen and Koondoola SHC areas.<sup>583</sup> Planning approvals were gained in 1973 and the site prepared for 150,000sq ft of retail facilities.<sup>584</sup> However, poor economic conditions halted the development.

The Commission's first major shopping complex was opened at Kwinana in April 1973. It provided 100,000sq ft of retail facilities, including a department store and two major supermarkets. The developer, A.V. Jennings Industries, was granted a 50-year lease of the site along with responsibility for all subletting. Land for other services in Kwinana was also to be offered on 50-year leases (eg fire station, ambulance post, post office, T.A.B., social club, swimming pool, P&C youth club, medical centre, squash centre, trampoline centre, billiards rooms, bank).<sup>585</sup>

Although the Commission had originally discussed selling shopping centre sites in its estates to developers, by the 1970s it was offering them to tender on long leases.<sup>586</sup>

<sup>580</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1972*, quote from p.31

<sup>581</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>582</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>583</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>584</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>585</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>586</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1976*

Construction work for the South Hedland town centre, delayed by economic downturn in the mid-1970s, finally got under way in 1976-77, with several office buildings completed. The expanded shopping centre was to open in August 1977, and was described as a 'giant' complex with 'the biggest Coles New World supermarket in Australia' (4,700sqm) as part of its 7,400sqm retail floor area. All the shops in the new centre had internal entrances from an air-conditioned mall.<sup>587</sup>

The stalled development of a major shopping complex at Mirrabooka, initiated in 1973, restarted in 1977 and was completed in 1978. The \$10million lend-lease development comprised approximately 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floor space.<sup>588</sup>

Commercial and office development at Mirrabooka continued to be an important aspect of the Commission's work into the early 1980s. A government office building was constructed, including space for six government departments and around 200 public servants. Tenders were sought for commercial enterprises such as cinemas, tavern, indoor sports, medical centre, 'health studio' (gym), theatre and restaurants. An artificial lake was developed and landscaped as a central focus for the centre. In the same period, smaller shopping complexes were developed at Langford, Karawara, Koondoola, Girrawheen and Spencer Park Albany.<sup>589</sup>

It is not known when exactly the SHC ceased to build shopping complexes. However, it is likely that the move through the 1980s away from SHC estates towards public housing dispersed through suburbs also saw an end to government involvement in providing shops for new areas.



Extant shops at Kooyong Road, Rivervale, 2014

*Believed to be those constructed by the SHC in 'Belmont', c.1950 (see image at the start of this chapter)*

*Clare Menck, September 2014*

*DOH retains title to shops that are part of its apartment developments at Wandana (Subiaco) and Cockburn Central. Shops within Brownlie Towers (Bentley) are believed to have been demolished within the past year, although some apparently vacant single-storey buildings remained at the complex in September that originally functioned as shops. A deli in Neerabup owned by DOH was sold around 2010.<sup>590</sup>*

<sup>587</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

<sup>588</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1978

<sup>589</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1979

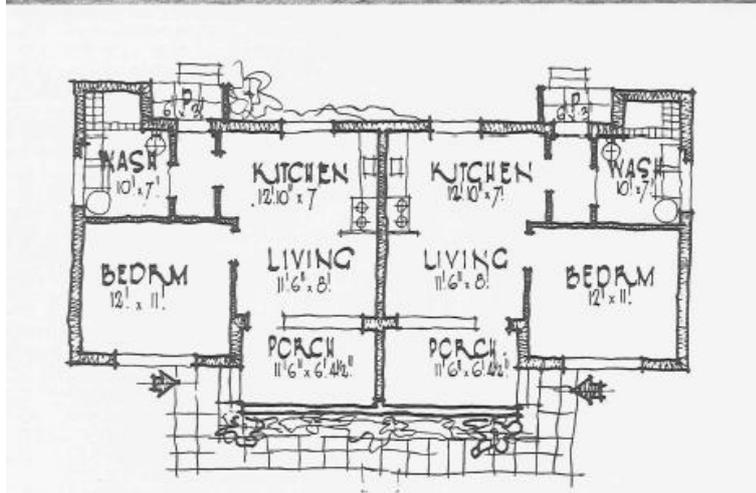
<sup>590</sup> Beth Ferialdi, DOH, email to Clare Menck, 6 November 2014; Clare Menck, site visit to Brownlie Towers, September 2014

## 12.4 HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY (1950S-2014)

The aged pension was introduced in Australia in 1909, for men aged over 65, and from 1910 for women aged over 60, with invalid pensions also introduced in 1910. Pensions were means tested and required recipients to have lived in Australia for 25 years (soon reduced to 20 years). A widows' pension was introduced from 1942.<sup>591</sup> Housing of the elderly, however, remained generally a family matter or, for the frail aged, a medical concern. Some destitute elderly people received support through asylums for the homeless, at the government's Old Men's Home in Claremont and Old Women's Home in Fremantle, or institutions run by charitable organisations.<sup>592</sup> See [Section 15.1 on Homelessness Abatement](#).

Provision of non-institutional government housing for the elderly was until the 1950s made only under the Mc Ness Housing Trust scheme, begun in 1930. It had been recognised for some time in the post war period that the ageing population and increasing number of aged pensioners would require additional housing. Provision for single-bedroom homes and flats for the elderly was made in all new housing developments from at least 1954.<sup>593</sup> Initially these were single-storey homes, often designed as duplexes.

While the SHC did not mention housing for aged tenants in its annual reports until the late 1950s, it is possible that many of its earlier blocks of flats housed elderly residents. In 2014, both DOH's earliest extant apartment blocks, dating from 1948, include units for aged occupants. Wandana, at Subiaco, was constructed in 1953-54 to house couples and small families, without specific mention of housing for the elderly, but in 2014 DOH lists 245 units at Wandana as aged persons accommodation, and it is presumed that many of these units were used for elderly residents from the



1958 standard plan duplex for elderly residents  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1958, p.12*

<sup>591</sup> Department of Social Security, 'History of Pensions and Other Benefits in Australia', June 2009, at ABS <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/8e72c4526a94aaedca2569de00296978!OpenDocument> accessed 12 June 2014

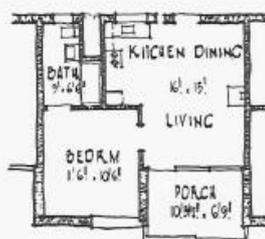
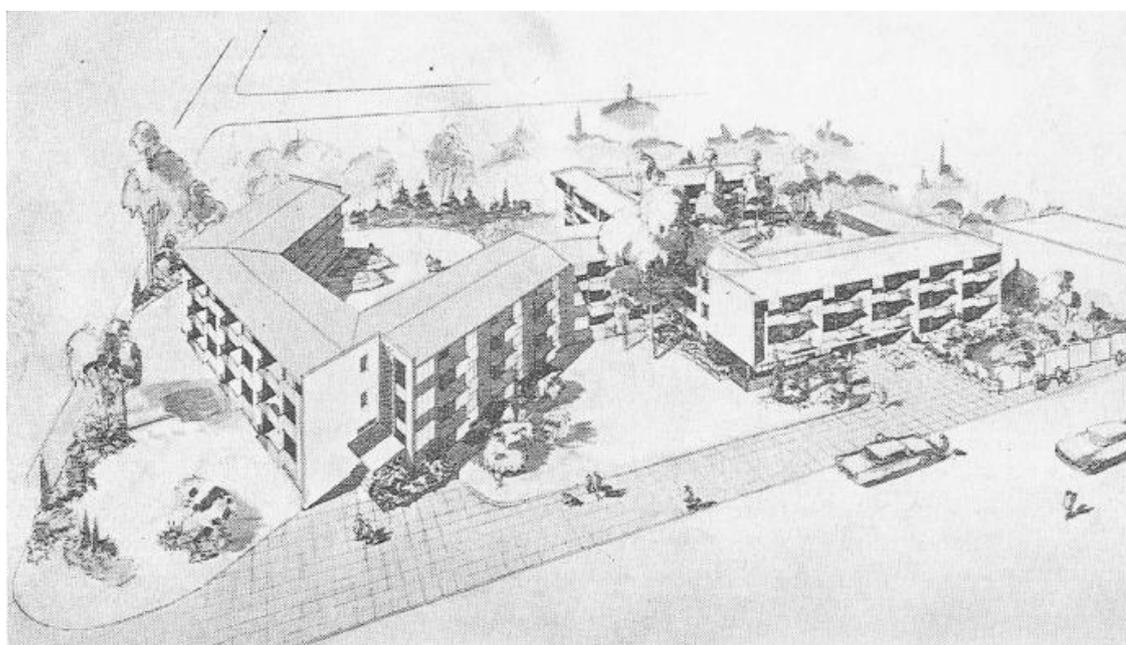
<sup>592</sup> HCWA, Register documentation for P03374 *Sunset Hospital*, September 1997

<sup>593</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1955*

outset. Housing lists of 2014 also list 30 aged persons units constructed in the 1940s, almost all duplexes or single-storey flats, but is likely many of these were McNess homes.<sup>594</sup>

In 1958, a strategy was developed to erect 342 duplexes to provide 684 single-bedroom elderly-persons' units. One standard plan was developed for these units. Each unit comprised a combined bathroom-laundry, one bedroom, and a combined kitchen-lounge. Features included stove units equipped with hot water coils to supply the bathroom and shallow-bottom baths or Roman-style tiled shower recesses. Each duplex was to be built on a level site close to shops, public transport and medical facilities. Metropolitan units were to be brick or brick veneer, and their rent was set at £2. 15s. However, the policy of rental rebates where rent would be too high a percentage of tenants' income meant that a couple living entirely on the aged pension only needed to pay £1 3s. Duplexes were to have a shared front yard and separate rear yards, each with a small shed.<sup>595</sup>

In addition to duplexes, a three-storey block of 70 one-bedroom units for elderly tenants was planned at the corner of Hay and Colin St West Perth, for completion in 1959. As well as the self-contained units, it included 'communal amenity rooms for resident as well as neighbouring pensioners'.<sup>596</sup> The complex was named 'Graham Flats' after Herb Graham, State Minister for Housing 1953-1959, who had been an



Plans for Graham Flats, West Perth, 1958

*SHC, Annual Report, 1958, p.24*

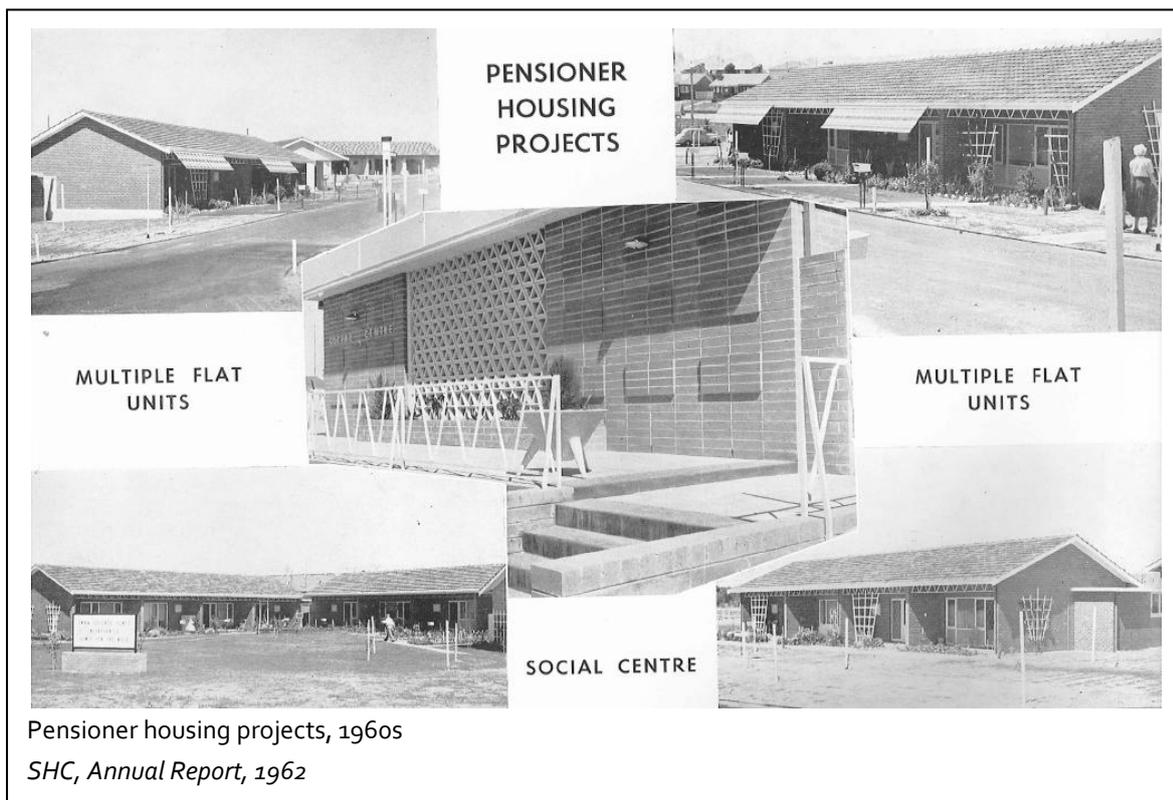
<sup>594</sup> DOH property lists, February 2014

<sup>595</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1958*, quote from p.13

<sup>596</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1958*, quote from p.13

advocate of SHC provision of housing for the elderly. The building was apparently constructed with 75 units. It was sited to be close to the city and public transport, in an area where flats had been established since the 1930s. The complex was landscaped by John Oldham. Despite being designed specifically for aged tenants, with features such as seating in the showers, the upper two levels had only stair access, a cause of immediate complaint not rectified until a lift was installed in 1987. By 1960, the top floor was occupied by regular SHC tenants and only 44 of the units had elderly residents.<sup>597</sup> In 2014, however, all seventy DOH units in the complex are reserved for aged persons.<sup>598</sup>

The move to provide accommodation for the elderly was possible by the late 1950s, as the pressure from workers and industry to house the State's labour force had begun to abate.<sup>599</sup> Graham Flats and most of the 1958-design duplexes were completed by mid-1959.<sup>600</sup>



From the early 1960s, multi-storey developments of single-bed units for elderly pensioner women began to be developed.<sup>601</sup> In 1960-61, 39 widows' flats were constructed by the SHC as 'Southlea' in South Perth under a special scheme. The following year they were transferred to the McNess Housing Trust.<sup>602</sup> The complex, on Hurlingham Drive, was referred to as 'civilian widows' flats'.<sup>603</sup> 'Westlea' followed in 1963, on Stirling Highway in Cottesloe. It was a three-storey block of 73 bedsit units. Each unit comprised living

<sup>597</sup> HCWA (Prue Griffin), Register Documentation for *Po4559 Graham Flats*, March 2001; SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988.

Note: several sources from the time of construction refer to place as having 70 flats but the on-site inspection for the register entry found 75 flats, with no evidence that any were later additions. DOH lists 70 units at Graham Flats in its property lists.

<sup>598</sup> DOH Property lists, February 2014

<sup>599</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.70

<sup>600</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>601</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1962

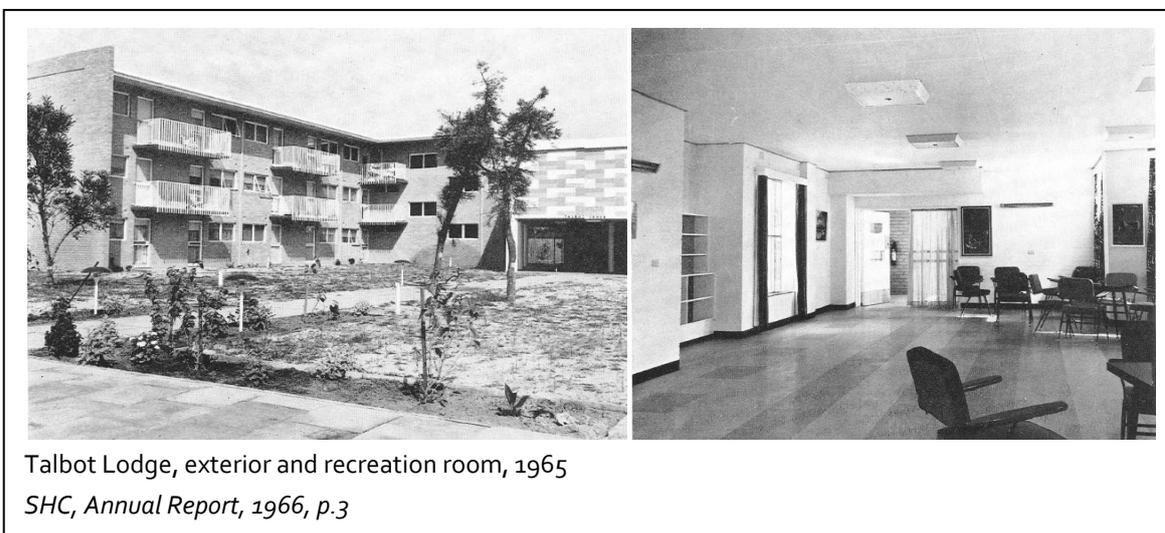
<sup>602</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1961 and 1962

<sup>603</sup> SHC, stapled notes and photographs on several projects, November 1960, SLWA PR9050/153

room, bedroom, kitchenette, dining area, foyer and balcony, with a communal lounge and laundry block also provided. Westlea was funded jointly by the Lotteries Commission and a State Government grant and completed in 1963. It was also used for McNess housing.<sup>604</sup>

The Commonwealth *Aged Persons Homes Act* of 1954 legislated funding support for institutional aged care. Initially this was mostly hostels for those without family to care for them. In 1963, a 'nursing home benefit' was introduced to facilitate development of nursing homes, providing substantial nursing care rather than just rooms and meals. Within five years the number of nursing homes across Australia increased 48%, especially after the funding provided by the 1954 Act was extended to nursing homes in 1966.<sup>605</sup> The 1960s changes encouraged private agencies to take up provision of aged care. As a result, many church and charitable agencies secured funds to this end, and the SHC provided assistance to them in establishing aged care services.<sup>606</sup> In 1964-65, 97 housing units and amenities buildings were erected, bringing the total constructed 'in recent years' to 424.<sup>607</sup> By June 1968, 642 units had been constructed.<sup>608</sup>

In 1964-65, a three-storey block of units for elderly pensioner women was erected in Carlisle, to house 77 women. It was named Talbot Lodge, after long-time women's advocate Mabel Talbot.<sup>609</sup>



Talbot Lodge, exterior and recreation room, 1965  
SHC, *Annual Report*, 1966, p.3

The number of aged single women applying for housing far outstripped the units available. At 30 June 1965, the Commission held 1,466 applications from eligible female applicants waiting for accommodation, with only one vacancy coming up at the Commissions existing aged care flats in the preceding year.<sup>610</sup> The first three blocks of flats for single women erected in the mid-1960s had all been partly financed by the Lotteries Commission but from 1967 Lotteries funding was no longer available for this sort of project.<sup>611</sup> Meanwhile, 1,059 'cottage flats' for elderly couples had been completed since 1958 and another 253 were under construction.<sup>612</sup>

<sup>604</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1963, 1964

<sup>605</sup> Legislative Research Service, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 'Nursing Homes and Hostels Legislation Amendment Bill 1986: Digest of Bill', 86/147, November 1986, pp.1-2, <http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/bd/1986/1986bd147.pdf>

<sup>606</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1964

<sup>607</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

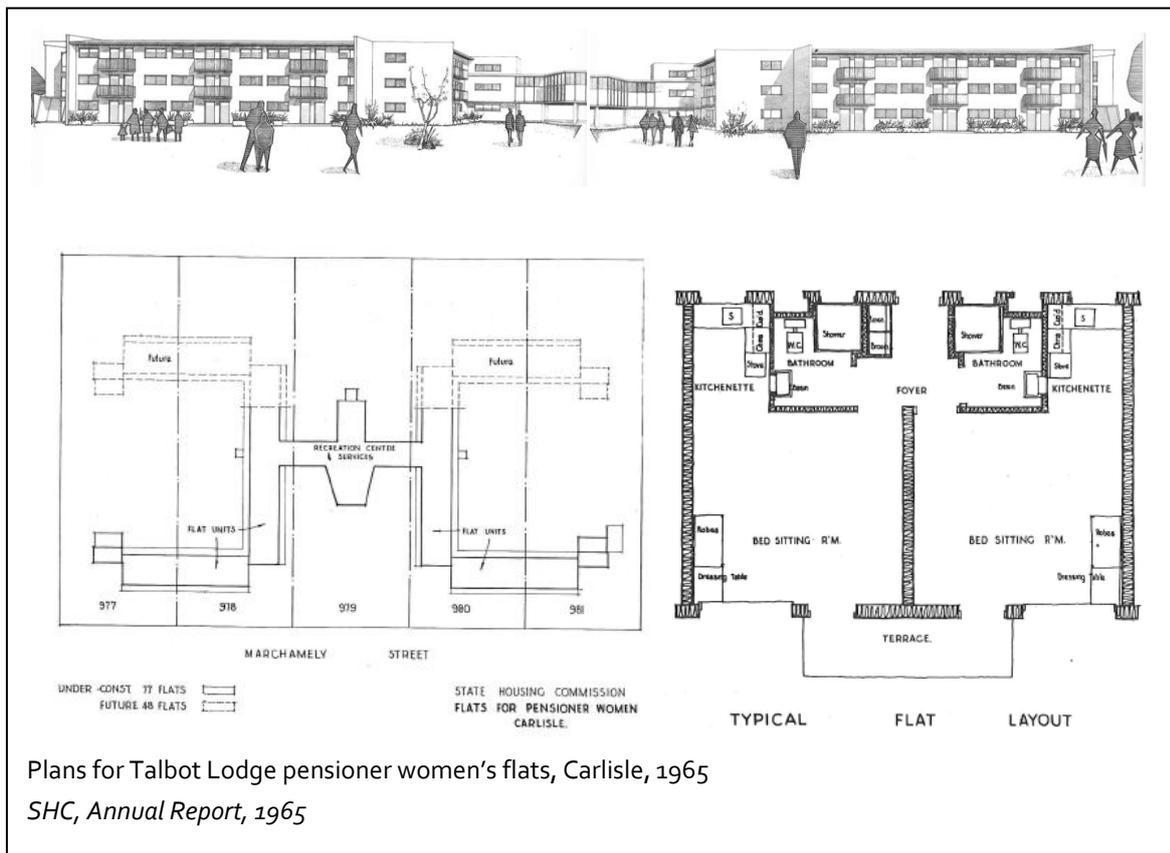
<sup>608</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>609</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

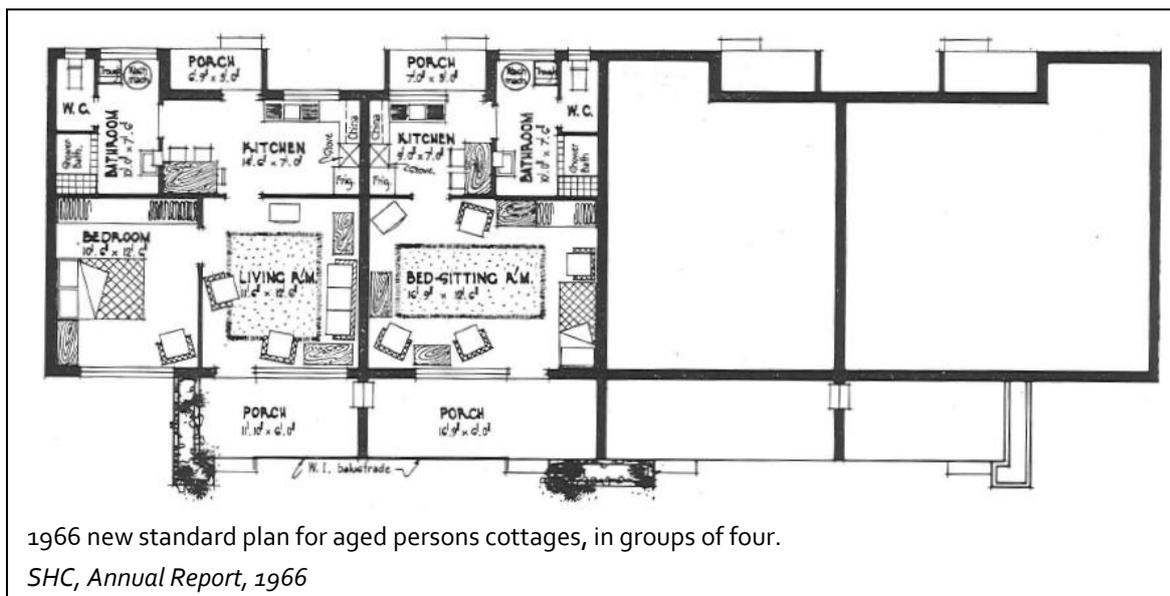
<sup>610</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965

<sup>611</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967

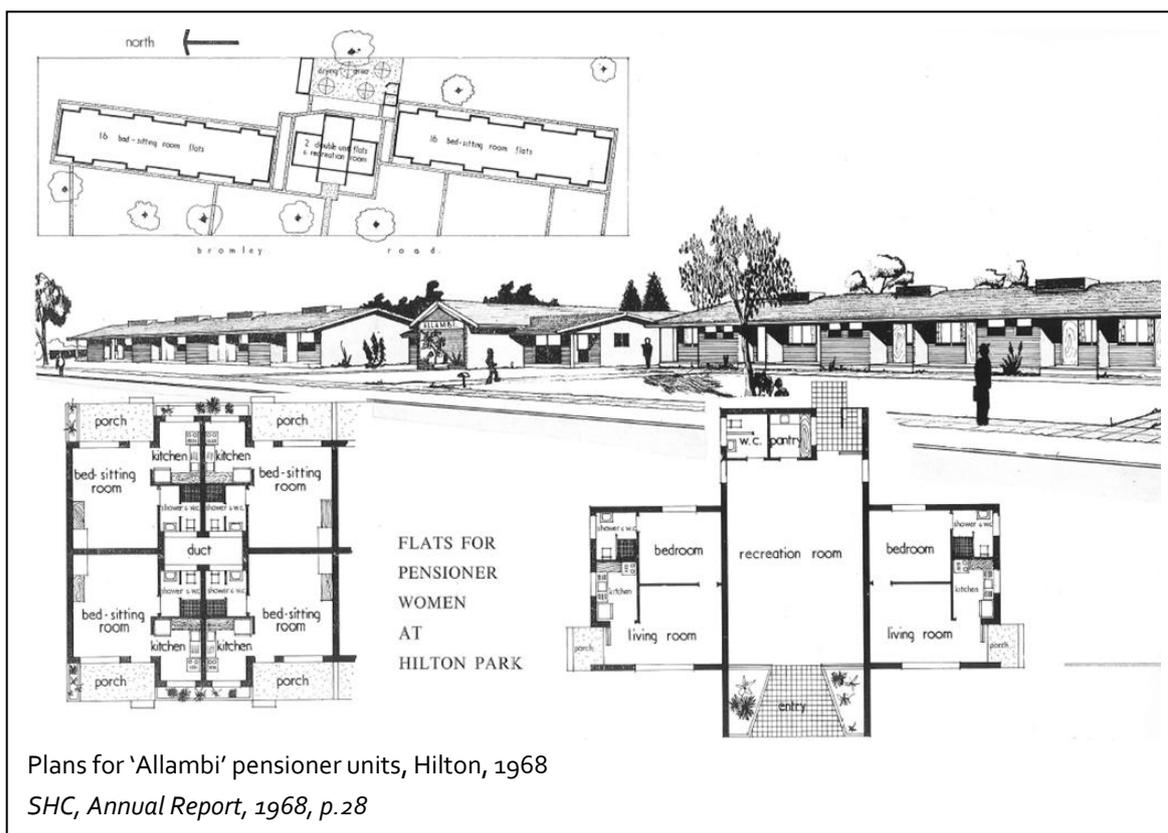
<sup>612</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1965



By June 1966, 511 duplex units for aged couples had been completed using the 1958 standard plan. This plan included a Roman bath recess to allow for seated showering, hot water to the whole house from a wood stove, and hand rails at the steps. A further 50 units for aged couples were incorporated at Graham Flats. From 1966, a new design was initiated that incorporated four units, two for single persons and two for couples. These were to be particularly used in country areas where there was a demand for accommodation for elderly single women.<sup>613</sup>



<sup>613</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1966



Plans for 'Allambi' pensioner units, Hilton, 1968

*SHC, Annual Report, 1968, p.28*

The SHC began erecting larger groups of single-storey units for elderly women. 'Allambi', a 1968 complex of 34 units at Hilton, was showcased in annual reports for two years to demonstrate this approach, but it is likely others were also built.<sup>614</sup>

The 1968 SHC annual report displayed SHC plans for a 32-unit frail aged hostel in Busselton, 'Villa Maria'.<sup>615</sup> This appears to be the first SHC venture into frail aged care, but as it was designed for an external not-for-profit agency it is possible other such designs were completed and not mentioned.

Housing for the aged into the 1970s attempted to see them located within communities to which they could actively contribute 'the role of good neighbour and wise counsellor' out of their 'greater leisure and greater freedom from family cares'. Accommodation for the aged was designed with 'fitments which simplify housework' and care taken to avoid the risk of accidents.<sup>616</sup> By 1971, eight per cent of the State's population was aged pensioners, the majority women.<sup>617</sup>

In the early 1970s, the Commonwealth provided a grant of \$1,750,000 over five years specifically for the housing of single aged pensioners.<sup>618</sup> The funding was largely used by June 1973, by which time accommodation for 222 pensioners had been provided.<sup>619</sup> A further 59 units were completed the following year, at which point the scheme was wound up, having provided 281 homes.<sup>620</sup>

<sup>614</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1968 and 1969*

<sup>615</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1968*

<sup>616</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971, p.10*

<sup>617</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971*

<sup>618</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971*

<sup>619</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>620</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*



'Cottage homes' for the aged, Coolbellup, 1971

*SHC, Annual Report, 1971, p.33*

Up to 1971, the Commission's provisions for aged pensioners were aimed at accommodating couples and single women. After this time, it increasingly also catered for aged single men.<sup>621</sup> By 1974, the Commonwealth *Aged Persons Homes Act* was providing \$2 for every \$1 spent by charitable, church and community groups on aged care accommodation. The original SHC policy of providing large groups of aged accommodation together had moved by 1974 to interspersing accommodation for the elderly throughout new housing estates under the 'housing blend scheme', including allowing them to take up one-bedroom and bedsit units within general medium density developments.<sup>622</sup>

As life expectancy increased, the need to provide housing for the aged became more pressing. After the initial five-year Commonwealth grant for aged care expired in 1974, a further three years of funding at \$700,000 per annum was approved.<sup>623</sup> It appears this second round of funding was focussed on country areas, where few aged care units had been built in the 1971-74 funding round.<sup>624</sup> In addition, the matching grant for charitable organisations providing aged care facilities was raised from \$2 to \$4 for every \$1 spent.<sup>625</sup>

The Henderson Report into poverty in Australia in 1975 identified 8-9% of Australia's aged population, defined as those over 65 or unmarried women over 60, living in hospitals, nursing homes, hostels and boarding houses, of whom some were 'too poor for a poverty line to have much meaning in their case' having 'hand[ed] over their entire incomes for somewhat less than the bare necessities of life'.<sup>626</sup> Of the remaining elderly population, around 24% were identified as very poor before housing costs were factored in, but high levels of home ownership meant many had low housing costs and subsequently the number of very poor aged persons outside institutional care was nearer to 8%. The safety net of the aged pension kept many from poverty, although it was a small income. Nationally, around 5% of the aged population lived in government rental housing. Most aged persons desired to remain as long as possible

<sup>621</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

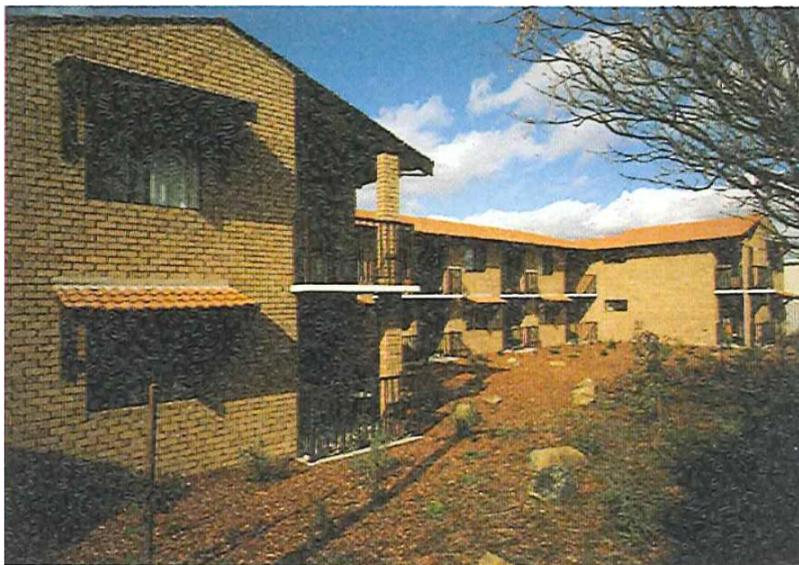
<sup>622</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>623</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>624</sup> DOH Property lists, February 2014

<sup>625</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>626</sup> Henderson, Ronald F., *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty: Poverty in Australia: First Main Report, Volume 1*, Australian Government Publishing service, Canberra, 1975, pp.239-40



Aged persons units built at North Perth, 1977

*SHC, Annual Report, 1978,*

in their own home and a large percentage of single aged persons in need of assistance lived with their adult children rather than in institutional care. There was insufficient institutional accommodation available and much of it of poor quality and/or located away from neighbourhoods where residents had formerly lived. A lack of support for family-based care led to recommendations for granny flat approvals.<sup>627</sup>

The Commonwealth periodically injected funds directly into pensioner housing, such as \$30million advanced nationally in 1979. However, this money was taken from the general public housing budget such that the increase in housing for the elderly meant less housing for the wider public housing population.<sup>628</sup>

From around 1980, bedsit units were no longer constructed for aged persons, with single applicants and couples both being offered one-bedroom self-contained units. These were generally preferred by single applicants, and also gave housing allocation officers more flexibility in allocating units.<sup>629</sup>

In the early 1980s, more than half the Metropolitan SHC homes were built for elderly occupants, with the remainder being mostly three-bedroom houses or two-bedroom duplexes. Very rarely did the Commission provide universal access to aged persons' units, as it was not believed the expense of a ramp was warranted when only a small number of homes would be accessed. A multi-storey complex of 61 units in Mount Lawley, constructed in 1981, was an exception, having ramp access to upper floors.<sup>630</sup>

From July 1980, the Commission began undertaking joint projects with non-profit and charitable organisations for the provision of pensioner accommodation. This scheme went beyond the previous arrangements, where the Commission had provided design and supervision expertise, to a joint funding arrangement. The first such joint venture was with the Grand Lodge of Freemasons, providing 61 units at Mount Lawley. The Commission funded three units for every two funded by the Grand Lodge, to regular Commission standards, with the Grand Lodge at liberty to provide additional fixtures and fittings as it desired. The housing allowed for on-site care and transition to hostel or nursing home care as required. Smaller projects were also completed at Bayswater and Esperance in 1982.<sup>631</sup>

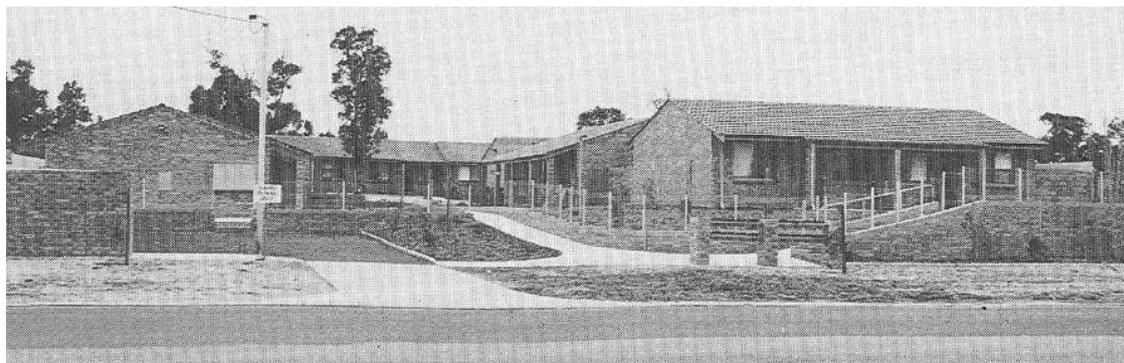
<sup>627</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.239-53

<sup>628</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.185

<sup>629</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1980

<sup>630</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1981

<sup>631</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1982



Aged care units, Balga, 1983-84

*SHC, Annual Report, 1984, p.3*

Joint venture projects for aged persons' housing generally worked by the venture partner providing land and SHC, by then trading as Homeswest, providing architectural services and finance. Once complete, a pre-agreed percentage of housing units were allocated to Homeswest tenants with the remainder to be privately let by venture partner, who became the ongoing managing body.<sup>632</sup>

By the mid-1980s, Homeswest was contributing substantially to the construction of aged care accommodation, both independently and through joint ventures with charitable institutions. In 1986-86, Homeswest either personally designed and built, or provided architectural supervision and funding for, 412 housing units for elderly persons.<sup>633</sup>

Aged care units were modified for disabled tenants following Homeswest's 1986 disability housing policy.<sup>634</sup> See *Section 15.2*.

In addition to joint venture aged care projects, Homeswest continued to build its own housing for the elderly, including 307 units constructed in 1986-87. Most of these were small complexes of three to five units. Some larger groups included Whatley Crescent Maylands (22 aged persons' units, 19 townhouses), Stevens Street Fremantle (23 aged persons' units, 29 townhouses), Harvest Road Fremantle (12 aged persons' units, 8 townhouses) and Marine Terrace Fremantle (48 aged persons' units amongst 'family



Aged care units at Wilson, mid-1980s

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1986, p.25*

<sup>632</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

<sup>633</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>634</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

townhouses and luxury units'). From 1986-87, two-bedroom units were also built for elderly clients, catering for couples where one partner required particular medical care. Increasingly, separate rear yards were provided to encourage tenants' 'feeling of individuality'. All housing intended for elderly clients was located close to public transport, shops and health care facilities.<sup>635</sup>

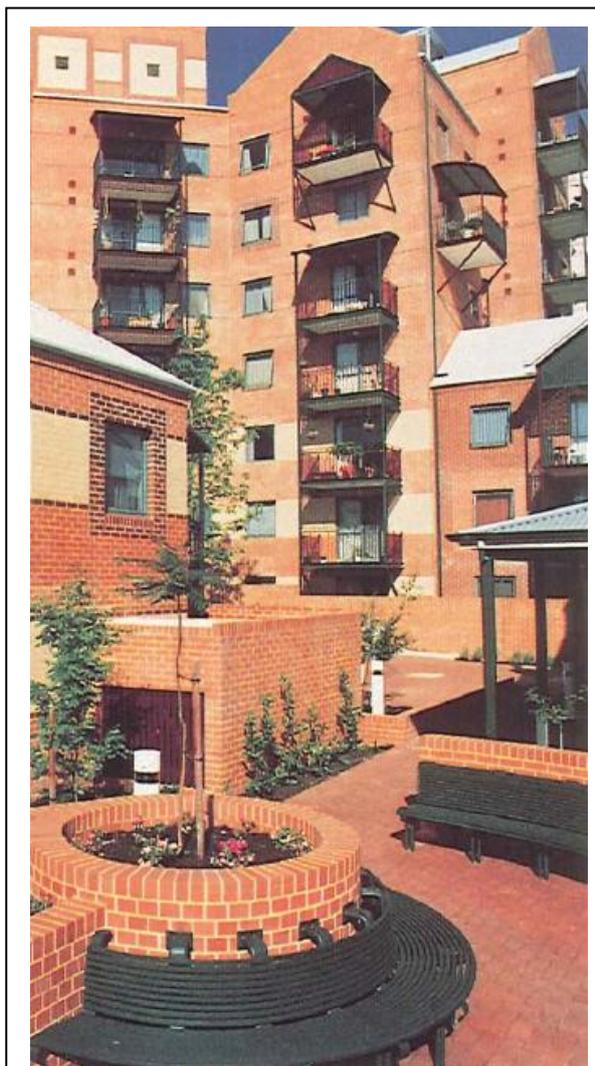
In 1987-88, Westlea apartments were converted from bedsit to one-bedroom units for elderly tenants.<sup>636</sup>

Homeswest began designing 'frail aged hostels' in the 1980s. By 1988, Homeswest-designed hostels had been erected at Narembeen, Wongan Hills, Southern Cross, Donnybrook, Wagin and Moora.<sup>637</sup>

Housing for the aged continued to be a substantial percentage of Homeswest's building and purchase program to the end of the decade. Joint ventures provided many of the aged care units constructed. However, by 1989 over a third of the agency's regular building and purchase program for rental properties was to provide housing for elderly clients.<sup>638</sup>

From 1991, Homeswest began construction on a 105-unit high rise complex for seniors, 'Ray Healy Towers', in East Perth.<sup>639</sup> The complex won a WA Civil Design award.<sup>640</sup> This appears to have been the first true high rise building erected by the Department since Brownlie Towers in 1969-70, and marked a return to high rise as a social housing option.

In February 1992, Homeswest launched 'WiseChoice', a scheme to build 'modern, low-maintenance homes for purchase by seniors'. By June 1992, plans had been submitted for 218 units.<sup>641</sup> A year later, 336 homes had either been built or were under construction.<sup>642</sup> The scheme proved very popular and by June 1994 there were 3,000 names on the waiting list for these over-55s 'villas' with 'a range of low-maintenance, easy-to-use features'.<sup>643</sup> The WiseChoice program slowed towards the end of the 1990s. In 1997-98, no new projects were commenced and 29 homes were completed



Ray Healy Towers, seniors complex, East Perth  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1994*

<sup>635</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987, quotes from p.31

<sup>636</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>637</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>638</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>639</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>640</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

<sup>641</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>642</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>643</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994, quote from p.25



Elizabeth Gardens, Bunbury, completed early 1990s – first country 'WiseChoice' development  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

and sold. As the real estate market was slow and private sector developers had moved into the market to provide appropriate seniors housing, there were no new projects planned for the following year either.<sup>644</sup>

In 1997-98, Homeswest teamed with the Australian Pensioners' League to provide joint-venture housing, mostly in small country towns. In 1997-98, this scheme began construction of housing units at Hyden, Kondinin, Lake King-Newdegate, Pingelly, Williams, Cowaramup, Dalwallinu-Kalannie, Goomalling, Koorda, Trayning, Wongan Hills, Mullewa and Perenjori, as well as Balcatta, Bentley and Gosnells.<sup>645</sup>

A New Aged Persons Unit Design Brief was introduced in June 1999, as part of the Ministry of Housing's participation in the State Government's five-year plan 'Time On Our Side, 1998-2003', addressing twelve priority areas in response to the State's ageing population. New seniors designs included units with no steps, paving right up to external doors, lowered front door thresholds, elimination of trip hazards throughout, larger bathrooms, sloped gradient rather than step-in shower recesses, no floor-level power points, rounded bench-top corners and wider than standard doors and passageways, all either safety or access features. Twenty one units at Tuart Hill (10), Bentley (7) and Mandurah (4) were completed under these guidelines by mid-2000, and all were opened for public display before being occupied.<sup>646</sup> An 'Ageing in Place' policy was followed, attempting to support elderly clients to remain in their own homes as long as possible.<sup>647</sup>

In 2008-09, the Housing Authority implemented policy to provide free rent for tenants over 100 years old.<sup>648</sup>

<sup>644</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>645</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>646</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*; SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>647</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

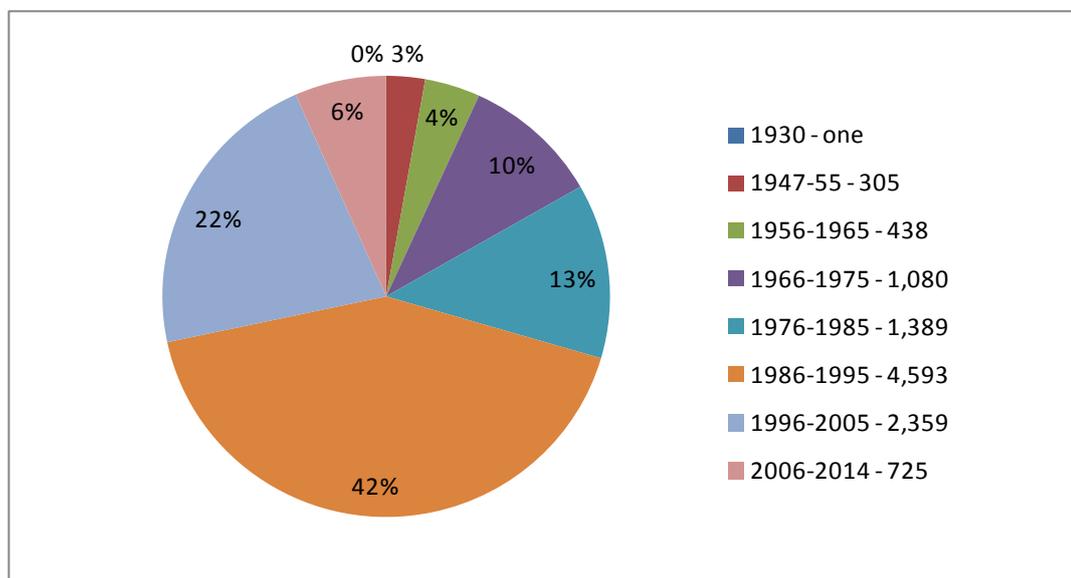
<sup>648</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2009*

A study in 2008 found that elderly tenants in public housing were substantially better off than those living on the aged pension in private rentals. In addition to paying less rent, public housing tenants' rent was not likely to suddenly increase and they had security of tenure, which greatly reduced housing stress and contributed to better overall health and social engagement. However, trends in both housing policy and population suggest the number of aged pensioners in private rentals will increase exponentially in the coming years, as public housing suitable for elderly residents is not being funded in proportion to the increasing aged population.<sup>649</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

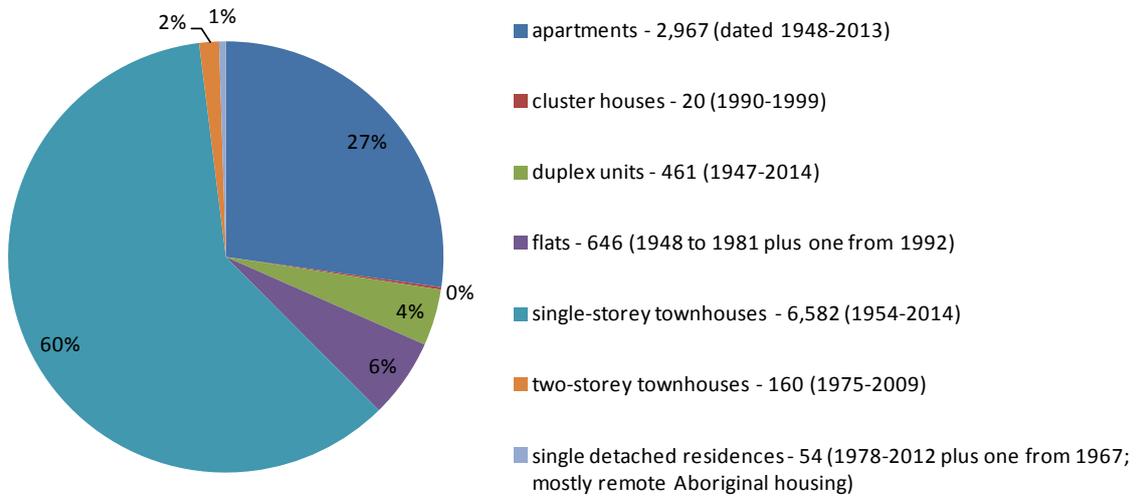
At 31 May 2014, DOH retained 10,890 housing units designated for aged persons or seniors, including both those built by the department and those acquired later. This figure does not include community housing stocks, as records of dwelling use for community housing are incomplete.

The 10,890 units divide chronologically as follows:



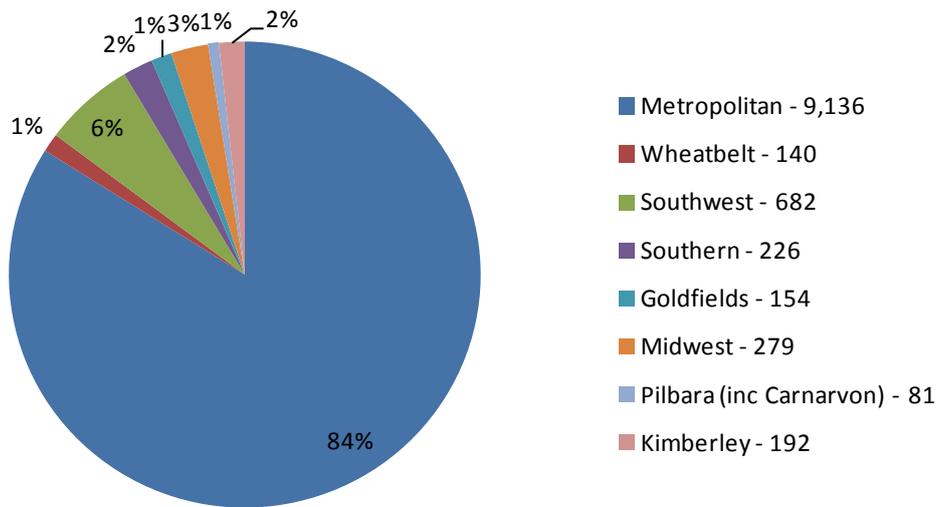
<sup>649</sup> Morris, Alan, 'Contentment and suffering: the impact of Australia's housing policy and tenure on older Australians', in *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 22 June 2009 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Contentment+and+suffering%3A+the+impact+of+Australia%27s+housing+policy...-a0222487683>

Aged persons units divide by housing type as follows:



Single storey townhouses comprise 60.5% and combined flats and apartments comprise 33%.

Aged persons housing divides by region as follows:



The Metropolitan area accounts for 84% of all DOH aged persons housing, Country areas for 13.5% and the Northwest for 2.5%.

Early blocks of flats mentioned above:

Graham Flats, Westlea, Southlea and Talbot Lodge all remain extant in 2014. Graham Flats is on the State Register of Heritage Places (P04559).

1958-59 duplexes:

In 2014, DOH retains 74 aged persons duplex units (37 duplexes) constructed in 1958 or 1959. It is possible some of the 19 singles or family duplex units from the period were also originally constructed as aged persons' housing. Twenty-six of the 74 duplex units are in country areas (Albany, Geraldton, Bunbury, Collie, Cunderdin, Harvey, Waroona, York).

## 1970s Commonwealth grant money:

DOH retains 263 aged persons' units constructed between 1971 and 1974. Most are flats or apartments, with some single storey townhouses or duplexes. All but ten (two groups, at Wonthella and Merredin) are in the Metropolitan area.

DOH retains 285 aged care units dating from 1975 to 1977. Of these, 105 are in country areas, in 19 towns.

## Other places mentioned above:

'Villa Maria' frail aged hostel, Busselton Extant, owned by Cape Care. Covered walkways to link buildings originally separate, but retains its original plan

'Allambi', Hilton Eighteen units in DOH ownership

Freemasons early 1980s projects No early 1980s DOH aged persons units remain at Mount Lawley; Fifteen units at Esperance (1981) are operated as community housing by the Freemasons.

Freemasons also operate community housing constructed between 1980 and 1984 at Orelia, Spencer Park (Albany), West Lamington (Kalgoorlie) and South Bunbury.

1986-87 aged housing projects None of the listed Fremantle projects remain in DOH ownership. Thirteen townhouses at Mount Lawley, listed as 1989, may be the units mentioned in 1987.

'Ray Healy Towers', East Perth All 105 units retained by DOH. A mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments, all earmarked for aged persons.

1999 design brief DOH retains the first complexes at Bentley (1999), Tuart Hill (2000) and Mandurah (1999).

## Australian Pensioners' League country housing:

DOH retains groups of Community Housing residences from the late 1990s in several country towns, but as Community Housing data is incomplete it is not possible to determine which are used for aged persons. The Australian Pensioners' League is no longer a Community Housing provider.

### 13 HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING ESTATES (1960S-1970S)

The Commission's stated aims by 1968 were to provide, 'within the limit of funds able to be made available by the Government', housing for rental or purchase by families of low and moderate incomes, and housing for the aged, 'distressed families of limited income', defence forces and, in special circumstances, workers in new industries.<sup>650</sup>

From the late 1960s, the SHC largely sought to meet these aims through development of higher density housing, as outlined in [Section 13.1](#).

In 1965-66, as the mining industry established centres in the Pilbara, much labour headed north, leaving the SHC struggling to find qualified contractors to undertake work, especially in regional areas. As a result, the Commission began investigating 'modular homes' for rapid erection on remote sites. The first such homes were trialled in 1966-67.<sup>651</sup> Fifty timber-framed three-bedroom transportable homes were subsequently successfully completed and erected across the State in 1967-68. The approach was deemed a success, especially as labour continued to be in short supply in southern regions, and fifty more homes were ordered for the following year. In addition to regular SHC residences, transportable homes were used for regional government housing.<sup>652</sup> After two years of installing transportable homes, however, complaints were received that they lacked variety. Subsequently the third order of fifty homes specified that there should be not more than ten of any one design, variety of shape including L-shaped and 'three elevational type' was required, and roofs should have a variety of tile colours rather than the 'uniformity and duller colours' of flat-pitched iron, asbestos or aluminium roofs.<sup>653</sup>



Transportable homes in transit (top) and in place at Quairading (below)

*SHC, Annual Report, 1967*

<sup>650</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1968*

<sup>651</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>652</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1968*

<sup>653</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1969*



In 1966, private architects were invited to submit designs for 'patio and terrace housing'. It was planned to build these semi-detached one- and two-storey homes with small private front and rear yards as well as a communal outdoor area.<sup>654</sup> 'Patio housing' generally refers to grouped homes that share at least one party wall. Often single storey, they at times had private patios but shared communal garden areas, or very small rear yards almost entirely covered by the patio. Patio homes were generally designed in groups of two to four residences, sometimes also referred to in North America as 'cluster homes'. The design emerged in the 1960s in North America.<sup>655</sup>

A survey in 1967-68 of over 1,000 applicants for housing assistance found that 65.4% were aged 21-35, and over 80% had made no attempt to obtain finances for housing other than to apply to the SHC. The Commission felt more must be done to educate and support young people in saving for a home deposit.<sup>656</sup> An advisory bureau was subsequently established, which assisted many people into home ownership and away from public housing waiting lists.

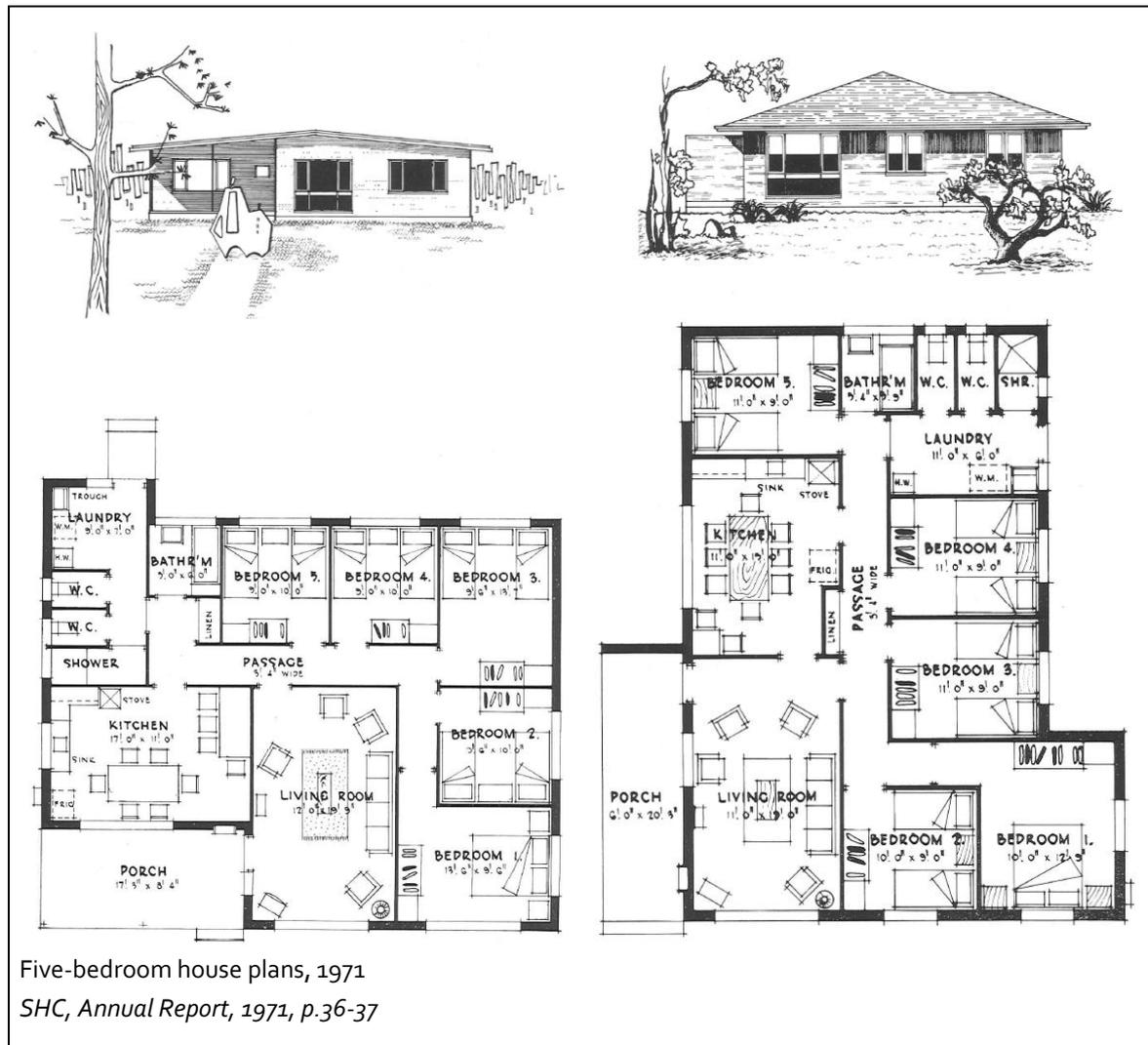


Sketches (above) and plans for two-storey duplex and townhouses, 1967  
 SHC, Annual Report, 1967, p.59

<sup>654</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1966

<sup>655</sup> [http://phoenix.about.com/od/homesandrentals/ss/hometypes\\_6.htm](http://phoenix.about.com/od/homesandrentals/ss/hometypes_6.htm) ;  
[http://www.ehow.com/about\\_6623940\\_definition-patio-home.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_6623940_definition-patio-home.html) ;  
<http://www.denverhomevalue.com/lifestyles/denver-map-search-cluster-and-patio-homes.html>  
 accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>656</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1968



Five-bedroom house plans, 1971  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1971, p.36-37*

By the late 1960s, around 2,500 applicants were receiving rental accommodation each year. Around 10,000 applications for rental and purchase accommodation were received each year, of which up to 4,000 lapsed prior to being taken up.<sup>657</sup>

Three-bedroom homes had become the norm for families by the 1970s, as it was no longer considered appropriate to plan homes where children of opposite genders would be required to share a bedroom. Four-bedroom homes were also regularly being constructed.<sup>658</sup> Changes to family sizes and housing expectations are evident in the designs of the early 1970s, when the SHC designed several five-bedroom standard plans, with each bedroom sized for two single beds, kitchen/dining areas allowing room to seat ten, two toilets, but only one bathroom.<sup>659</sup> By the end of the 1960s, standard designs were progressively having open brick fireplaces replaced with gas or electrical heaters.<sup>660</sup>

The SHC designed a 'chalet' to be erected in the rear yard of Commission houses where very large families were to be accommodated. At the outset, only the local authority at Kwinana allowed these

<sup>657</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1968*

<sup>658</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>659</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971*

<sup>660</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1969*

chalets to be erected, with the first two installed in 1970. The units were intended for removal when no longer required.<sup>661</sup>

A prototype group of homes using brick veneer on concrete raft floors was erected at Geraldton in 1969-70. It was considered successful and further homes of this sort were planned for Geraldton and Esperance.<sup>662</sup>

In 1969-70, 'a different approach to tenants was adopted' that saw the removal of the front fences from 625 rental properties in the year.

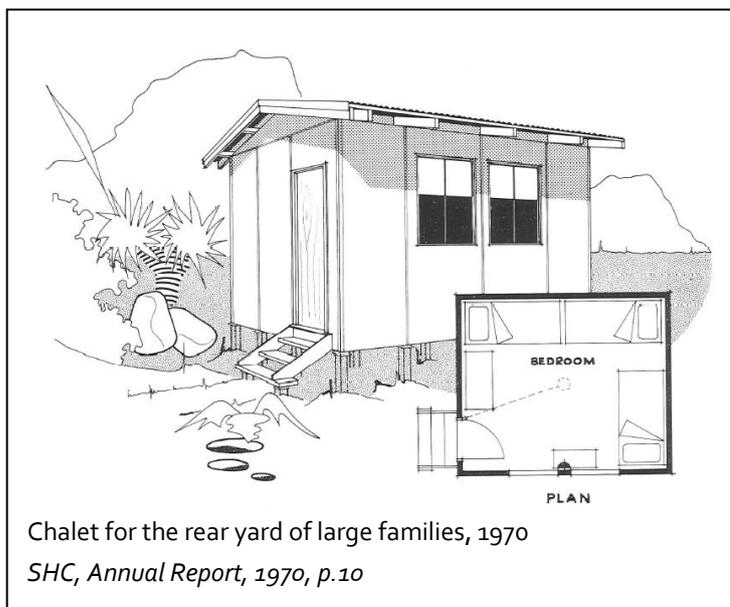
This reduced the Commission's maintenance costs, as did moving from oil-based to acrylic paints for asbestos-clad houses. Brick veneer, still the material of preference for SHC homes, was also less costly to maintain.<sup>663</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, SHC provided buildings for GEHA, local shires, Department of Native Welfare, Department of Agriculture, Medical Department, PWD, Department of the Interior, Postmaster General's Department (PMG) and R&I Bank, in addition to its own building programs.<sup>664</sup>

From 1972, brick veneer group homes in the Metropolitan area had improved window designs and a roof pitch lowered to 18 degrees for tiled roofs.<sup>665</sup> The Commission also considered new housing designs to include courtyards for indoor-outdoor living and addition of a family room.<sup>666</sup>

High unemployment in the early 1970s resulted in several government job-creation schemes. A grant of \$50,000 was made to the SHC in 1971-72 for the hire of day labourers, allowing for an additional 39 tradesmen to be employed. High unemployment also meant a greater number of SHC tenants required rental rebates. Surprisingly, it did not appear to mean a sudden increase in applications for housing assistance, possibly because those most severely impacted by unemployment were already SHC clients.

The Commission attempted to make allowances for arrears payments where clients became unemployed and struggled to meet their obligations.<sup>667</sup> Recession conditions continued to the end of 1972, resulting in many SHC houses in regional areas being vacated on account of lack of work in these areas.<sup>668</sup> The 'long boom' Australia had experienced through the 1950s and 1960s was coming to an end.<sup>669</sup>



Chalet for the rear yard of large families, 1970  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1970, p.10*

<sup>661</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>662</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>663</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>664</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

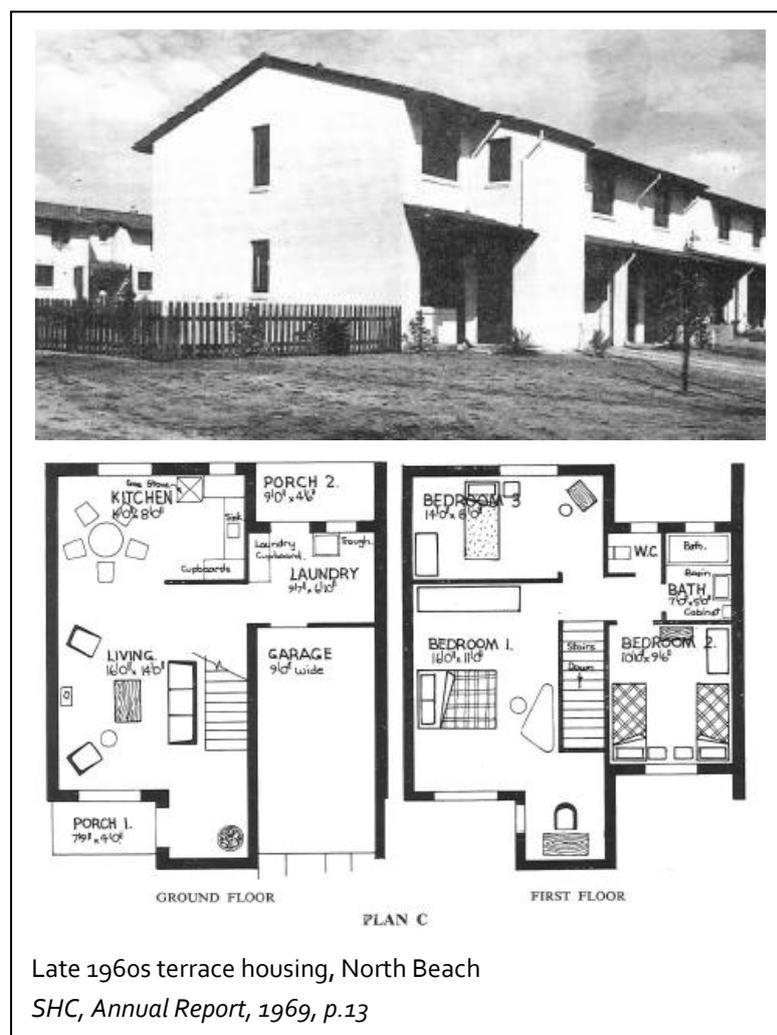
<sup>665</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>666</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*, quote from p.6

<sup>667</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>668</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>669</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation, 2010, p.27*



By the 1970s, SHC was issuing over 1,000 notices to quit rentals each year, mostly on account of unpaid rent. While a majority of tenants left quietly, several hundred each year had court orders served and, as a last resort, a small number were forcibly evicted by bailiffs (eg. fourteen in 1969-70). Rent was mostly collected by SHC officers coming door-to-door collecting. In regional areas where this was not always possible, the level of arrears was much higher. Arrears actions were taken when rents got three weeks behind without extenuating circumstances being made known to the Commission. The largest group of tenants regularly in arrears were 'widows and deserted wives on low incomes'. Most of these picked away at clearing their accounts with small payments as they were able.<sup>670</sup>

State Housing Commission rent collectors visited all Metropolitan tenants at least fortnightly, and sometimes weekly, to collect rent. As the only Commission representative to regularly call on tenants, they also reported requests for maintenance and repairs, property standards, tenants' behaviour and tenants' complaints.<sup>671</sup>

By 1971, the Commission believed the 'housing problem' had been virtually overcome in the State, with 'applicants who have a real housing need and do not wish to exercise a social choice as to type of accommodation or specific location' receiving a rental home within 3-6 months, and emergency housing much quicker. Many SHC tenants used the lower-than-market SHC rents as an opportunity to save the deposit for an SHC purchase home, and it was noted that these applicants were often able to provide a larger deposit than those coming out of private rental accommodation.<sup>672</sup> Up to at least the mid-1970s, many home loan providers considered only male income when approving a loan. Double income families were expected to demonstrate that they were able to repay a loan based only on the husband's earnings, effectively excluding many couples who had the capacity to repay a loan from accessing finance.<sup>673</sup>

From the early 1970s, SHC moved to decentralise its administration. In addition to its existing fourteen regional offices, regional management centres were established at Perth, Fremantle, Merredin, Bunbury, Albany, Geraldton and Port Hedland. Although it was acknowledged that this was a more expensive way

<sup>670</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>671</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>672</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971*, quote from .6

<sup>673</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1975*, p.170



SHC terrace housing 1970

*SHC, Annual Report, 1971, p. 21*

to operate, it was believed important 'to take decision making back to those who are affected, and to provide a closer contact between client and administration', encouraging 'that essential element of "humanity"' into SHC operations. Decentralisation also provided some stability to regional populations and, it was hoped, might employ some regional young people in their local areas who would otherwise seek work in the city.<sup>674</sup> The five-year decentralisation goal was perceived as completed when new Albany offices opened in September 1975, the fifth regional SHC headquarters. By 1977, with the addition of several branch offices, over 90% of SHC tenants were receiving a door-to-door rent collection service.<sup>675</sup>

By the early 1970s, the Federal government was seeking ways to either increase its control over the details of government housing or remove itself from housing programs altogether. The 1966 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* expired in 1971 and the Commonwealth initially planned to let it lapse without extension. Turbulent political times, including the Liberal Prime Ministership switching from Gorton to McMahon and subsequently a new Federal Housing Minister also being appointed, growing social mood for change and the rising popularity of the Labor opposition under Whitlam, resulted in the existing rental agreement being hastily extended to 1973. Before the extension was complete, Labor had won the December 1972 Federal election, and the Whitlam government's social agenda retained and expanded Commonwealth involvement in public housing.<sup>676</sup>

The 1973-78 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* changed the focus of Commonwealth-funded housing away from home ownership to providing rental accommodation for persons in need of government assistance. Seventy per cent of Commonwealth funding under the new Agreement was to be directed towards providing rental homes, with the remaining 30% able to be offered for purchase,

<sup>674</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*, quotes from p.49

<sup>675</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.130

<sup>676</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.147-49, 159

including by terminating building societies.<sup>677</sup> The new government was alarmed at the diminishing public housing stock and increasing waiting lists. However, public housing stock continued to be sold off nationally.<sup>678</sup> A needs test made eligibility criteria stricter than the *State Housing Act* and restrictions on resale required resident purchasers who wished to on-sell their home within five years to offer it first to the Commission.<sup>679</sup> The 1973 Agreement was negotiated at a time when both State and Federal governments were held by the Labor party. It was the first *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* negotiated by a Federal Labor government since the original 1945 scheme. This 1973-78 housing agreement covered a tumultuous period in Federal politics and the Commission was frequently frustrated by variations and unpredictability of Commonwealth funding over the mid-1970s.<sup>680</sup> However, the welfare emphasis was maintained in the 1978 Agreement, negotiated by Liberal/Coalition governments at both State and Federal level.<sup>681</sup>

After seventeen years actively promoting home ownership schemes ahead of rentals, the 1973 Agreement was a significant change of direction for government housing. The rental schemes of the immediate post-war period had been viewed as a stop-gap measure. The shift to ongoing support for rentals signified an acknowledgment, however tacit, that a large proportion of public housing clients were not on track towards home ownership. Although this had been the reality for some time, the Commission had previously been at pains to identify itself as a housing business not a welfare agency. At the Commonwealth level, the Housing Minister began to use the language of 'welfare housing', and direct additional funds in this direction. Unfortunately, the use of this language heightened the stigma associated with public housing.<sup>682</sup>

The Whitlam administration also pursued interventionist government approaches to urban planning. The new Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) sought to manage far-reaching design initiatives that integrated multiple authorities to coordinate matters such as transport, sewerage, heritage, regional growth hubs, plans for regions and cities, release of serviced land and urban development research. Its ambitious program was not achieved before it was abolished after 1975, but influenced aspects of urban design in following years.<sup>683</sup>

The SHC's head office in East Perth was demolished in 1973 to allow for construction of a new multistorey head office, with some of the timber-framed units being relocated for use as country halls. Tenders were called in 1973 and the building was completed in October 1974. The builder was H.A. Doust Pty Ltd and the project cost \$1,895,729.<sup>684</sup>

In a bid to ensure Commission housing matched broader community housing standards, the SHC embarked on a program from 1973 to upgrade all pre-1961 dwellings, which were recognised as being built 'to reflect periods of austerity and materials shortages'.<sup>685</sup> The following year, the improvement program was extended to homes constructed prior to 1967.<sup>686</sup> Older houses were progressively upgraded for the comfort and convenience of residents. The Commission recognised that its earlier housing no longer met 'acceptable standards'. Upgrades included improved plumbing and electrical fittings, replacing wood stoves with gas or electric units, and concrete troughs and chip heaters with stainless

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<sup>677</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>678</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.159-60

<sup>679</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>680</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>681</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>682</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.159-60

<sup>683</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.32-33

<sup>684</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973, 1974, 1975*

<sup>685</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*, quote from p.6

<sup>686</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

steel troughs and gas or electric hot water systems.<sup>687</sup> All-weather toilets and ablutions were also added, along with 'ample power points', cupboards, and modernised laundries and bathrooms. Thousands of homes required attention and it took until the end of the 1970s for all pre-1967 homes to be upgraded.<sup>688</sup>



Mid-1970s upgrades to kitchens and laundries

*Note replacement of wood stove/oven in the kitchen with electric (also gas in some places) and replacement wall linings, stainless steel trough and hot water system in laundry.*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1976 pp.10-11*



<sup>687</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1976

<sup>688</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1978

This three bedroom house is suitable for siting with either Kitchen or Livingroom to face street frontage.

A four bedroom design featuring a separate shower cubicle.

Sketch plans for a two-storey town house.

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

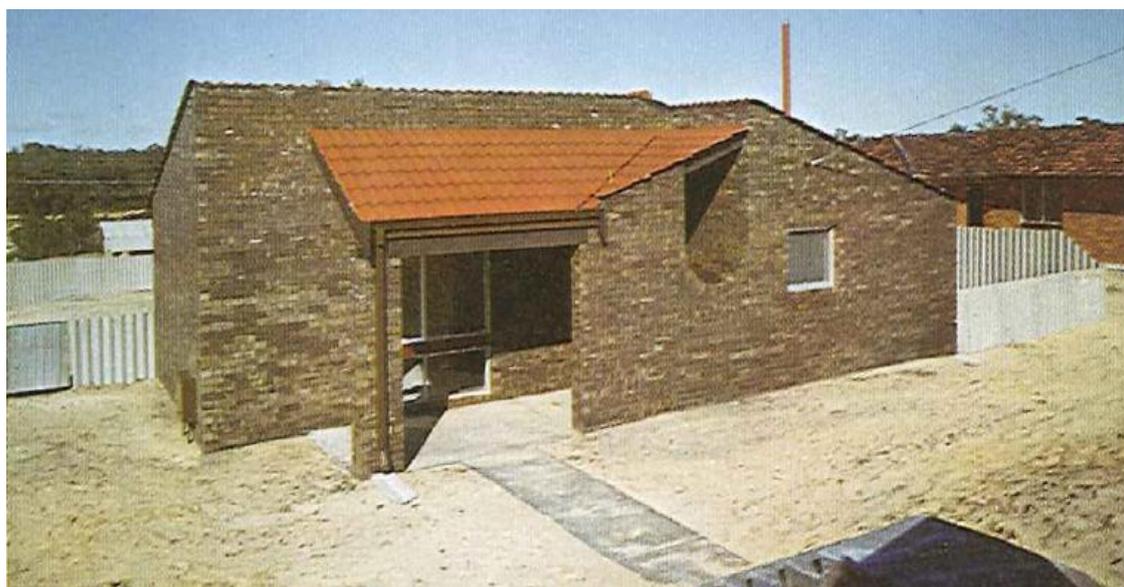
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

New house designs, 1968-72

Clockwise from top left: SHC, Annual Reports, 1969 p.17, 1970 p.22, 1972 p.22, 1971 p.35

Late in 1973, OPEC raised the international oil price, sending shock waves through the global economy. In Australia, inflation had already been at around 10% and rose rapidly, peaking at around 17% in 1975. Although it declined from this peak it remained mostly above 10% into the early 1980s and did not return to 1960s levels until the recession of the early 1990s.<sup>689</sup>

Economic upheaval and spiralling inflation caused SHC costs to shoot up, reducing the number of new homes completed. At the same time, there was a 46% increase in demand for rentals in 1974-75, caused by shortage in home building finance and a decline in private sector accommodation. The Commission had to change its allocation policy to meet 'emergent' cases first, as far more people were meeting the 'needs' criteria than could be housed. 'Needs' was established in 1974 as a trial, creating a three-tier system (emergent, needs, wait-list), but was discontinued due to the number meeting the 'needs' criteria.<sup>690</sup>



Prize-winning entry by an SHC contractor in the 1974 West Australian 'Homes of the Year' competition  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1975, p.10*

After Cyclone Tracey flattened Darwin in December 1974, evacuees were provided emergency SHC housing in Perth by waiving eligibility tests. The Commission made 30% of its rental homes available to evacuees, which put pressure on both its own ability to house needy families and the private rental market. Smaller families were mostly housed quickly, but accommodating pensioners and larger families became difficult.<sup>691</sup>

Waiting times for rental properties had been reduced in the early 1970s such that they depended on 'selectivity rather than availability' – that is, those willing to go anywhere the SHC sent them could receive accommodation relatively quickly. By 1974, around 5,000 applicants were being placed each year. As there were about 4,000 vacancies in the same period, the Commission's building program could largely keep up with the demand. However, a boom in the building industry more generally in 1973-74 meant building labourers and materials were in short supply and the Commission's building program fell

<sup>689</sup> Stevens, Glenn, Reserve Bank of Australia, 'Inflation Targeting: A Decade of Australian Experience', April 2003 <http://www.rba.gov.au/speeches/2003/sp-dg-100403.html>; ABS <http://www.abs.gov.au> both accessed 1 May 2014

<sup>690</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>691</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

behind.<sup>692</sup> This lasted through the mid-1970s, but by 1978 the building industry had slumped, private accommodation became more readily available, and demand for housing assistance eased.<sup>693</sup> By the end of the decade, there was a surplus of rental apartments in the Metropolitan area but there was still pressure for family homes.<sup>694</sup>

In 1974-75, the Commission purchased 163 inner-city houses and 50 apartments, to place smaller families closer to employment and community facilities. These were mostly intended to house single mothers, who had expressed a desire to live closer to the city. The buy-in program utilised real estate agents to provide details to the Commission of homes meeting commission criteria.<sup>695</sup>

In 1975-76, the Design and Construction branch noted that they were endeavouring to consult with clients about their needs before designing homes, and develop new designs that kept pace with 'changes in the habits of living, in fashions, in available materials and in building techniques'.<sup>696</sup>

In 1975, the Federal Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, appointed in 1972 and chaired by Ronald Henderson, reported the findings of its extensive national inquest. The Commission was appointed by the McMahon Liberal government, and had its remit and personnel expanded by the Whitlam Labor government. It identified disturbing levels of poverty in Australia, including amongst two-parent families where one adult was in full time work. It also found that rates of poverty were much higher among women than men. The highest rates of poverty were among those in private rental accommodation, with over 40% of the very poor paying private rents (13% of all private renters). By comparison, around 10% of government renters and 4% of those who owned or were purchasing their own home were identified as very poor. Nearly 40% of the public housing tenants identified as very poor were single-parent families. The Commission recommended providing housing support in the form of financial assistance to households rather than housing itself, to 'increase a family's ability to choose their housing and location',<sup>697</sup> while also identifying situations where funding might best be targeted at private bodies offering housing services for special groups, such as youth or the aged. While overall recommending a reduction of public housing stock, the Commission recommended purchasing housing in built-up areas so as to integrate public housing tenants through medium income suburbs and keep them close to their social networks where possible, as an interim measure until income support could be brought to sufficient levels to support the poor in private rental housing.<sup>698</sup> Although not implemented explicitly, the recommendations of the Henderson Report appear to have influenced government housing policy through subsequent decades.

As part of its ongoing support for the building industry, from 1975-76, the Commission included contract clauses to say builders must retain at least one apprentice for every five housing units produced in a year, in an attempt to increase the number of qualified tradespersons in the State.<sup>699</sup>

By the mid-1970s Australia was one of the top few countries in the world in terms of average house size, number of houses with private gardens, proportion of home owners and housing distribution across social strata. However, behind these international comparisons there remained much inequity in Australian housing and many people could not obtain a home, or only an unsuitable or undesirable one.<sup>700</sup> The 1975

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<sup>692</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>693</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1978

<sup>694</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1979

<sup>695</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975. Note: elsewhere SHC annual reports state that 175 homes were purchased.

<sup>696</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976, quote from p.9

<sup>697</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, p.4

<sup>698</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.1-6, 158-60

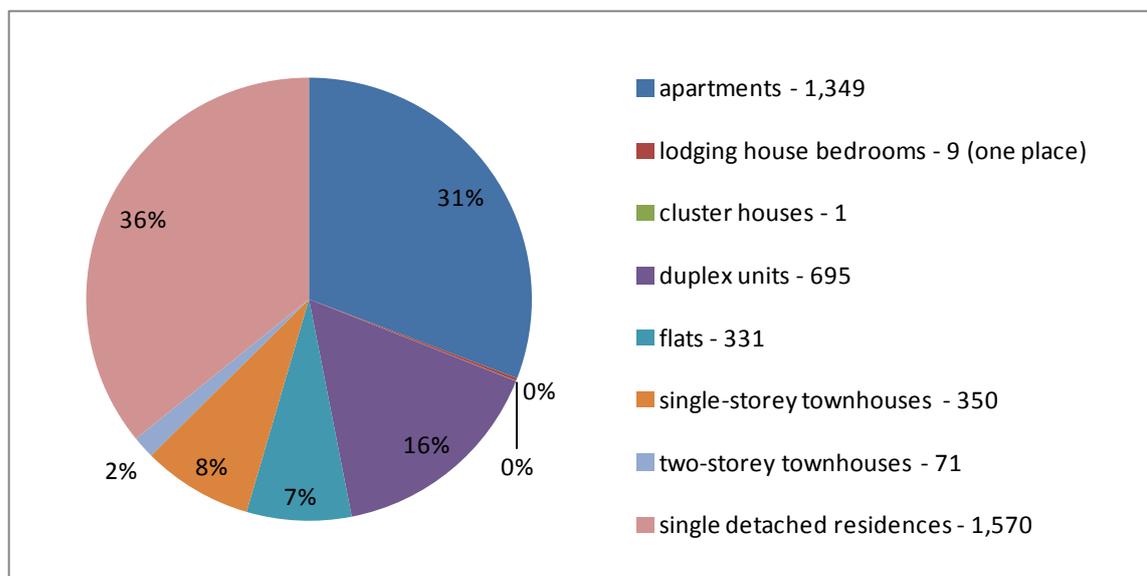
<sup>699</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>700</sup> Stretton, *Housing and Government*, 1974, p.171

Henderson Inquiry's finding that most of the poor were not in public housing, and many within public housing were not technically poor, was used by many policy makers in the following years to argue faults in the public housing system. It does not appear to have been seen as a mark of public housing success to be keeping a large proportion of the nation's low income earners out of poverty.<sup>701</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

At 31 May 2014, DOH retained 4,376 housing units from the period 1966 to 1975, including both those built by the department and those acquired later. The 4,376 units divide as:



Combined flats and apartments comprise 38%, single detached houses 36% and duplexes 16%.

A further 311 housing units are included in community housing stock, of which 186 (60%) are lodging house rooms, 82 are non-standard dwellings, 19 are single storey townhouses, one is an apartment, two are single detached residences, one is a duplex and ten have no style noted.

#### Transportables

DOH retains 691 transportables, introduced from 1967, all of which are in the Country or Northwest areas. Most of these (442) are in the Northwest (64%) and almost all of those (393) date from 2009 to 2014. Six transportables remain in DOH ownership from 1967 (Mukinbudin x2, Broomehill, Kondinin, Trayning and Wyalkatchem). The earliest Northwest transportables retained are from 1978 (Jigalong and Karratha).

<sup>701</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.134-80

Groups of housing from 1966-75 in DOH ownership: 48

Areas with over 100 DOH properties of the period are Balga (214), Coolbellup (155), Fremantle (167, mostly in eight apartment blocks), Girrawheen (136), Karawara (109) and North Beach (158). Bentley also shows up as a large group (305 units) but almost all of these are within Brownlie Towers.

Smaller groups have been identified at Albany (esp Spencer Park) (38), Armadale (63), Busselton (50), Calista (29), Carnarvon (esp Morgantown) (60), Cloverdale (30), Dianella (41 – mostly two apartment blocks), East Fremantle (36 - mostly two apartment blocks), East Victoria Park (50), Esperance (37), Gosnells (28), Hamilton Hill (36), Highgate (82, mostly one apartment block), Hilton (20, mostly one apartment block), Karratha (63), Kelmscott (47), Koondoola (44), Kununurra (23), Langford (58), Lockridge (93), Maddington (25), Maylands (25), Meekatharra (24), Merredin (44), Midvale (26), Mosman Park (95, in two apartment blocks), Narrogin (28), Newman (46), Northam (32), Orelia (66), Rangeway (Geraldton) (50), Scarborough (32), Shoalwater (35), South Hedland (66), Spearwood (23), Thornlie (36), White Gum Valley (54), Wickham (21), Withers (Bunbury) (73) and Yokine (40).

The 1973 head quarters building for SHC in East Perth remains in 2014 as the DOH main office.

### 13.1 INCREASING DENSITIES (1960S-1970S)

Changes in departmental philosophy saw a move by the late 1960s away from whole suburbs of family homes. The Commission first employed an in-house town planner in 1966 (Dr A. Comar). Planning policies subsequently changed towards higher density subdivisions.<sup>702</sup>

Higher density housing was seen as a more economical use of serviced land (water, sewers, etc). The availability of affordable new land was also becoming limited. Further development aimed for 50% individual homes, with the remainder to comprise medium density residences such as flats, terrace and 'patio' houses, and duplexes. New designs for all of these styles were developed, including blocks of flats up to four storeys. Some local governments were not keen to allow higher density residences and projects were delayed due to protracted negotiations. By June 1968, construction of flats at Calista, Armadale, Hilton, Coolbellup and Carlisle was well under way.<sup>703</sup>



SHC flats at Waverley Road, Coolbellup, c.1969

*This is probably Yaralla Flats, later redeveloped as Juliet Court*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1970*

At the start of the 1960s, flats comprised only a small portion of the homes built. In 1962-63, 9% of total dwellings constructed by the SHC were flats. By comparison, at 30 June 1969, 41% of the homes under construction were flats.<sup>704</sup> Although not all of these were multistorey complexes, the shift through the 1960s to flats was a significant trend. Private housing also began to increase its density, facilitated by strata title legislation passed in 1966. The move towards higher densities was driven primarily by economic factors and the demand for housing close to amenities and employment.<sup>705</sup> Technological advances meant uniform-design higher-density housing could be erected more quickly than an equivalent amount of low density housing.<sup>706</sup>

The Commission designed its flats on the whole to cater for young families, and aimed to accommodate them in walk-up flats no more than three-storeys high. Flats at higher levels were given to families with older children. The flats for young families were designed to include private laundries so that women would not need to leave small children alone while they went to a communal laundry. Flats with their own

<sup>702</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, p.17

<sup>703</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>704</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969

<sup>705</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.83-84

<sup>706</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, pp.29-31



'Mawarra', two-bedroom brick flats, designed by private architects SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970 p.37

laundries were later designated 'apartments'. In anticipation of young children in the homes, these developments were provided with outdoor play space and sandpits.<sup>707</sup>

Housing estates were a strong international trend for the three decades after World War Two, although forms of housing estate had been

developed from the nineteenth century. Housing estates were planned groups of residences constructed at around the same time, often by a single contractor. They were generally large scale, urban, of relatively uniform design and on the outskirts of major settlements. Although not necessarily public housing, many were government initiatives, particularly in the post-war period as many countries rebuilt out of war-related housing shortages. While the SHC's suburbs of single detached homes constructed in the 1940s and 1950s were housing estates in the broader sense of the term, the move to higher density estates from the mid-1960s reflected many of the international trends that created enormous high rise developments through Europe in this period.<sup>708</sup> Western Australia's move towards increased densities did



SHC flats, Lockridge – rear view, c.1970  
SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971 p.13

<sup>707</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971

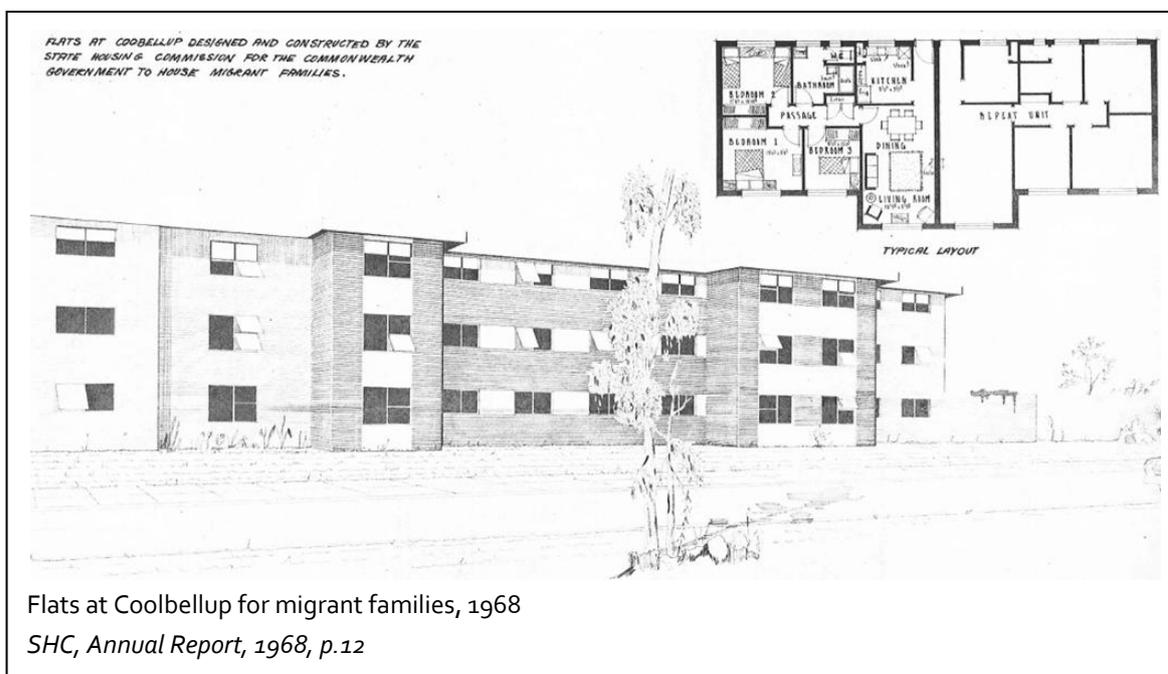
<sup>708</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, pp.27-28

not go so far as the huge high rise estates of Europe, or even the public housing high rise of Sydney or Melbourne, but it was a significant shift for the State in the nature of government housing.

The philosophy of housing estates, even the modest-scale Western Australian examples, was to create neighbourhoods, with services all within the same area. Neighbourhoods were seen as the answer to anonymous cities, which were perceived as breeding grounds for social problems, as they provided a medium-level social network between family and city levels. Garden City suburbs were an early low-density move in the neighbourhood direction. However, as the ideals of the Garden City proved largely unrealised, from the 1930s other approaches developed. Clarence Perry in the USA developed the Garden City concept of new towns outside cities into planned urban neighbourhoods with safe traffic movement, community services including a school and basic amenities, in an attractive environment with play areas and green spaces. These were to be carefully socially engineered, as Perry believed community would not develop spontaneously in urban areas as earlier planners had hoped. Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan of 1945 took this even further, aiming for 'a heterogeneous society in every neighbourhood of the city'. Critics of the neighbourhood model saw it as attempting to force social relations. They also identified that many developments supposedly based on the neighbourhood philosophy in fact emphasised maximising housing units rather than provision of community hubs.<sup>709</sup>

Many early SHC estates had by the late 1960s reached a point where the land was worth more than the homes on it, which spurred replacement of early family homes with higher density residences. Many of the original homes were by this time occupied by single widows, who had originally moved in with their families, and the Commission desired to re-house these women in single-women's accommodation, especially those in rental homes, and reuse the land. To assist in relocating residents, tenants were offered the chance to put the rental credit of their existing home towards purchasing a new home in another estate.<sup>710</sup>

Work began in February 1967 on a block of flats for single working women. The bedsit units were a pilot scheme 'to encourage women's organisations to provide similar accommodation from their own resources'.<sup>711</sup>



<sup>709</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, pp.29-31, 57 (quote) & 61

<sup>710</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>711</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967, quote from p.14

A special design for three-storey flats was developed in 1967-68 for the Commonwealth Department of Housing to accommodate new immigrant families at Coolbellup.<sup>712</sup> The same year, a new migrant hostel was established at Bateman ('Noalimba'). The mining boom attracted large numbers of skilled migrants to Western Australia from the late 1960s, mostly of British origin.<sup>713</sup>

The first four-storey flats were completed by the SHC in 1968-69, using an old quarry site that allowed street-level access to both the ground and first floor, with a total of 57 units.<sup>714</sup>



Coram Court, Fremantle, July 1970

*Ken Hotchkin, used with permission, SLWA collection, 280012PD*

Internationally, the 1960s saw the construction of high rise public housing estates, influenced by the 'Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne' (International Congress of Modern Architecture - CIAM). The first Congress was held in 1928. In 1930, Swiss architect Le Corbusier introduced his concept of the 'Radiant City', based on free-standing high rise towers, and three years later CIAM birthed the concept of a 'functionalist city'. This philosophy pursued a modern, egalitarian urban neighbourhood, and underpinned much of the high density post-war development in Europe and elsewhere. A belief prevailed that modern architecture would 'achieve a just and fair society'.<sup>715</sup> Functional cities were to be 'super-rational, ordered, zoned, machine-like with historical clutter swept away'. CIAM ideas were very influential in Australian planning, and particularly impacted the provision of government housing from the late 1960s in Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>716</sup>

<sup>712</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>713</sup> Chinnery, R, with Considine & Griffiths Architects, 'Standard Archive Record for Noalimba Accommodation & Conference Centre, Bateman', for the Department of Sport & Recreation, on behalf of Landcorp, June 2003, pp.4-9

<sup>714</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969. Note: This matches the description of Coram Court, Fremantle (DOH records it as constructed in both 1967 and 1970), but it has not been confirmed that the 1969 report relates to Coram Court.

<sup>715</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, pp.44-46, 89 (quote)

<sup>716</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.70



Model of proposed SHC housing estate at Withers, Bunbury, 1967

*Stevenson, Kinder & Scott Corporate Photography, SLWA collection, 342417PD*

Between 1966 and 1968, the SHC prepared designs and models for housing estates including multiple high rise towers at Withers (Bunbury), Hilton and Bentley.<sup>717</sup> Withers later went ahead using much of the 1966-67 plan, but without high rise towers. Hilton did not proceed at all, but Bentley brought the idea of government high rise in Western Australia to fruition, building on the success of Wandana at Subiaco over a decade earlier.

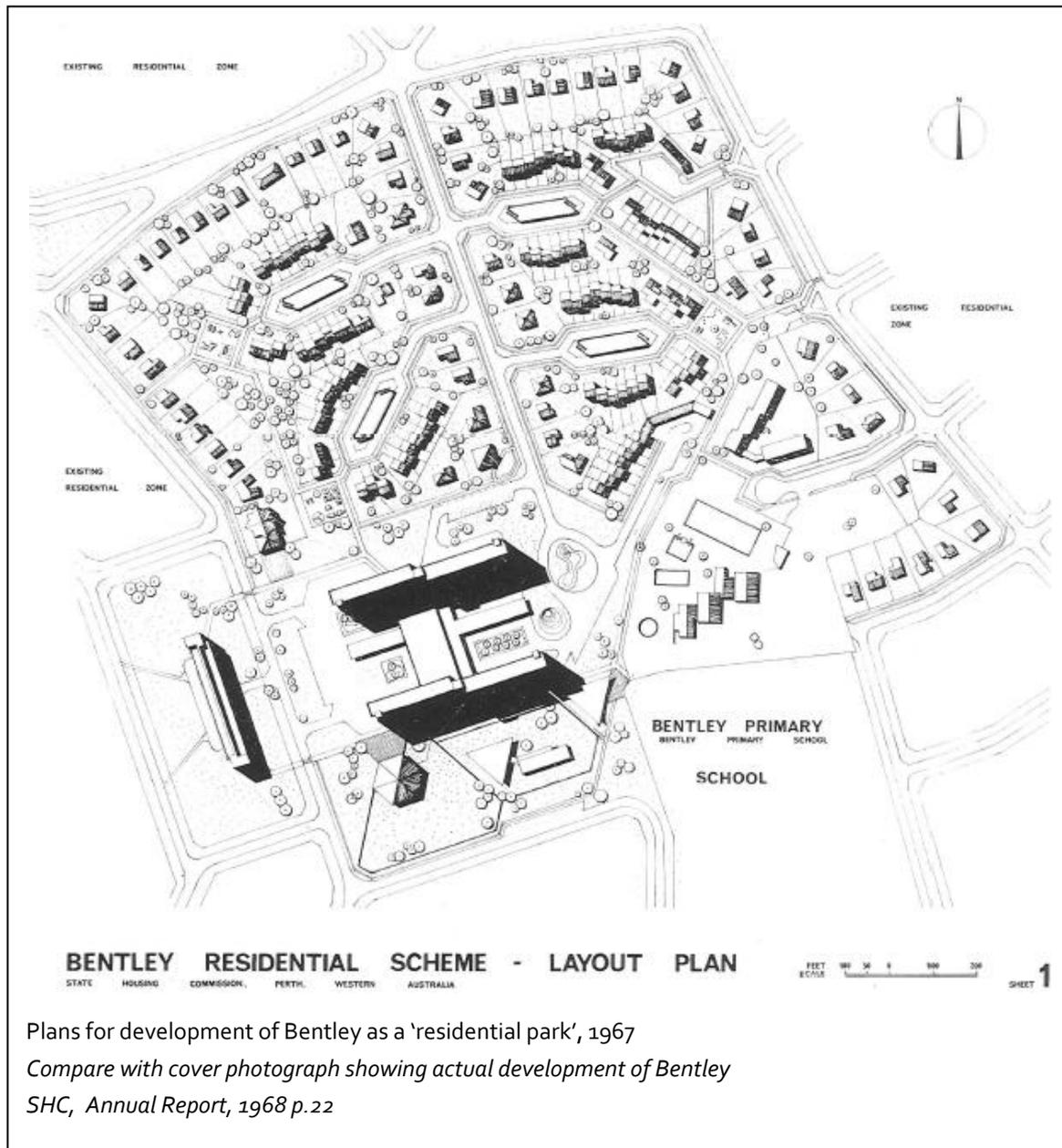
In 1968-69, the concept of a 'residential park development' comprising a mix of houses, flats and high rise apartments was put forward for land at Bentley. The proposed development was to have 33 individual houses (12 three-bedroom, 21 four-bedroom), 119 two-storey terraces (112 three-bedroom, seven four-bedroom), 32 three-bedroom units in a two- and a three-storey block of flats, and 320 units in two ten-storey towers, incorporating five shops. Each high rise was to comprise 20 bedsit units, 20 one-bedroom units and 120 two-bedroom units. As only one road was to cross the estate, it was considered suitable for residents to use the parklands instead of having their own gardens. Bentley was the Commission's largest project of the period, covering a 61 acre site, of which 40% was designated for open space and community facilities. The project aimed to house a range of families, including couples with one or two children, pensioner couples and elderly single women, mostly in rental accommodation. Schools, library, play areas and an aquatic centre were all nearby.<sup>718</sup> The entire project was completed in around 15 months by contractors A.V. Jennings Industries, one of the largest developers in the country, and opened in December 1970.<sup>719</sup> The high rise portion was known as 'Brownlie Towers'.

Bentley was the first State Housing Commission development to apply some aspects of 'Radburn' planning principles, which were to be a feature of early 1970s SHC estates. Descriptions of the Bentley project did not attribute its features to Radburn, but aspects such as the use of cul-de-sacs to limit vehicle access, and inclusion of pedestrian green spaces to link the development, are characteristic Radburn features.

<sup>717</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967 and 1968

<sup>718</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969 and 1970, p.11-12

<sup>719</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971



Plans for development of Bentley as a 'residential park', 1967

Compare with cover photograph showing actual development of Bentley

SHC, Annual Report, 1968 p.22

Radburn is a town in New Jersey, outside New York City, designed in 1929 for the City Housing Corporation by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. Developed in response to the rising popularity of the motor car, Radburn was planned to separate vehicle and pedestrian traffic. It featured the 'superblock', a large area surrounded by main roads from which cul-de-sacs accessed all houses. Houses were designed with their living areas facing central communal parklands, which were also the pedestrian access ways, linked between superblocks with pedestrian underpasses to cross main roads. Radburn primarily comprised detached family homes, but also included townhouses, duplexes and an apartment complex, housing around 680 families. It was initially designed to be much larger, but the developers went bankrupt during the Depression. The settlement of Radburn itself had some success as a housing development, and remains an active residential community to the present (2014), governed by a community association. Many housing developments around the world sought to emulate its design principles, especially in public housing developments.<sup>720</sup> Radburn designs were implemented in other

<sup>720</sup> 'Radburn: A town for the Motor Age in Fair Lawn NJ, USA', website maintained by the Radburn Association <http://www.radburn.org/geninfo/history.html> accessed 29 April 2014

Australian cities from the early 1960s. Although always more popular with government than private developers, two private developments on Radburn lines were implemented in Perth in the late 1960s, at the north part of City Beach and at Crestwood Estate, Thornlie. Neither included medium or high density housing.<sup>721</sup>

It was not only the government building higher density housing in Western Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including for low income residents. For example, a nine-storey block of apartments at 159 Hubert Street, East Victoria Park ('St Ives'), and another two at 10-14 and 31 Wellington St Mosman Park, both low-socio economic areas in the 1960s, were erected in the same period and do not appear to have been linked to the Commission.<sup>722</sup> However, by the early 1970s criticism of high rise housing, especially public housing, was being expressed. High rise was seen as linked to social problems, and the welfare of children raised in high rise apartments was disputed, particularly in an Australian context.<sup>723</sup>

Plans were drawn in 1970 and tenders called for a multi-residence development at Stevens and Swanbourne Streets in Fremantle, to include three 9-storey 'star-shaped' apartment blocks, three 5-storey 'slab blocks', one 4-storey block, and a terrace of two-storey flats provided a total of 440 units, along with a shop, and the SHC Regional Office.<sup>724</sup> A three-storey underground carpark was to have its



Brownlie Towers, 1970, with SHC branch office, later shops, in foreground

*Note undercroft and circular central play area.*

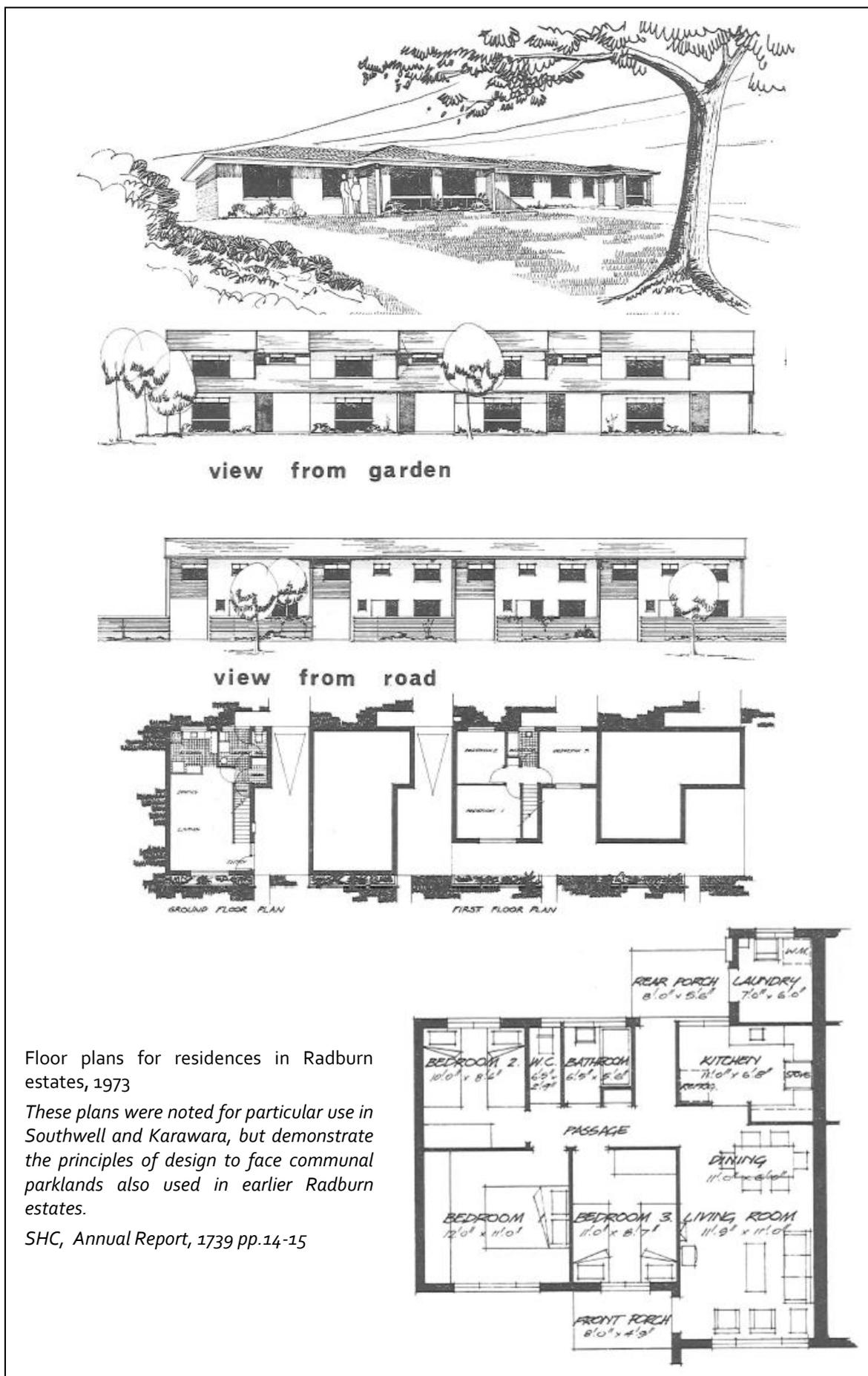
*Fritz Kos, SLWA collection, 341110PD*

<sup>721</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.194-95; Crestwood Estate <http://www.crestwood.org.au> accessed 19 June 2014

<sup>722</sup> DOH property lists, February 2014; historical aerial photographs at <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/> Although it is possible these apartment blocks were built by SHC and have been completely disposed of, this is unlikely as they are not mentioned in SHC annual reports. The Mosman Park apartments, especially 10-14 Wellington St, appear to have been refurbished, which may indicate they were done up and sold, but St Ives does not appear to have been upgraded and it would be unlikely that SHC sold the whole complex as is.

<sup>723</sup> HCWA (Summers, L, Griffin, P & Ball, J, historians), Assessment Documentation for *Brownlie Towers*, December 2002, pp.7-8

<sup>724</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970



Floor plans for residences in Radburn estates, 1973

*These plans were noted for particular use in Southwell and Karawara, but demonstrate the principles of design to face communal parklands also used in earlier Radburn estates.*

SHC, Annual Report, 1739 pp.14-15

roof landscaped to provide recreation space and a children's play area. It was intended that the development would include accommodation for pensioners as well as all stages of family units and thus create an integrated community.<sup>725</sup> Aerial photographs suggest this complex was never built, with the site at the corner of Swanbourne and Stevens Street remaining vacant until it was subdivided in the mid-1980s for a mix of low and medium density homes, including a housing collective.<sup>726</sup> A similar 1970 plan for a complex of three, four and seven storey apartment blocks in Alday Street, Saint James was also shelved due to changes in government policy, possibly the result of a change from State Liberal to Labor government in February 1971.<sup>727</sup>

By the time the Liberal party regained power, in 1974, it appears high rise had gone out of favour. No further high rise public housing was built in SHC estates. It is not clear why Western Australia did not adopt high rise in the manner that Sydney and Melbourne were doing in the same period. In these eastern cities, high rise public housing was associated with so-called 'slum clearance'. Perth had not developed extensive nineteenth-century inner-city terraces and tenements, which in areas such as Redfern-Waterloo (Sydney) or Fitzroy (Melbourne) characterised much of the housing in low-income areas perceived in the 1960s as 'slums' that were replaced with blocks of high rise government flats up to twenty stories high. This may have been a factor in Western Australia pursuing less high rise, but even what was planned was only around ten stories, much lower than the examples in eastern Australian cities. It is surprising that at least four SHC high rise developments were planned between 1966 and 1970 that did not proceed. Philosophies of increasing density in Western Australia led instead to medium density developments, mostly on new subdivisions rather than reworking land in earlier areas.

In Bunbury, a major flat and housing development was initiated in 1969-70 at Withers Park. It varied from previous housing projects in that the front of houses were to face a footpath, supplied with overhead lighting, while the rear of houses faced the road. Care was taken with design on account of the rear of the



'Harler Place', Mosman Park, c.1970

*Note the provision of universal access to three of four levels.*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1971 p.12*

<sup>725</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971

<sup>726</sup> <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/>

<sup>727</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the periods 1969-71



Withers Park housing estate, Bunbury, c.1974

*SHC, Annual Report, 1974*

homes being publicly visible.<sup>728</sup> This was the first of the true 'Radburn' estates. Rather than pursuing high rise, planning aimed to increase densities through extensive use of two- and three-storey walk-up flats.

Walk-up flats are groups of units that all have separate external entrances, and no lifts. Although less dominating than high rise towers, they became a significant feature of Australian urban landscapes, as both public and private housing, often rental accommodation.<sup>729</sup>



'Karobean' walk-up flats at Jecks Place, Orelia, c.1970

*SHC, Annual Report, 1709 p.35*

The move in the late 1960s to higher density housing estates, where about half the homes were medium-density, was by 1971 seen as successful as an efficiency measure and was continued into the 1970s. Planning also incorporated 'Radburn type estate development, architectural and social blending in estates, controlled land prices, and medium density rental accommodation'. By this time, the

<sup>728</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>729</sup> Pickett, Charles 'The "six-pack": the past and present of walk-up flats', Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, [http://www.aicomos.com/wp-content/uploads/2009\\_UnlovedModern\\_Pickett\\_Charles\\_SixPack\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.aicomos.com/wp-content/uploads/2009_UnlovedModern_Pickett_Charles_SixPack_Paper.pdf) accessed 18 June 2014

Commission was purposely building 'non-saleable rental accommodation' catering to relatively rapid tenant turnover. However, it also aimed 'to create balanced communities in a reasonable environment' to avoid creating estates with a 'rental ghetto mentality', acknowledged as a danger world-wide. New SHC estates were 'blended', with part of the land offered to private builders and developers at concessional rates. This was intended to provide some housing support for private builders who were marginally above the criteria for formal assistance. The Commission also began seeking affordable land within existing suburbs, especially for housing pensioners, but land prices were often prohibitive in these areas.<sup>730</sup>

South Hedland was developed from 1970 to address the growing housing crisis in the rapidly expanding Pilbara port town. It proudly used the 'Radburn Principle' of planning, providing 'dual access' to homes and a 'residential park concept'. The first stage comprised 48 homes on concrete raft floors.<sup>731</sup> In 1971-72, 36 older houses were relocated from Port Hedland to South Hedland as the second stage of the latter development neared completion.<sup>732</sup> Radburn layouts continued to be used in the third stage at South



Aerial photograph showing first four 'nuclei' of the town, 1979

*SHC, Annual Report, 1979, cover photograph*

<sup>730</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1971*, quotes from p.5

<sup>731</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>732</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

Hedland, along with circular subdivision design.<sup>733</sup> Local mining companies contributed substantially to the construction of homes in stages three and four of the development, providing nearly 300 houses in addition to SHC dwellings. It was anticipated that by the completion of stage four, 1,600 homes would provide for 64,000 people in the new town. Services lagged behind residential development, however, with only four shops operating to serve thousands of residents by 1973-74.<sup>734</sup> The first four stages – 'nuclei' – were completed by 1975, creating the first 'cell' of the planned town. However the town centre, although urgently required by the nearly 6,000 residents, remained in planning stages, with sites to be serviced in 1975-76. Difficulties were encountered as no tenders were received for provision of services such as shops and daycare on sites available for these purposes.<sup>735</sup> While Radburn planning emphasised facilitating pedestrian access, there was nowhere at South Hedland for residents to walk to, and in the Pilbara heat many probably were not keen to walk anyway. A first neighbourhood in the second 'cell' of the South Hedland development, renamed 'Koombana', was completed in 1977-78. The second cell was design along traditional lines, the Radburn principles of the first cell having been abandoned. Further residential development in South Hedland was put on hold due to a mining industry downturn.<sup>736</sup>

Radburn principles were also applied to a new development at Kalgoorlie-Boulder (area bounded by Lionel, Wilson, Auburn and Dixon Streets) from 1970.<sup>737</sup> The suburb was named 'Adeline' and landscaped to follow a 'Mexican-cum-Cacticum-Israeli' concept, with shredded bark ground covering and intensive planting of eucalypts.<sup>738</sup>



Housing at Adeline, Kalgoorlie, fronting onto Radburn-style communal spaces

*Original caption notes this as Belgravia Place, with a mix of housing for GEHA, WAGR and 'an aborigine'. SHC, Annual Report, 1974 p.14*

At the start of the 1970s, SHC was developing major housing estates at Mirrabooka, Lockridge, Langford, Orelia, South Hedland, Adeline (Kalgoorlie-Boulder), Esperance, Withers Park (Bunbury), and Rangeway (Geraldton).<sup>739</sup> Rangeway, Lockridge, Mirrabooka, Orelia and Esperance were designed along more traditional lines, with aspects of Garden City planning, while Langford, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Withers Park Bunbury and South Hedland were Radburn layouts. Other 1970s developments at Armadale and Greenwood demonstrate some Radburn features. Later areas, such as the Northwest portion of Swan View (encircled by Blackadder Road), retained the concept of cul-de-sacs accessed from a loop road, but

<sup>733</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1973

<sup>734</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>735</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975

<sup>736</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1978

<sup>737</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

<sup>738</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1972, quote from p.14

<sup>739</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

appear to have mostly done away with the idea of communal parkland cores, with the central area reduced to little more than a cycle path.<sup>740</sup>

It was not only the SHC that pursued Radburn town planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Several Pilbara mining towns, developed initially as private company towns, use similar layouts. Although Radburn planning was only used in Western Australia for about five years, these years corresponded with the Pilbara mining boom. Radburn planning therefore had a greater influence in that region than it might otherwise have had. Pilbara towns that demonstrate evidence of Radburn layouts include Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Wickham, and to a lesser extent Dampier (adapted), Newman and Pannawonica. Shay Gap and Goldsworthy, neither of which remain extant, are reported to have also used Radburn planning ideas.<sup>741</sup>

Many of these were initially 'closed' towns, built and managed by private mining companies. Karratha was developed by the government from 1968 as an 'open' town, although primarily supporting Hamersley Iron in a manner reminiscent of Kwinana or Wittenoom, as an expansion of the company's 'closed' port town at Dampier, 20km west. It was laid out on Radburn lines, especially the eastern area (Bulgarra) but also the localities of Pegs Creek and, to a lesser extent, Millers Well. The SHC built 90 residences in Karratha between 1970 and 1974, in the initial stage of the town, around a third of which were to house government employees. Another round of building in the late 1970s brought the number of SHC housing units in town to 396 by mid-1980. Many SHC houses appear to have been in Bulgarra. However, it was not considered a government 'estate', either in SHC reports or locally.<sup>742</sup>

The rush of flats developed in the late 1960s finally managed to peg back the Commission's waiting lists to a moderate length. Subsequently focus was turned from walk-up flats to townhouses, single detached homes, duplexes and courtyard housing.<sup>743</sup> Many local authorities in the 1960s had refused planning approval for other medium-density styles, feeding the proliferation of walk-up flats. From the 1970s, these restrictions began to ease, and the Commission developed more terrace, patio and courtyard styles. However, some local authorities continued to make alternate styles difficult, particularly on account of requirements for covered carparks, parking space allowances, and general aesthetics. The Commission noted with some frustration that 'Local Authorities in some areas will need to be more realistic in their planning requisitions and be prepared to accept a compromise between what is desirable and what can be provided in the context of low cost public housing – a term which the Commission does not accept as synonymous with cheap housing'.<sup>744</sup>

The Commission continued to struggle with local building by-laws. In 1965, uniform building by-laws were established, but as local authorities were able to add to them, there was in effect little uniformity across the State. In addition, the 1965 standards for natural light and ventilation were based on British standards, where climatic conditions and the angle of the sun were significantly different. It appears many local authorities did not want their residential areas to have a public housing 'look', enforcing by-

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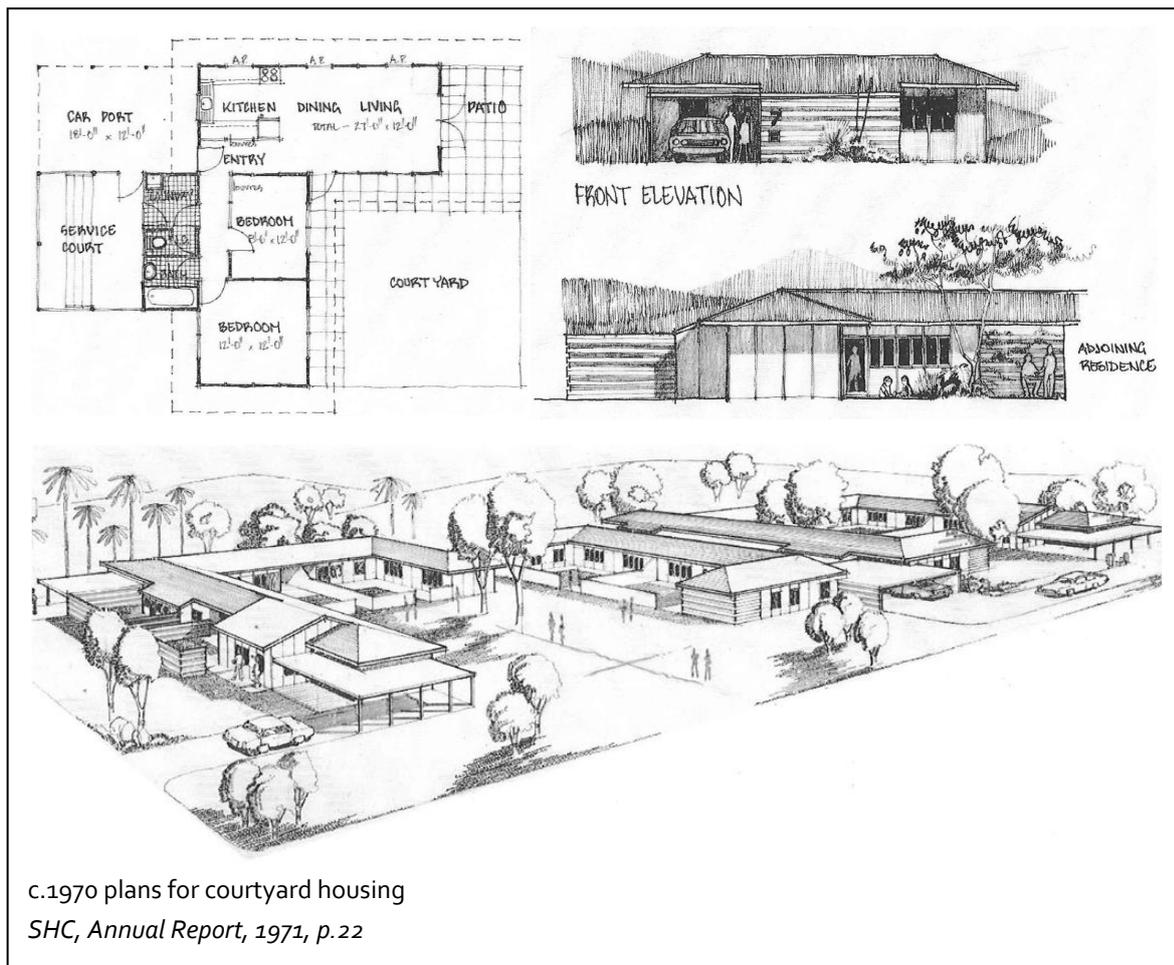
<sup>740</sup> SHC annual reports do not specify design principles for all developments. This analysis is based on current and historic aerial photographs compared with localities listed in SHC 1970s annual reports as having relatively high numbers of housing units constructed in the period, and addresses of remaining DOH housing stock in these areas.

<sup>741</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.131-32; Google maps <https://www.google.com.au/maps> accessed 18 June 2014

<sup>742</sup> Jo Pritchard, Local History Office, Shire of Roebourne, phone call with Clare Menck, 24 June 2014; John Verbeek, Economic Development Advisor, Shire of Roebourne, email to Clare Menck, 20 June 2014; SHC, *Annual Report*, for the period 1970-1980

<sup>743</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1972

<sup>744</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971



c.1970 plans for courtyard housing  
 SHC, Annual Report, 1971, p.22

laws such as requiring duplexes to be designed to look like single houses, insisting on minimum distances of 30ft between buildings, and dictating that car parking areas must be screened with brick walls.<sup>745</sup>

Commission homes, especially flats, were by the 1970s designed for minimum maintenance, and this impacted the materials chosen.<sup>746</sup> The SHC believed it had a holistic role in providing for the wellbeing of residents, however austere the actual housing was.

*'The ultimate aim of all housing activity is to give the families the opportunity of living a full and happy life in healthy and congenial surroundings, so far as housing can contribute towards this end. For the bulk of the population this ideal must be translated into a housing policy aiming at the provision of residential accommodation which will conform to the accepted requirements of physical and mental health and the formation of a balanced local community.'*<sup>747</sup>

The Commission was very aware of the role of gardens and landscaping in making a residential development liveable. Group projects in particular were landscaped by the Commission as construction neared completion, and in some denuded residential subdivisions, such as South Hedland, trees and shrubs were provided to the occupants of all houses.<sup>748</sup> By 1972, the Commission maintained landscaped gardens at 131 group housing projects.<sup>749</sup> It was noted in the mid-1970s that SHC landscaping required

<sup>745</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1971

<sup>746</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1971

<sup>747</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1971, p.10

<sup>748</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1971

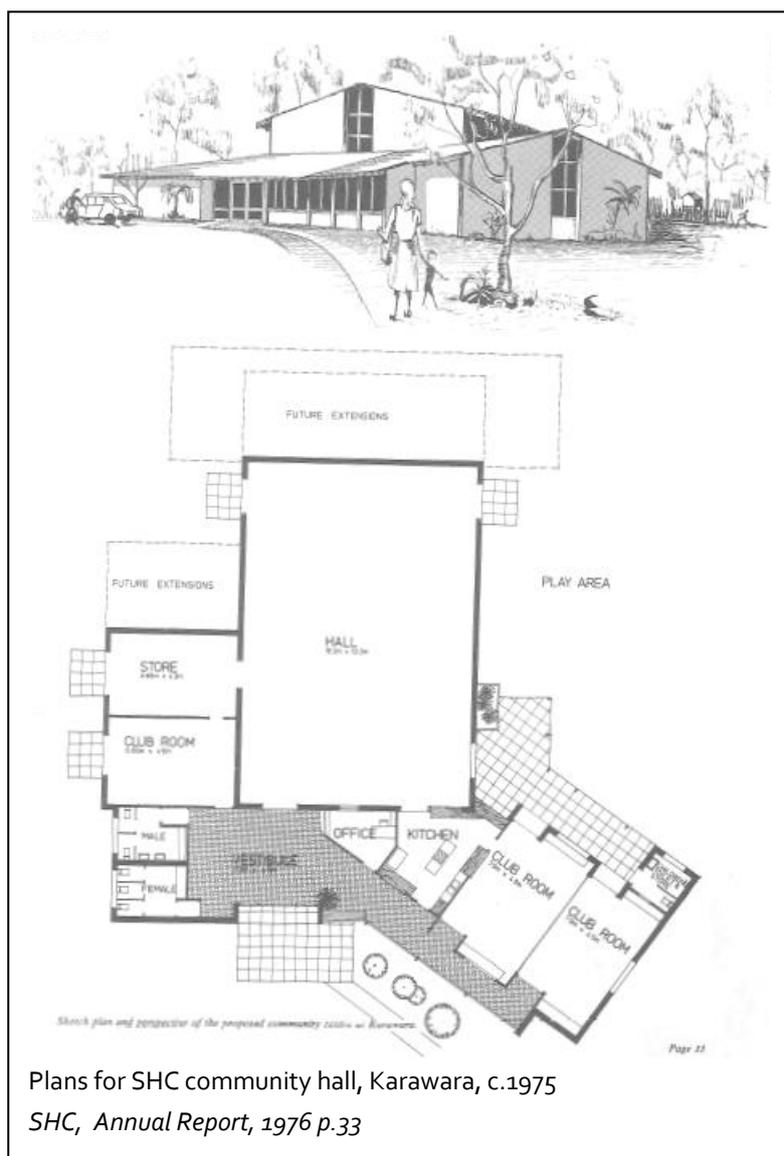
<sup>749</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1972

plants tolerant of 'adverse environments' including 'coastal conditions, hot winds, consistent vandalism, poor soils and drought'. Native species were used almost exclusively, along with grassed areas.<sup>750</sup>

As higher density housing estates were established on the edges of the Metropolitan area, large numbers of people, often on limited incomes, moved rapidly into areas with inadequate services and public transport. The media quickly began reporting on these estates as areas of crime, vandalism and violence, accusing the SHC of building 'ghettos' and stigmatising struggling areas.<sup>751</sup> Stigma has been identified in many studies as both a cause and a result of neighbourhoods physically, socially and economically deteriorating.<sup>752</sup>

As estates comprising predominantly poor families undoubtedly did develop problems as identified by the media, the SHC moved in the 1970s towards 'blended estates', comprising a mix of public and private housing. Provision of community facilities in the early estates was largely left up to community action groups, but in later estates the SHC recognised the need for these and planned accordingly.<sup>753</sup> Although the need was identified and some action taken in the 1970s, some estates were still developed without sufficient service planning. Mirrabooka, which was in planning stages from the early 1970s, finally had land released to the public in 1984, but had no primary school until 1989. Lack of community facilities or advance planning for public transport and communications hampered the development of the community.<sup>754</sup>

To facilitate services in its later estates, the Commission provided finance and plans to local authorities and community groups for the provision of community halls. Land was also made available at concession rates for churches, nursing centres, kindergartens and playgrounds.<sup>755</sup> From the early



Plans for SHC community hall, Karawara, c.1975  
SHC, *Annual Report, 1976* p.33

<sup>750</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>751</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.84-86

<sup>752</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, p.203

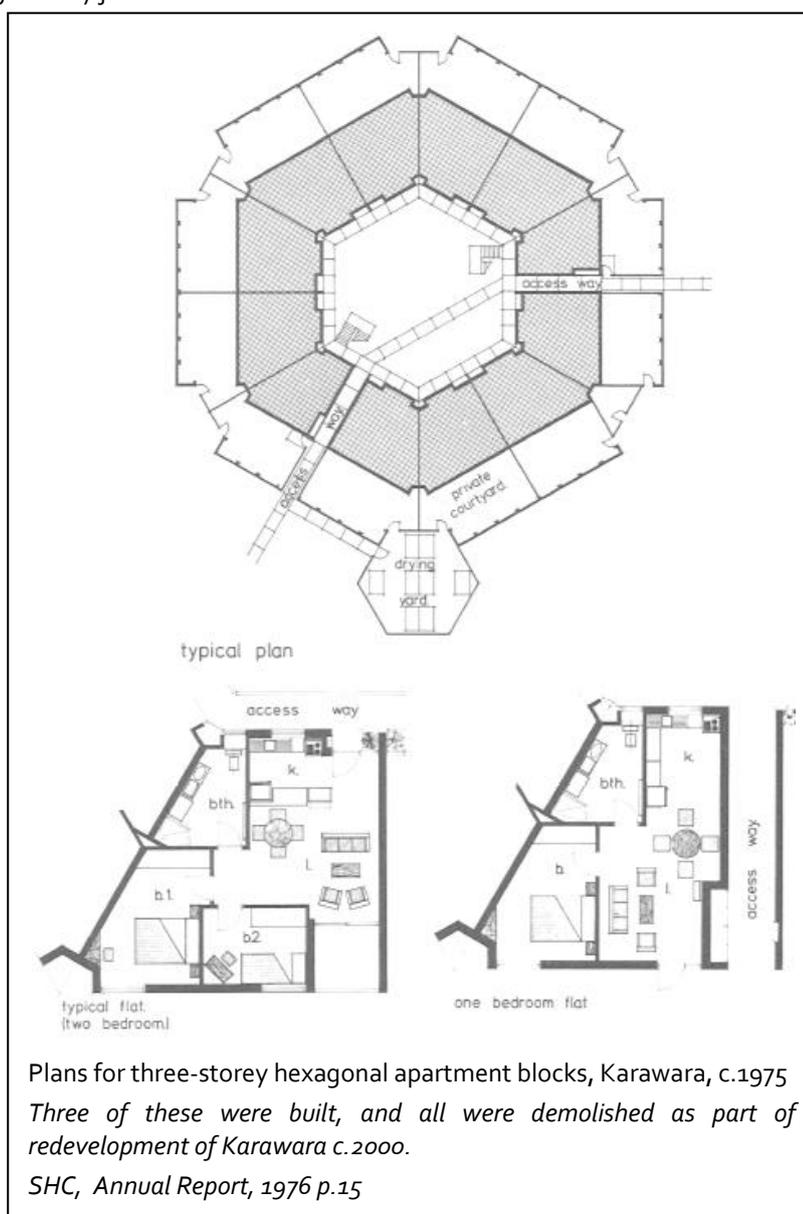
<sup>753</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.84-86

<sup>754</sup> Feilman Planning Consultants, 'Community Planning and Estate Development', September 1989, p.8

<sup>755</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

1970s, the Commission provided bridging finance for local authorities to build the necessary social infrastructure in large housing projects, such as at Karawara and Southwell/Hamilton Hill.<sup>756</sup> It also recognised that housing estates needed social, sporting, civic and commercial facilities from their inception, rather than waiting until population reached a level to demand them. This was subsequently to be built into the planning of Commission estates. The Commission also employed specialists in urban sociology to assist with community development in SHC estates. Although not stated in annual reports, it appears social problems were becoming apparent in SHC developments and causing concern.<sup>757</sup> From 1973-74, the Commission employed Community Development Officers to work with estate residents towards 'a balanced and viable community'. The first two such officers were appointed to Hamilton Hill and Koondoola, under development at the time.<sup>758</sup> Through the late 1970s into the 1980s, the Commission provided some community facilities for its estates, such as the community halls at Karawara and Queens Park. These were generally joint ventures with local authorities.<sup>759</sup>

A new housing estate was laid out from 1972 at Koonawarra (East Manning, renamed Karawara the following year) which largely did away with the traditional reliance on quarter-acre blocks. Described as a 'residential park', it allowed 15% of land for public use, and included primary school, child care, shopping centre, hotel, service station, 'drive-in chicken bar', two churches, indoor recreation centre, community hall, and 1170 residential units. Houses were to cater for a cross-section of ages, including student hostels, and were laid out along Radburn principles. In addition, the natural contours of the area were to be maintained and utilised, and native vegetation retained were possible.<sup>760</sup> By the following year the number of house units had been scaled back to 700, although college residences and student



<sup>756</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1973

<sup>757</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1974

<sup>758</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1974

<sup>759</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1978, 1980

<sup>760</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1972

hostels could potentially add up to 500 more units to that number.<sup>761</sup> Difficulties were faced when the local authority would not grant planning approval for the first 220 homes, but this was overturned at appeal.<sup>762</sup> The first homes were completed late in 1975.<sup>763</sup>

A further 'Radburn' estate was planned for Southwell (Cockburn, later renamed Hamilton Hill) from 1972.<sup>764</sup> Hamilton Hill proceeded rapidly from planning to implementation, with over 100 homes completed in 1974. The Commission offered to assist the Town of Cockburn by providing a hall, change rooms, infant health clinic and kindergarten, leased to the Town at a nominal rate.<sup>765</sup> From 1973-74, an 'allocations committee' was instituted to determine which clients were to be offered homes in the new development at Hamilton Hill. Subsequently there were 'a minimum of complaints, limited settling-in problems and virtually no requests for transfers' and it was decided to use a similar committee for allocation of housing in subsequent estates, beginning with Karawara. The work of the committee included creating a 'social map' of the area to 'gain an appreciation of household characteristics'.<sup>766</sup>

Development of Koondoola, in the Shire of Wanneroo, began in January 1973. It appears to have followed more traditional 'Garden City' planning principles.<sup>767</sup> Karawara and Hamilton Hill were to be the last Radburn developments constructed.

The use of cul-de-sacs was a feature of 1970s suburbs that did not otherwise use Radburn design philosophies. Where Radburn plans linked cul-de-sacs with pedestrian green spaces, many other suburbs developed where cul-de-sacs had no through-access, pedestrian or vehicle, and this approach was continued through into the 1980s.<sup>768</sup>

Increasingly, townhouses were favoured for SHC developments. They were seen to provide families with better privacy and independence, as they did not rely on communal areas for drying, play or parking.<sup>769</sup> By 1973, the Commission was steering away from erecting any flats or apartments, instead developing thirty new designs for single detached houses, townhouses, duplexes and courtyard housing. Radburn planning principles influenced the designs, including the use of concrete driveways and crossovers, 'ranch type fencing', and concrete raft floors. Six-foot high rear (road side) fences of timber pickets or asbestos sheeting began to be installed.<sup>770</sup>

The Commission continued to aim for social diversification by offering land within its estates to private developers. It was noted in 1974 that ideally private estates would also offer land to the Commission, thus integrating low income housing throughout residential areas, but private developers generally declined to offer land at prices affordable for SHC operations.<sup>771</sup> From 1974-75, the Commission was able to purchase some land in private developments, with private developers then constructing SHC homes on the land. In addition, around 40% of land in new SHC estates was sold into private ownership, thus increasing the diversification of communities.<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1973

<sup>762</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>763</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 19-75

<sup>764</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1972

<sup>765</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>766</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975

<sup>767</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1973

<sup>768</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.64

<sup>769</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1972

<sup>770</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1973

<sup>771</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>772</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975

Commonwealth funding for kindergartens in 1974 increased the demand for suitable kindergarten sites. The Commission made land available for this purpose in Lockridge, Balga, Langford, Girrawheen, Armadale, Coolbellup, Belmont and Geraldton.<sup>773</sup>

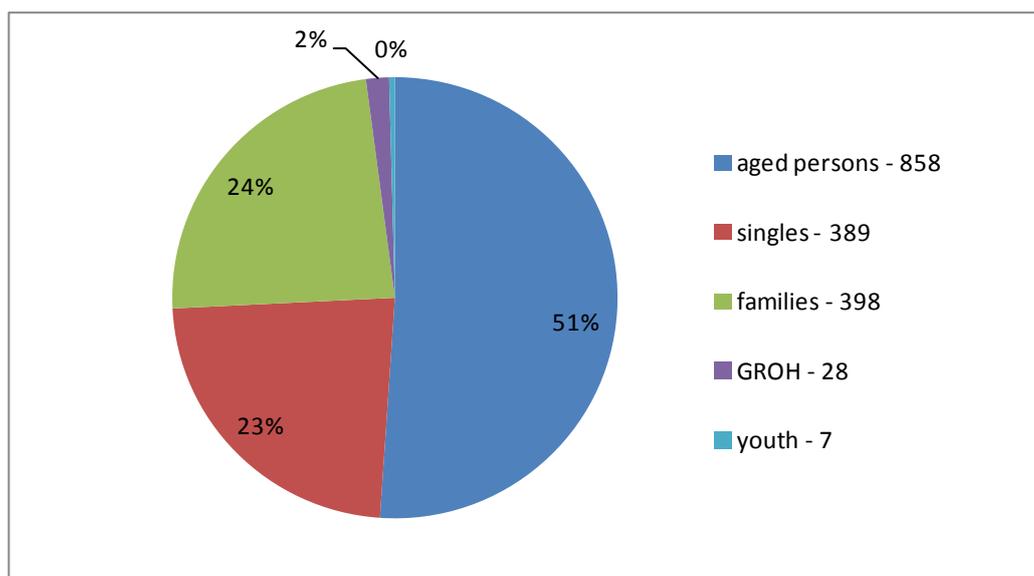
The tight economy of the mid-1970s prevented progress on town centres at Mirrabooka and South Hedland, leaving two of the Commission's largest estates without adequate services.<sup>774</sup> In an attempt to try and stabilise rapidly increasing land prices, the Commission released land suitable for building from amongst its landholdings.<sup>775</sup>

By the mid-1970s, public housing estates were widely linked to social problems. One tenant reported that 'the atmosphere in some of these areas is decidedly hostile. And after being housed in these areas some people feel they have been labelled for life'. Tenants received the benefit of secure housing and reduced rents tied with the disadvantages of poor physical and social facilities, inadequate environment especially for children, lack of choice, and restrictive and sometimes hostile regulations and officials.<sup>776</sup>

#### Places that remain in 2014:

##### Flats (including apartments)

DOH retains 1,680 housing units dated 1966 to 1975 in approximately 100 blocks of flats or apartments.<sup>777</sup> These divide by client group as:



The large number of family units at Brownlie Towers (231) and Smith St Highgate (79) together account for 78% of the family apartments/flats remaining from this period. Despite most SHC flats in the late 1960s and early 1970s being designed for young families, there are now only nine other 1965-76 apartment blocks owned by DOH in 2014 that provide family tenancies, at Orelia (x2), Carnarvon, Eden Hill, Exmouth, Fremantle (x2), Langford and Lockridge.

<sup>773</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>774</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>775</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

<sup>776</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.164-65, quote from Mrs Hoole, Sydney, p.165

<sup>777</sup> It is difficult to identify the exact number of complexes, as numbering systems vary from place to place.

It is possible that many of the flats/apartments designated for singles were originally designed for families, as a significant number of them have two bedrooms, and single people were not generally eligible for SHC housing before the 1980s.

Many of the blocks of flats from the period are complexes of eight to twelve units. There are eleven larger complexes, mostly containing between 24 and 79 units (Fremantle x3, Highgate, Beaconsfield, Mosman Park, Coolbellup, Midvale, Dianella, Karawara). Brownlie Towers, comprising 300 units in two ten-storey blocks, one two- and one three-storey block, is by far the largest complex of the period.

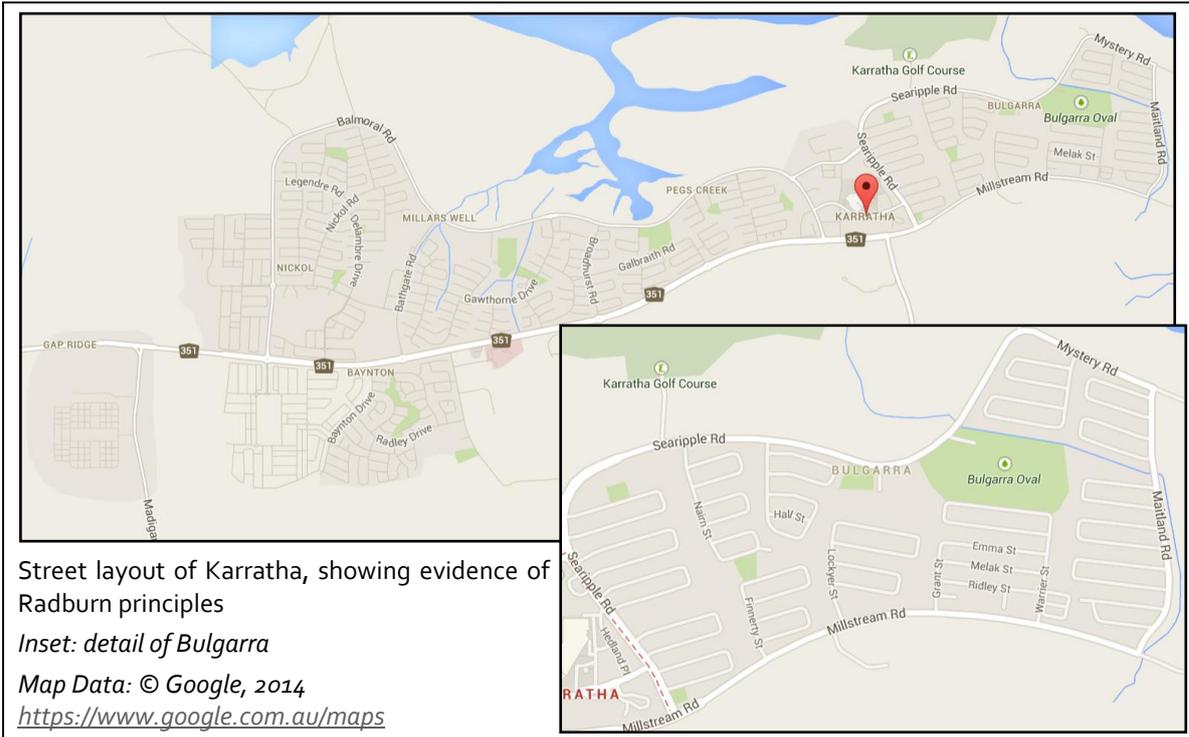
#### Radburn estates<sup>778</sup>

Bentley	Bentley was not designed specifically as a Radburn estate, but it did implement ideas of walkability and cul-de-sacs to limit traffic. Unlike true Radburn designs, it did not have a central parkland as a pedestrian link. In 2012-13, all the residences on the four cul-de-sacs and central road were demolished. The site is currently clear awaiting redevelopment. Brownlie Towers remain.
South Hedland	South Hedland was the most extensive Radburn development undertaken by the SHC. Its first four nuclei (localities of Cassia, Lawson, Shellborough and Walnut Grove) were developed as roughly circular areas with central communal spaces. There were very few link roads within or between each area, and the road pattern was a convoluted tangle of cul-de-sacs and short loops. More recent infill has removed some communal spaces, begun filling in between the original circular areas, and added some link streets, but original street layout remains largely evident. DOH retains 470 housing units dated 1970 to 1985 in South Hedland.
Withers (Bunbury)	Withers appears to be the most intact of the SHC's Radburn estates. Redevelopment in the mid-1980s removed some of the 'Radburn' features, especially by adding fencing so residences no longer opened onto the communal green spaces, to improve resident security and privacy. A road link was added, although the main parkland is still not traversed. The original layout remains easily discernible and substantial 'green space' remains. DOH retains 44 units dated 1969 to 1975 in the Radburn-design central area and 141 units dated from 1976 to 1992 in this area.
Adeline (Kalgoorlie)	Redevelopment in the mid-1980s removed some of the 'Radburn' features. Adeline had a major east-west connecting road extended through the central parkland in 2001, almost completely obscuring the Radburn intent. It is not easy to determine how many residences DOH retains in Adeline, as it is part of a much larger suburb for data purposes.
Langford	Langford had several small connecting road sections added in the late 1980s, along with redevelopment to add fencing. The central open space was subdivided as two additional residential areas and as a result the original pedestrian core is almost completely obscured. However, aerial photographs suggest it was never developed as a green space, with some uncleared bushland and a large portion possibly even being left as a sand patch, so there may never have been a communal pedestrian green space in this suburb. DOH retains 122 housing units dated 1970 to 1985.

<sup>778</sup> Historic aerial photographs <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#> accessed 19 June 2014

Note: While Metropolitan photographs are available from the 1940s at roughly ten year intervals, and more frequently in the last twenty years, photographic coverage of regional areas prior to the twenty-first century is poor.

Karawara	Karawara's layout took the minimisation of through traffic to its most extreme, as the 'ring road' never connected at the northwest corner, meaning half the suburb was accessed off one long no-through-road. The suburb originally had a series of eleven multi-storey apartment blocks located around the community hall, accessed by cul-de-sacs and the ring-road. These apartments and hall were all demolished in the late 1990s. The cul-de-sacs were joined up, central bushland was cleared and additional roads added. The new residential subdivisions created now include very large houses that show no evidence of the former government housing on site. However, some portions of the suburb retain their original layout, one section retains largely original buildings and the central east-west pedestrian parkland has been preserved. In the southern section a majority of original buildings remain. DOH retains 148 housing units in Karawara dated 1973 to 1978.
Hamilton Hill	Hamilton Hill in 2011 had a major connecting road added across its central parkland and an additional small grid of streets added onto this through-road. As a result, the original Radburn design is somewhat obscured. Without checking every street name, it is not possible to easily determine how many residences DOH retains in the Radburn section of Hamilton Hill, as it is part of a much larger suburb for data purposes. However, it appears the majority of DOH's 151 residences in Hamilton Hill constructed between 1973 and 1985 are in the area, including a closely-located group of 25 housing units.
Armadale	SHC built around 450 dwellings in Armadale in the 1970s, but does not discuss it in annual reports as an SHC estate. Some sections of the suburb appear to have Radburn characteristics, but this may be more in response to the course of Neerigen Brook through the area than an adherence to Radburn philosophy. DOH retains 437 housing units in Armadale, of which nearly 70% date from 1967 to 1995.
Greenwood	The suburb was developed by the SHC mostly for purchase homes. The SHC built around 80 dwellings in the suburb in the 1970s and the street layout, particularly in the western part of the suburb, has central parklands accessed by cul-de-sacs and, more dominantly, loop roads. SHC retains 47 housing units in Greenwood, of which 44 were constructed between 1971 and 1978. Warwick, a neighbouring suburb developed by the SHC as a purchase-estate around the same time (1973) did not adopt Radburn principles.
Karratha	Possibly the most intact example of Radburn design remaining in the State is at Karratha, with almost the whole town (except a small southwest section) arranged in loop roads accessed from minimal ring-roads and through roads. Laid out from 1968, it clearly has Radburn influences. The design is most pronounced in the eastern portion of Karratha (Bulgarra), which remains one 'superblock' with open-space pedestrian corridors but no through-roads. Although not an estate designed by the SHC, DOH retains 156 homes in Karratha from the 1970s, including many in Bulgarra.



**14 FROM COMMUNITY TO PRIVACY (1970S-1980S)**

The SHC appears to have ceased laying out substantial new government housing estates in the mid- to late-1970s, although construction of houses in the areas planned in the early 1970s continued into the early 1980s (eg. Balga, Lockridge, South Hedland, Karawara, Hamilton Hill, Karratha). The focus on increasing residential density turned from building blocks of flats in new areas to 'renewing' low-density suburbs of the post-war period. See [Section 14.1](#).

The Commission articulated its aims in 1977 as:

*'to provide accommodation, consistent with acceptable community standards, for those families and individuals considered to be in need of public housing assistance; to improve the living environment of tenants and provide to them the maximum level of service, both consistent with sound property management practice; and, to achieve these aims while remaining financially viable and moving to a position of less dependence on external capital funding'.<sup>779</sup>*

Details of these goals noted that housing should not be below the standard of private homes 'for comparable income ranges'. Low-to-medium population densities of twenty persons per acre were seen as ideal, and design was to 'maximise the proportion of accommodation units providing individual ground floor entrance and private "exclusive use" area of land'. Commission homes were also to be designed to be fully integrated amongst private housing.<sup>780</sup>

From 1974-75, contractors were permitted to use their own designs and specifications, or the Commissions, or a mix of both, resulting in improved construction performance in the Metropolitan area. Designs tendered had to be comparable with SHC designs, and be completed within 18 weeks. In the first year of the new approach, 195 single detached homes were erected.<sup>781</sup> This was the beginning of a shift away from in-house government design and standard plans towards privately-produced unique designs for each project. The following year, 153 such homes were contracted, approximately one quarter of the Metropolitan homes built.<sup>782</sup> By 1976-77, the majority of Metropolitan SHC homes were built under this 'Design and Construct' approach.<sup>783</sup>

From October 1976, the Commission ceased to finance under long-term conditions the purchase of new houses in the Metropolitan area or those occupied throughout the State by tenants. Sales were subsequently made on a cash basis. Finance was provided by a Home Builders Account, with eligibility criteria set by the *Housing Agreement Act* of 1973, or by outside sources where clients were not eligible for such and account.<sup>784</sup> This brought to an end the system of assisting low-income workers into home ownership that had been initiated with the 1912 *Workers' Homes Act*.

Through the 1970s, the Commission increasingly became concerned with client satisfaction. Services beyond the immediate provision of shelter developed, including community development workers engaging estate communities to work together for local amenities such as public transport, kindergartens, telephones, lights, footpaths, shops, playgroups, holiday activities, youth groups and

<sup>779</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977, quote from p.8

<sup>780</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977, quotes from p.9

<sup>781</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1975

<sup>782</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>783</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 19-77

<sup>784</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

resident newsletters. Residents were consulted in advance of redevelopment proposals, such as at Redcliffe and North Midvale.<sup>785</sup>

The ethnic make-up of Australia, which had been diversifying since World War Two, expanded from the 1970s with the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1973. Many post-war migrants were accommodated in government housing, particularly those who were government or industrial workers. However, as government housing was increasingly provided only for a low-income minority of the population, and migrants were increasingly required to have particular skills and/or capital in order to migrate, fewer new migrants utilised government housing. Humanitarian arrivals ('refugees'), however, often arrived in need of significant assistance. In the 1950s and 1960s, these were largely Eastern Europeans. From the 1970s, Australia began accepting non-European immigrants, including refugees from South East Asia and South America. Chileans began arriving following the 1973 military coup. The first Vietnamese refugees, an ethnic group that was to significantly shape Australian society, arrived in 1976. In the ensuing decades, refugees have arrived from many parts of the world, both making their own way and through overseas refugee camps. More recently numbers have increased from Africa, sub-continental Asia and the Middle East.<sup>786</sup> In a 2003 national study of over 9,000 public housing tenants, 4% identified as migrants or refugees, while 10% did not speak English at home and 31% were born outside Australia.<sup>787</sup> By comparison, at the 2011 census, 37.1% of Western Australians and 30.2% of Australians were born outside Australia, but only 2% did not speak English at home, while for those who had been in Australia less than five years ('recent arrivals'), 3.1% spoke no English. Overall, around 17% of migrants were recent arrivals.<sup>788</sup> In 2014, the Australian Department of Social Services provides settlement assistance to new arrivals through contracted service providers, but refugees are not prioritised for public housing and most find accommodation in the private rental market.<sup>789</sup> The long waiting lists for government housing mean that, although many refugees would meet application criteria, settlement support agencies now generally assist them to find private housing rather than enter the government housing system.<sup>790</sup> A very small amount of crisis accommodation specifically for migrants and refugees is provided through Community Housing.<sup>791</sup> Migrants and refugees are part of the public housing story because they are part of the Australian story, but after the initial post-war decades most do not have a particular public housing history.

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<sup>785</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>786</sup> Refugee Council of Australia <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/f/rhp-hist.php> and Australian Government <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/changing-face-of-modern-australia-1950s-to-1970s> both accessed 15 May 2014

<sup>787</sup> Department of Family and Community Services, 'National Social Housing Survey of Public Housing Tenants 2003', p.142

<sup>788</sup> ABS <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> and 'Migrant families in Australia' <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3416.0Main+Features2Mar+2013> accessed 23 June 2014.

Note: These figures include a large number of Australians who did not state their place of birth on the census. Of those Australians who did give their birth country, 27% were born overseas. (Niki Ward, ABS, email to Clare Menck, 25 June 2014)

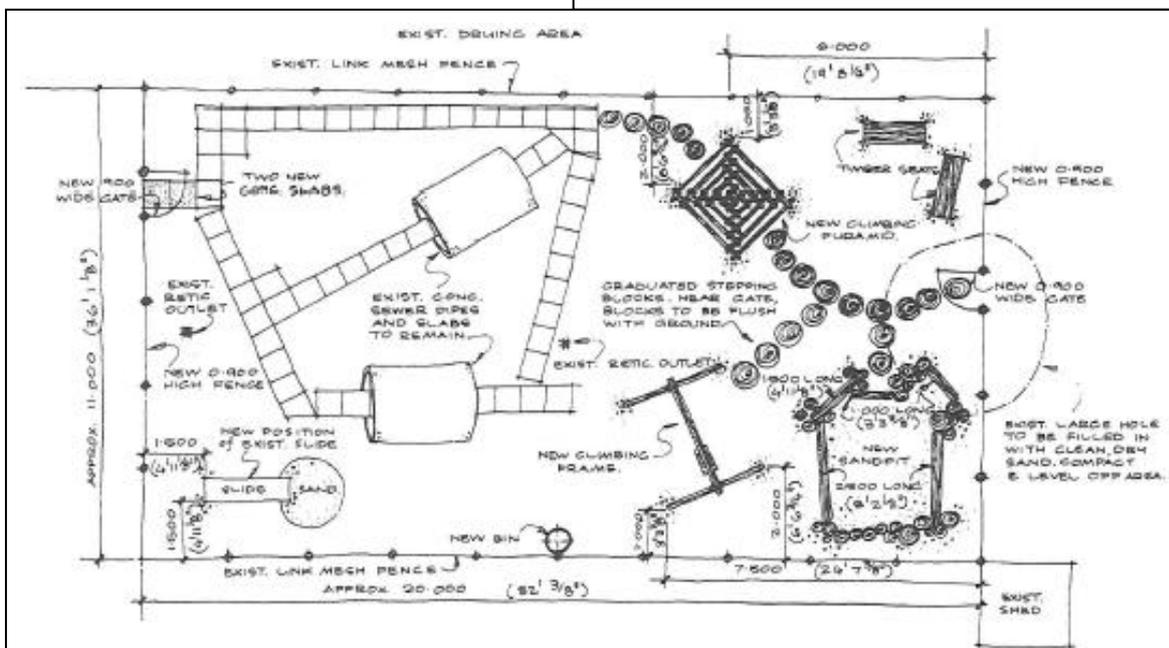
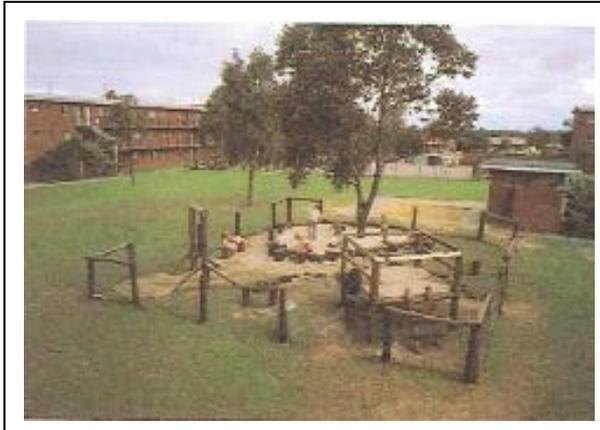
<sup>789</sup> Department of Social Services, 'Fact Sheet 98 – Settlement Services for Refugees', <http://www.dss.gov.au> accessed 16 May 2014

<sup>790</sup> Andrew Williams, Refugee Council of Australia, and Yvonne Cooper, Coordinator Humanitarian Settlement Services, Communicare Inc., emails to Clare Menck, 16 May 2014

<sup>791</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014. At 31 May 2014, two single detached houses were listed as crisis accommodation for migrants and refugees.

A 1977 report was completed by the Commission to investigate the particular needs of single parent families. Flats in particular were used to accommodate single parents. Consequently, their lack of security became an issue of concern. While the SHC claimed it had addressed issues from the 1977 report, groups lobbied for better lighting, stronger door and window locks, fencing of ground floor flats and installation of public telephones. In 1980-81, \$225,000 was spent on improving lighting, but many of the other concerns were not addressed.<sup>792</sup>

Although play areas were included in Commission apartment developments from the 1960s, the increasing emphasis through the 1970s on providing services as well as housing led to the Commission planning to provide play equipment at all its apartment blocks. Basic playgrounds were to include 'seating, a swing or slide, a log structure for climbing, a sand pit and fencing' and communities were encouraged to group together to fund additions to the basic equipment.<sup>793</sup>



Plan and photographs of typical 1970s playgrounds in SHC estates

SHC, *Annual Report, 1978* p.29

<sup>792</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*; Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.86

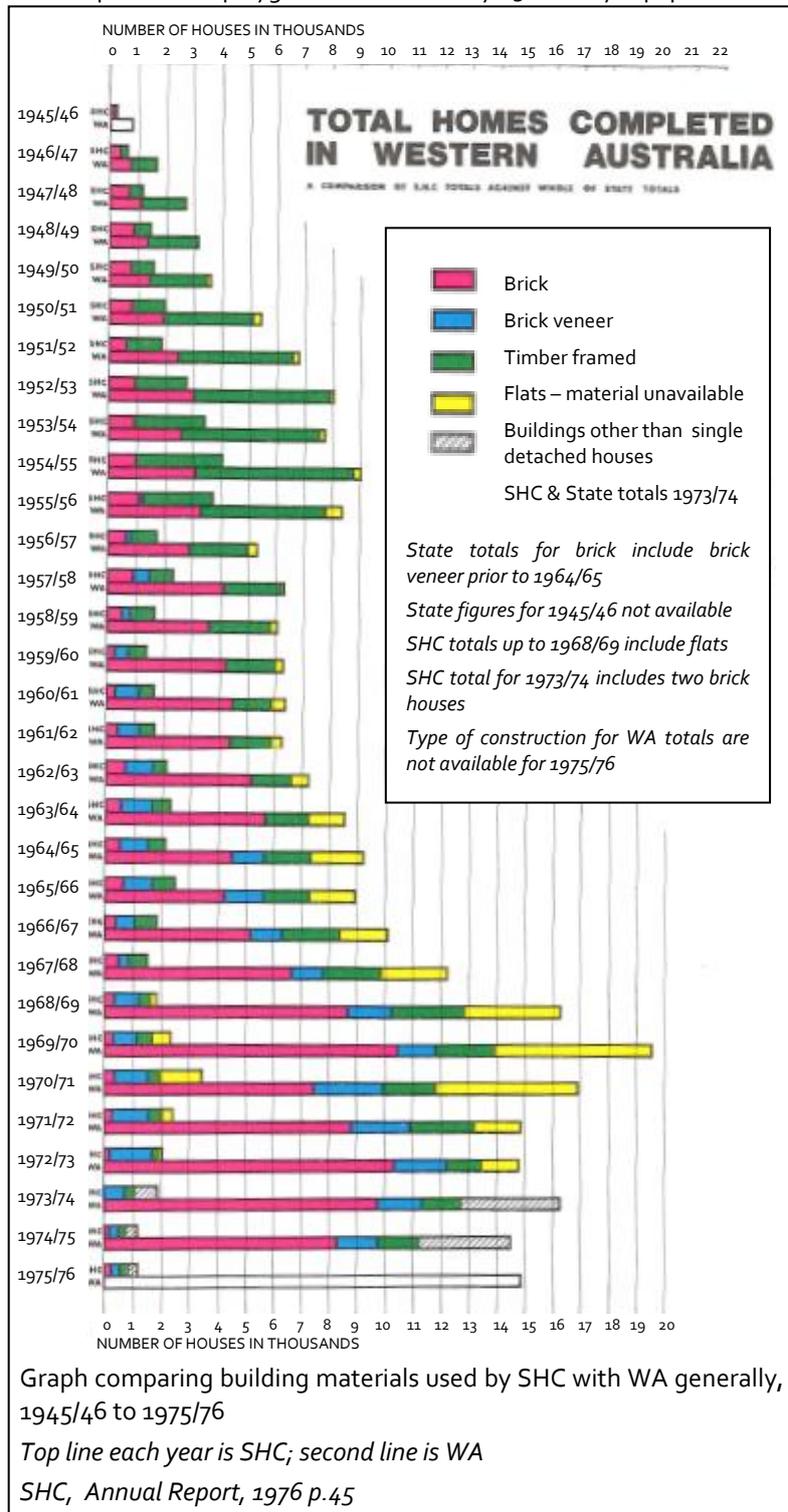
<sup>793</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

The playgrounds policy, developed in 1977, aimed to install fifty playgrounds a year in SHC apartment complexes. This goal initially proved overly ambitious, but with the help of a team from an Aboriginal employment program, all apartment complexes had playgrounds installed by 1980. Play equipment was largely constructed of unfinished 'bush pole' timbers.<sup>794</sup>

From 1977, the Commission formalised a policy to allow its residences to be used for non-residential purposes for the benefit of the community. This had been occurring in an ad hoc manner previously. Non-residential uses included community welfare agencies, resident groups, health facilities or volunteer agencies. Community use was intended as a temporary measure until community facilities could be constructed, and was particularly important in country areas.<sup>795</sup> Ten years later, 116 Homeswest properties were in community use, with Homeswest subsidising more than \$80,000 of rent per year to support community groups offering services from Homeswest properties, including child minding, pre-school, low-priced food and clothing outlets, temporary accommodation and counselling centres.<sup>796</sup>

By 1978, SHC homes were constructed of steel frames, concrete or timber floors, panelised systems, transportables, brick veneer, masonry veneer and double brick. It appears the

Commission in general no longer built timber-framed homes and, with the exception of its panelised and transportable units, had done away with fibrous cement or asbestos cladding.<sup>797</sup>



<sup>794</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1979, 1980

<sup>795</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1979

<sup>796</sup> SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1987

The SHC claimed at the end of the 1970s to have 'the cheapest housing rents in Australia, the shortest waiting periods, the most generous rebate scale, and a just transfer system'. Apparently, 'activist groups' had been criticising the Commission.<sup>798</sup> Social activism, which had become more main-stream through the 1960s, was on the rise in the 1970s. Increasing dissatisfaction was expressed with 'anonymous modern design' and pressure mounted for wider inclusion in decision making processes. Social justice became a dominant theme. Both feminism and environmentalism emerged as strong movements, heritage issues began to weigh into public debate, and Aboriginal rights came into the spotlight, influencing government policy at many levels including urban planning.<sup>799</sup>

From the late 1970s, the SHC began a policy of designing homes to blend into surrounding suburbs. Initially this was implemented in well-established suburbs. The three first examples cited in annual reports were at Subiaco, North Fremantle and Mosman Park.

At Subiaco in 1977-78, thirteen houses were demolished and a complex of 64 homes was planned to replace them. It was noted that in designing the new complex 'the character of Subiaco had been taken into account'.<sup>800</sup> Heights were restricted to two-storeys and 'an earthy appearance of brick and tile' was aimed for. The site was on Subiaco Road, directly opposite Subiaco oval.<sup>801</sup>

Similarly, a new development of 12 two-bedroom homes, 14 aged-persons bedsits and 12 bedsits for working couples was under construction at North Fremantle, using 'ochre-coloured flush jointed blockwork to simulate local limestone', and Colorbond roof sheeting, 'to complete the early Fremantle character'.<sup>802</sup> Low-profile was a feature of the design, despite nearby high rise development. Other design



Townhouses at Mosman Park, c.1979, designed to 'blend in'  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>797</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*. Note: the last recorded timber-framed homes are in 1975-76, but no data is provided for the interim years.

<sup>798</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>799</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation, 2010*, pp.27-28

<sup>800</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*, quotes from pp.9&12

<sup>801</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>802</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*, quotes from pp.9&12



Award-winning SHC townhouse development, Harvest Road North Fremantle, c.1980  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1980 p.18*

aims were maximisation of privacy, utilisation of river views, surveillance of vehicles, shared pass to rear yards, retention of existing trees, using the site's contours and low-maintenance landscaping. The completed complex was used to house small families and aged persons.<sup>803</sup> The North Fremantle development, in Harvest Road, won an award in 1980 for its 'contribution to the built environment of the City of Fremantle'.<sup>804</sup> At Mosman Park in the same period, a development of 28 two-storey townhouses and seven pensioner units was designed to be 'harmonious with surrounding new residential development'.<sup>805</sup>

However, as the Harvest Road development was a two-storey complex in a street of mostly single-storey workers' cottages dating from the turn of the twentieth century, this development was still a long way from 'blending in'.<sup>806</sup> The Subiaco townhouses were likewise distinctly different to surrounding Subiaco homes but, as the Commission complex comprised almost all the houses in an area bounded by Subiaco Oval and the railway, there was little adjacent housing to be directly compared with. At Mosman Park, already an area including medium and high density housing, the new homes were less conspicuous. All three 1978 townhouse developments appear to have been constructed to very similar plans.<sup>807</sup>

By the end of the 1970s, the Commission was still constructing single residences and duplexes in groups. In 1978-79, fifty homes were erected using this method.<sup>808</sup>

<sup>803</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*, quote from p.11

<sup>804</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*, quote from p.18

<sup>805</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*, quote from p.11

<sup>806</sup> Clare Menck, research notes for review of the Fremantle Municipal Heritage Inventory, 2004

<sup>807</sup> Google streetview images from January 2010 <https://www.google.com.au> accessed 1 May 2014

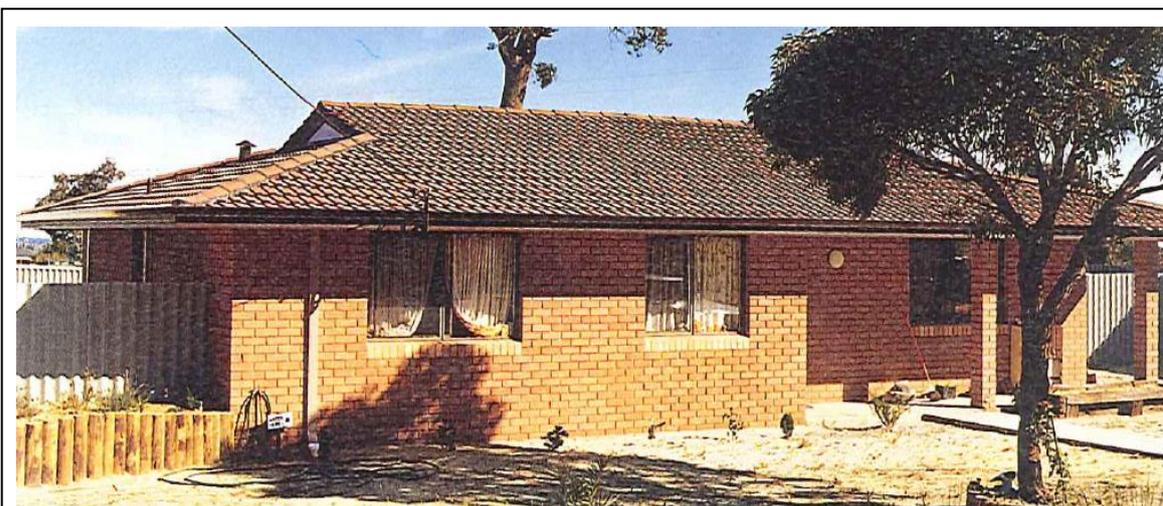
<sup>808</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*



In 1980, it was anticipated that 1,000 new rental units would be required each year for at least three years to meet ordinary rental demand. At the same time, Commonwealth funding had been progressively reduced over several years, and a portion of what was granted was required to be spent on Aboriginal housing.<sup>809</sup> A government directive to address housing shortages in the Northwest ahead of the planned North West Gas Project led to a focus of SHC projects in that area in the early 1980s.<sup>810</sup>

The 1978 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* continued the shift of the 1973 Agreement towards 'welfare housing'. However, the needy groups now targeted for housing were to pay more for the privilege, as rents were now to be charged at market rather than economic rates. That is, government rents were tied to private rental rates rather than to the original cost of the house. Rental rebates continued to be provided for those on low incomes, and the number of tenants requiring rebates leapt in response to the rental changes. The changes were part of a philosophy that 'it was better to subsidise the household rather than the house'. The higher rents, coupled with increasing schemes to move low-income earners towards home ownership, saw many more stable public tenants move out of public housing estates to be replaced with tenants with multiple disadvantages and associated social problems. A greater proportion of public tenants were now on 'benefits'. It has been argued that the combined effects of the move to market rents further stigmatised public housing and that the extensive social problems of public housing estates, such as alienation, social dysfunction, antisocial behaviour and aggression, can be traced particularly to the policy shifts of the late 1970s.<sup>811</sup> However, the lack of support services, community facilities, public transport and employment opportunities that plagued outer suburban government housing estates around the country had been characteristics of the developments since at least the roll-out of Radburn estates from the late 1960s, with the SHC noting concerns about such issues in its annual reports of the early 1970s.

The 1978 Agreement also required States to match Commonwealth funding for housing, which many were not in a financial position to do. It ran just over two years, to 1981, when it was extended to 1984 as a stop-gap while the government planned major changes to housing policy. However, as in the early 1970s, the planned changes did not eventuate as the Federal government changed to Labor from 1983.<sup>812</sup>



Three-bedroom home, Forrestfield, built c.1981 under the *State Housing Act 1980* Loan Scheme  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1982*

<sup>809</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>810</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>811</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.181-84, quote repeated variously

<sup>812</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.185-87

In 1981, the Commission initiated a 'rent warrantee' scheme whereby Aboriginal pensioners could opt to have their pension sent to the Commission, who would deduct rent payments and forward the remainder to the client. This scheme was extremely successful in reducing arrears payments and within three years was available to all SHC clients on fixed pensions.<sup>813</sup>

A new *State Housing Act* was brought into operation from 1981, replacing the 1947 *State Housing Act*, which had 'become very limited in its scope'. Among changes, the Board of Commissioners no longer had members representing particular interest groups. The 1981 *State Housing Act* brought the Commission back into the business of vendor finance, five years after this had been discontinued. In 1980-81, the Commission put out tenders for 77 homes to be built specifically for sale to low-income clients. The Commission also gained approval in 1980 to become a Lending Institution under the 1978 *Housing Agreement Act*. This allowed it to assist tenants to purchase their Commission homes with the same terms and conditions as applied through terminating building societies who received funds under this Act. While most homes under these schemes were purchased by 'contracts to buy', some were cash sales.<sup>814</sup>

In the early 1980s, economic downturn saw increasing demand for Commission housing. The number of unemployed young people applying for housing was increasing. The Commission



Three-bedroom purchase home, Lockridge, 1983  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1983*

at the time maintained, however, that it could not build accommodation for these young people without undermining its primary objectives of providing housing for families, pensioners and single parents.<sup>815</sup>

From the early 1980s, the Commission made available serviced lots to selected builders to allow them to provide combined 'house and land packages' to buyers, referred to as 'Select and Construct'. Initially this



'Select & Construct' home, Willetton, 1984  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1984*

applied at Balga, Willetton and Jandakot, with Mirrabooka to follow.<sup>816</sup> By 1985, 'Select and Construct' had become a substantial portion of the Commission's building program, with 1,015 housing lots made available in 1984-85 to build 269 rental homes, 315 purchase homes for Commission clients, and 431 joint venture lots for project builders. Twenty-six builders participated, providing 45 different rental

<sup>813</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1984*

<sup>814</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1981*

<sup>815</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1982*

<sup>816</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1984*

designs.<sup>817</sup> 'Select and Construct' provided finance to Homeswest clients to build on Homeswest land.<sup>818</sup>

Commonwealth funding for public housing had declined dramatically after 1975. By 1981-82, Commonwealth funding was barely 8% of what it had been in 1974-75. This funding decline, together with the ongoing requirement for States to



'Select & Construct' home, Koondoola, 1984  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1984 p.11*

repay Commonwealth funds, which were in fact long-term loans, had a crippling effect on the States' ability to provide sufficient housing.<sup>819</sup> From 1983, Commonwealth funding for housing began to increase again, allowing the SHC's building program to expand.<sup>820</sup> Both State and Federal governments changed from Coalition to Labor control early in 1983. Hawke, as part of his 1983 Federal election campaign, pledged to double public housing to 10% of all housing stock nationally. Several years of accelerated building programs, however, did not meet this target, partly because government properties were being sold off as well as newly constructed. By 1988, government rental housing accounted for 5.2% of all housing in Australia.<sup>821</sup>

In addition to more building, purchase of houses in existing residential areas was increased, with the aim of integrating public housing tenants into the wider community.<sup>822</sup> This 'spot purchase' program had acquired 448 properties by June 1985, and it was hoped it would create 'an acceptance of government housing in substantially private areas of the community'.<sup>823</sup>

In February 1982, a scheme was initiated to allow eligible persons purchasing their own homes to take out Commission loans for building extensions to accommodate their own parents. Initially there was little interest in the scheme. However, the offer gradually began to be taken up, with 20 applications received in 1983-84 and five loans approved.<sup>824</sup> It appears many applicants did not proceed with plans, as by 1985 only seven projects had been completed.<sup>825</sup>

In the mid-1980s, the Commission undertook subdivisions to provide several thousand new housing lots in the Metropolitan area. At Mirrabooka, a new subdivision of 300 lots was laid out according to design principles that created 'a series of small, physically defined and identifiable residential precincts or villages', each of around 80 homes, each with only one entry road and centred around a small open space. As there would be no through-traffic in these 'villages', road reserves and pavement widths were 'reduced below traditional standards' as an economy measure.<sup>826</sup>

<sup>817</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>818</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>819</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012, p.188*

<sup>820</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*

<sup>821</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012, pp.189, 192 & 200-01*

<sup>822</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*

<sup>823</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>824</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*

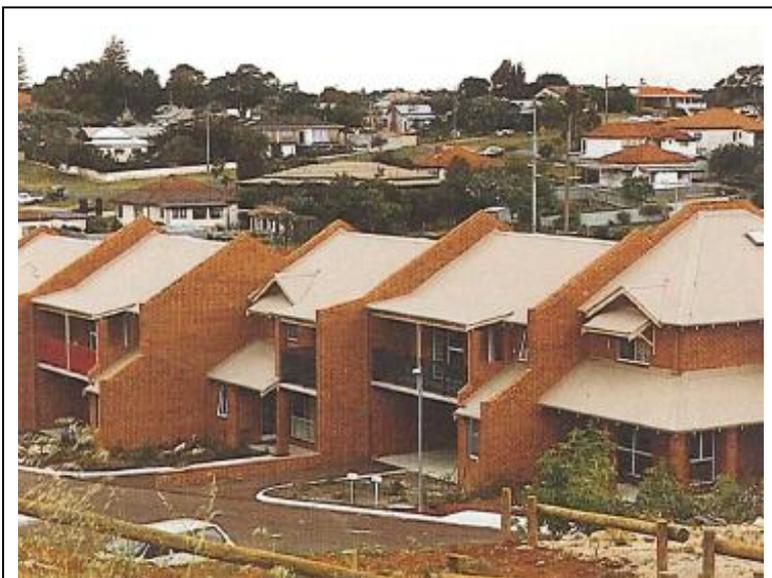
<sup>825</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>826</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984, quotes from p.10*

New designs were developed in 1983-84 for single-storey two- and three-bedroom townhouses, all with carports. Single storey designs were desired to 'relate to surrounding urban properties'. Two-bedroom corner duplexes were also designed, to address the requirements of some local authorities to have frontages to both streets.<sup>827</sup>

Following Commonwealth initiatives in 1983-84 to provide childcare facilities in high-needs areas, the Commission developed a standard plan for a 40-place daycare centre, featuring three or four play areas, all with covered play areas and access to outdoor playgrounds, toilets for each age group, flexible-use dining area, staff room, natural lighting and minimal passageways. The plans were 'residential in scale and character' so they would 'blend in' to neighbourhoods. Efficient circulation was also a design objective.<sup>828</sup> The first centres were completed in 1984-85 at Coolbellup, Victoria Park and Duncraig.<sup>829</sup>

In preparation for Fremantle hosting the America's Cup in 1986-87, the Commission planned additional housing support in anticipation of private tenants being moved out by redevelopment projects or increasing rents. Supply of an additional 400 homes in the Fremantle area was proposed. A former woolstore in South Fremantle, between Marine Terrace and South Terrace, was purchased for conversion to 63 units, to be designed to reflect the historic architecture of the area.<sup>830</sup> Other projects included 52 units in Stevens Street, conversion of the former North Fremantle Ice Works into 20 units, 24 units on the site of the former North Fremantle Fire Station, and 9 units in Burford Place. Most were designed in-house, but the woolstore and Burford Place developments were designed by private architects. All were designed in close liaison with the City of Fremantle 'to reflect the unique historic character of Fremantle'.<sup>831</sup> Homeswest aimed to design and construct residences that did not 'diminish local standards'. Attention to the amenity of the neighbourhood was a particular concern in Fremantle projects.<sup>832</sup>



Homeswest Rental housing built in readiness for the America's Cup  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1987*

By the mid-1980s, most SHC homes were constructed of masonry, with some masonry veneer in country areas and the Northwest. Timber-framed homes were still built in areas with 'doubtful subsoils (clay etc)', seismic risk, or remote locations where masonry was difficult to obtain.<sup>833</sup>

A bond scheme was established in 1984 to assist clients trying to break into the private rental market. At the same time, the Commission initiated several new schemes to assist clients

<sup>827</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*, quote from p.12

<sup>828</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*, quote from p.12

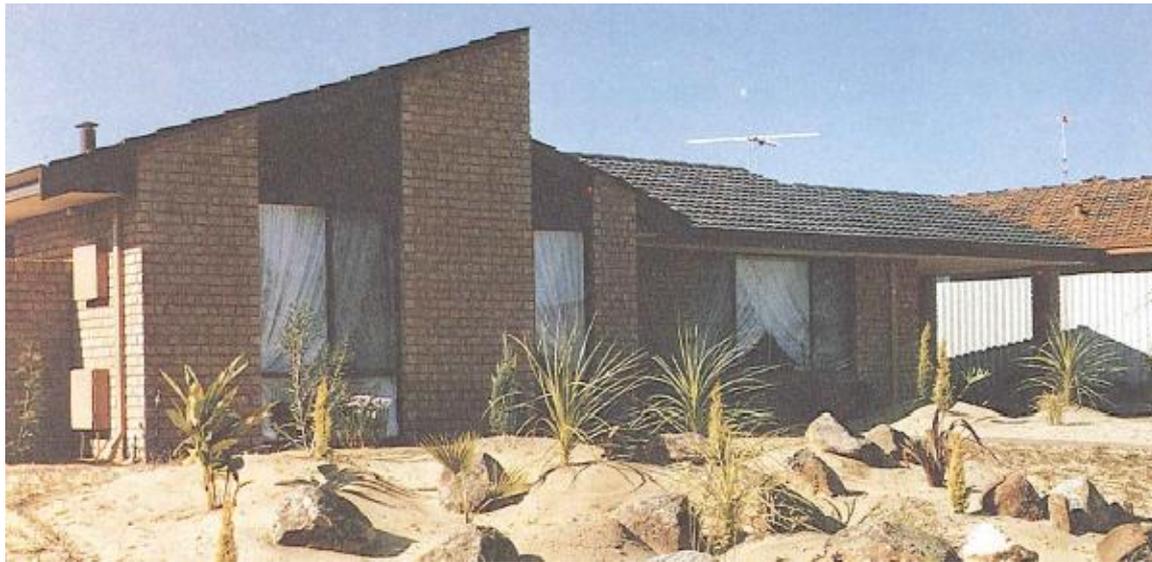
<sup>829</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>830</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>831</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*, quote from p.25

<sup>832</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>833</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*. Note: initially SHC annual reports use 'masonry' to distinguish from brick (mostly concrete), but later it includes brick



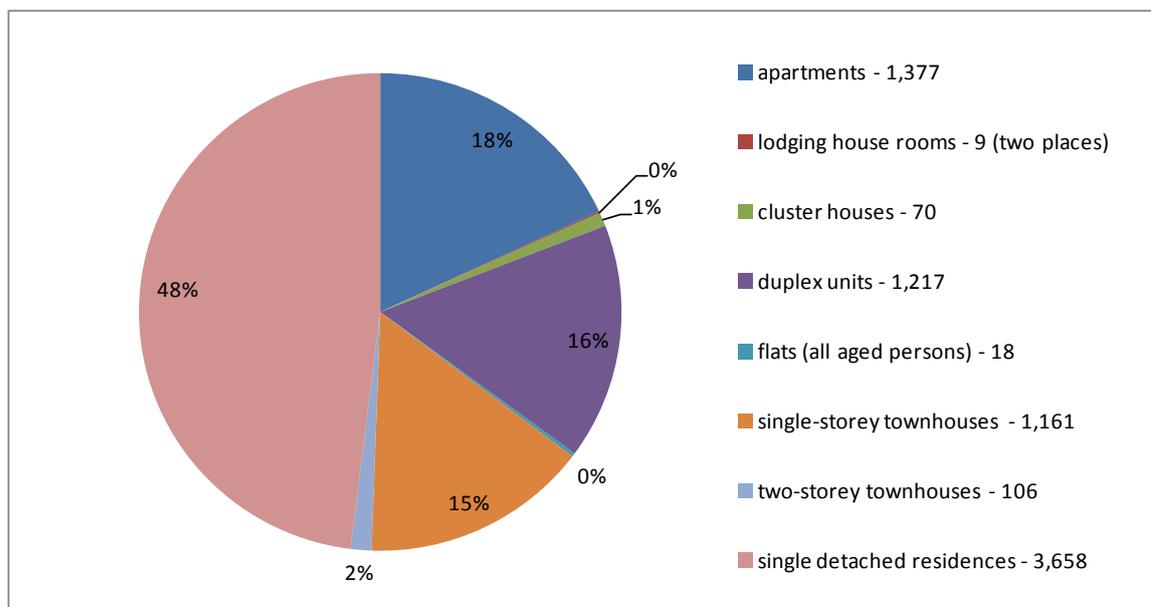
New Homeswest rental property, Kingsley, 1986  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1986 p.30*

with purchasing their own homes, including the First Mortgage Scheme, Flexible Deposit Scheme, Shared Equity Scheme and Senior Citizens Purchase Scheme.<sup>834</sup>

From 1985, the Commission moved to install heating in all its properties. Up to this time, heating units had only been provided in apartments, townhouses and pensioner units.<sup>835</sup>

*Places that remain in 2014*

In 2014, DOH retains 7,616 housing units constructed between 1976 and 1985. These divide as follows:



An additional 415 units are included in community housing stock, comprising 20 apartments, five lodging

<sup>834</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>835</sup> SHC, *In House, Vol.1 No.2 June 1985 p.2*

house rooms, eight duplex units, 192 'non-standard' units, 45 townhouses (23 single-storey, 3 two-storey, 19 unspecified), 19 single detached houses and 126 non-specified units.

#### America's Cup Housing

DOH retains 99 housing units in Fremantle dating from 1984 to 1986, and another eight in North Fremantle.

No units remain in the former ice works (Norfolk Street), although the complex remains extant, with some units now advertised as luxury short stay corporate apartments.

Four townhouses remain Stevens St, with another 65 housing units in the same block (various street addresses), which was originally earmarked for high rise development in the 1970s that did not progress.

Eight two-storey townhouses remain at Burford Place (North Fremantle).

The site of the former North Fremantle fire station, probably the corner of Thompson and Alfred Roads, retains a complex of two-storey townhouses but none are owned by DOH.

#### 'Blend-in' design

All three late-1970s townhouse complexes mentioned as early examples are still in DOH ownership (Subiaco, North Fremantle, Mosman Park).

#### 'Select and Construct'

As this approach was generally intended for purchase homes, it is unlikely DOH retains many of these residences. DOH retains some 1982-1985 single detached residences in the areas noted as first using the approach (Balga, Mirrabooka, Willetton but not Jandakot) but it is not known if these residences were built in this way.

#### 'Design and Construct'

This approach was used from 1975 and became the main approach through the 1970s, so most properties from this period are likely to relate to this theme.

#### Groups of 1976-1985 housing remain in DOH ownership

Over 200 units: Broome (240), Carnarvon (218 units), Karratha (330), South Hedland (404)

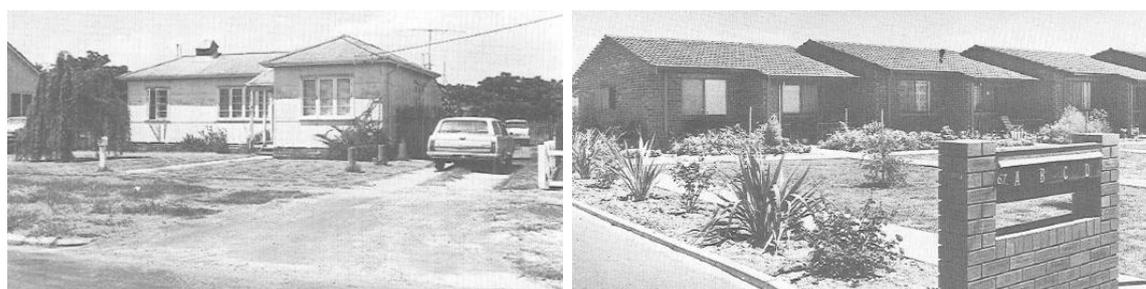
Over 100 units: Albany (155), Armadale (120), Balga (119), Beaconsfield (176), Busselton (100), Derby (124), Hamilton Hill (131), Kununurra (120), Mandurah (104), Maylands (101), Mirrabooka (118), Northam (101), Spalding (Geraldton) (118), Westminster (102), Withers (113)

Under 100 units: Carlisle (97), Forrestfield (91), Girrawheen (85), Halls Creek (57), Koondoola (95), Wickham (84)

### 14.1 URBAN RENEWAL & CONSOLIDATION (1976-1993)

From the mid-1970s, the SHC began to address perceived problems in its early, low density housing estates through a series of urban renewal projects.

Urban renewal was taken to mean completely replacing houses deemed no longer suitable for upgrading, while retaining and upgrading those that could be reused.<sup>836</sup> The aim was to replace old housing and make more economical use of the land. New dwellings were 'more durable and modern'.<sup>837</sup> The first renewal project, at Midland (Midvale), began in 1976 and was completed by late 1978. The new development provided 169 housing units, with 22 given to families relocating from the decommissioned houses. This roughly doubled the housing density of the earlier residential area.<sup>838</sup>



Midland redevelopment, before & after, 1976 & 1978

*SHC, Annual Report, 1978 p.39*

Increasing housing density was a popular planning philosophy of the 1970s and 1980s. Proponents cited improved efficiency in providing services and utilities and increased walking or cycling of residents. Opponents saw increased densities as destroying existing community structures and interactions, lamented the loss of open space, environmental impacts of fewer plants and more hard surfaces, and reduction in productive garden space. They also disputed claims of reduced vehicle usage, as few residents had employment opportunities within walk or cycle distance. Medium density was often proposed by planners and architects with excellent intention, but in practice low budgets, poor planning controls and opportunistic developers led to medium density developments that were far from ideal.<sup>839</sup>

Beaconsfield began to be 'renewed' from 1977, and Redcliffe, in Belmont, was also in early stages of renewal planning at this time.<sup>840</sup> Redevelopment of Beaconsfield was finally completed in 1985, with the new development comprising 187 housing units and the estate renamed 'Davies Park' (also 'Davis Park').<sup>841</sup> At Willagee, 493 units were renovated in 1978-80.<sup>842</sup>



Pensioner units c.1980, built as 'renewal' of Beaconsfield

*SHC, Annual Report, 1980 p.33*

<sup>836</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977 and 1978*

<sup>837</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*, quote from p.44

<sup>838</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978 and 1979*

<sup>839</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.190-91

<sup>840</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>841</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>842</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

Every attempt was made to communicate with SHC clients and all other relevant parties throughout renewal processes, but the Commission admitted it was a learning process. When plans were initiated for renewal of 148 residences at Beaconsfield, there was some unrest amongst private residents who would become neighbours to the new development, which the Commission addressed by sending representatives doorknocking and setting up a local information centre.<sup>843</sup>



Two-bedroom duplex at Queens Park, before and after redevelopment, 1978-80  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1979*

Plans to 'renew' Maniana (now Queens Park) were deferred, with upgrades instigated instead to give the suburb another 20 years life.<sup>844</sup> Three hundred units were substantially reconstructed in the suburb 1978-1980.<sup>845</sup> 'Reconstruction' involved stripping homes back to only studwork, floors and roof, extending the lounge and enclosing rear verandahs, recladding the exterior with brick veneer, providing all new internal linings and fittings, installing gas stove and hot water, and constructing new kitchen and linen cupboards. Twenty units for the temporary accommodation of tenants displaced by this reconstruction were provided, along with a rent free period to compensate for the inconvenience.<sup>846</sup>

Residents of Brownlie Towers, and other concerned persons, requested changes at the Towers, and the Commission agreed in 1978 to remodel the undercroft area into community rooms for pensioner and children's activities.<sup>847</sup> The undercroft of one tower was enclosed with lightweight framing in 1979-80 to create a daycare centre and a pensioners' club.<sup>848</sup>



Redevelopment of Goonadah Apartments, Coolbellup, c.1980  
*Courtyard redesigned to include shade trees, children's playground and garden areas. Lawn areas outside the complex were also reduced and replaced with low-maintenance native plants and bark chip mulch.*  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1980 p.14*

<sup>843</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

<sup>844</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

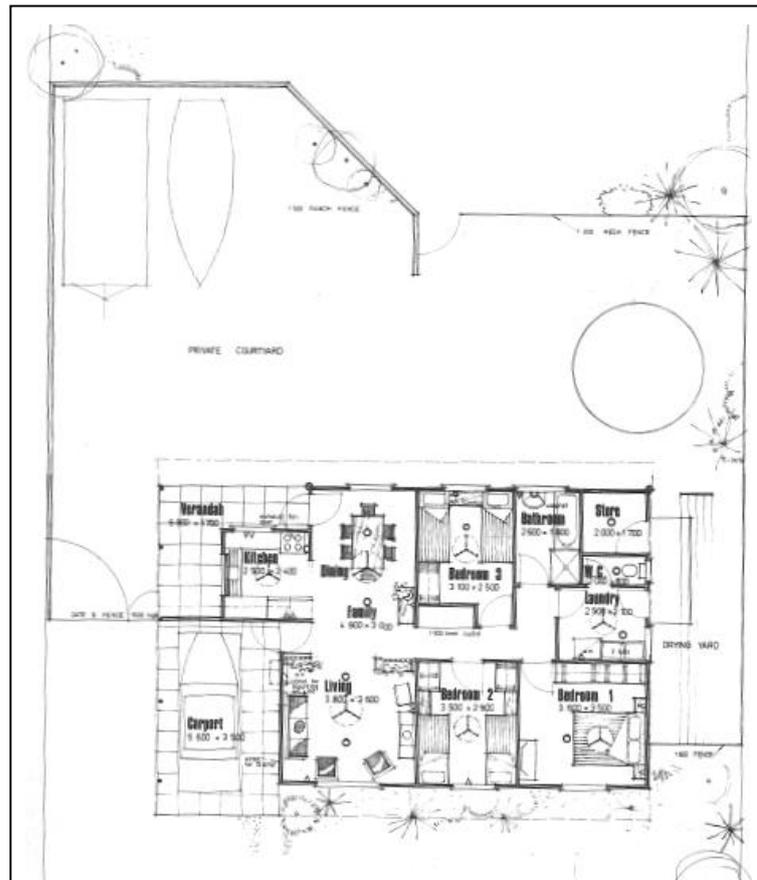
<sup>845</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>846</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>847</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

<sup>848</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

Research conducted in the mid-1970s also led to changes in SHC policy around its housing estates. The Commission participated in 1974 in a joint study on social mix in housing developments, together with the Commonwealth Cities Commission. It found that the most significant factor in SHC residents' satisfaction was privacy – both private space, and proximity to neighbours. The Commission noted this finding and aimed to address issues of privacy in future housing designs. However, it cautioned that it was 'not able to return to the days of the quarter-acre block'. Other important factors in residents' experience were the physical appearance of the area, reputation of the area and available recreational facilities. Little dissatisfaction with the actual houses provided was reported. The study made comparisons with the private sector and found many similarities, but noted in particular that private sector residents were not generally concerned with the reputation of an area, and private flat dwellers did not share the problems of public flat dwellers.<sup>849</sup>



Plans to improve houses within Radburn estates, 1976

*Note fencing to create private courtyard at rear of house. Top of plan addresses communal walkways; bottom of plan addresses the street.*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1976 p.13*

Surveys into resident experience were conducted in Port Hedland, including South Hedland and Cooke Point, in 1974. The results showed that while residents appreciated the safety and walkways of the Radburn design estates, they did not like the lack of privacy, sense of being 'back-to-front' or open front



Improvements to two-storey Homeswest residences, mid-1980s

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1986 p.21*

<sup>849</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

lawn areas. More fences between houses were requested, and a lack of storage space was noted.<sup>850</sup> The Radburn design principles were subsequently set aside in the second 'cell' developed at South Hedland.<sup>851</sup>

Withers 'Radburn' estate in Bunbury was the subject of a major redevelopment project from the mid-1980s, including removing two units to allow for a private road and addition of driveways and gates.<sup>852</sup> Fencing for around fifty single detached and duplex homes was also erected. Tenants were very positive about the changes, believing they improved security for residents, their children and their property and vehicles. These changes fundamentally removed some essential features of 'Radburn' design, being vehicle-free frontages and open landscaping between homes. Similar changes were also made at Adeline estate, Kalgoorlie, and Wingrove estate, Langford, 'to rectify problems resulting from the initial Radburn design development'.<sup>853</sup>



Mid-1980s changes at Withers, Bunbury, to remove features of Radburn design

*Before (above) and after. Note sparse, dry communal 'parkland' before; new roundabout, road and fences after.*

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1986 p.27*

In the mid-1980s, the Commission felt the need to complain to several local authorities about substandard services to areas dominated by Commission housing. Roads, footpaths, drainage and playing fields were all areas noted as requiring attention, especially as the Commission was a significant rate-payer in these areas. It was also felt that some local authorities



Early 1980s kitchen refurbishment in c.1950 pre-cut home  
*This kitchen replaced an original combined kitchen-living area.*  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1982*

<sup>850</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

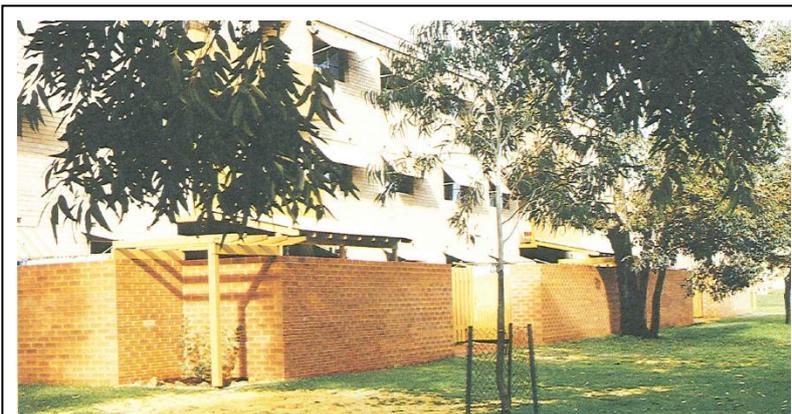
<sup>851</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>852</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>853</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*, quote from p.29

were failing to provide community services such as rooms for community groups to gather and relying on the Commission to fund these initiatives.<sup>854</sup>

From 1984-85, apartments at Lockridge and Balga were improved by provision of small courtyards to rear units and awnings for 'a more pleasant living environment'.<sup>855</sup>



Upgrades to Lockridge three-storey flats, Lockridge, 1985  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1985*

From 1988, Homeswest committed \$2million to upgrading the 'Radburn' estate at South Hedland over two years.<sup>856</sup> South Hedland and Adeline (Kalgoorlie) were re-fenced in 1989-90, with walkways closed and vehicle access restricted, along with internal upgrades to the houses.<sup>857</sup> Radburn design had been found to create social problems when applied to government housing estates, as the communal parklands attracted antisocial behaviour and were often realistically perceived as dangerous. The



Improvements to single-storey Homeswest residences, mid-1980s  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1986 p.20*

network of cul-de-sacs was difficult for emergency services to negotiate. In addition, in the hot climates of South Hedland and Kalgoorlie, the ideal that residents would choose to walk was unrealistic for much of the year.<sup>858</sup> 'Parklands' appear to have become degraded or been largely left to dry out.<sup>859</sup> For detail about Radburn estates see [Section 14.1](#)

Major redevelopments were underway in 1990 at Redcliffe, Belmont, Bayswater, Willagee, Bentley, Palmyra and Rivervale. At Redcliffe, up to 350 properties were involved while at Willagee as many as 750 were considered for redevelopment.<sup>860</sup>

<sup>854</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>855</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*, quote from p.2

<sup>856</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1988*

<sup>857</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*

<sup>858</sup> Lynden Prince, community development consultant at South Hedland, informal conversation with Clare Menck, March 2014

<sup>859</sup> Landgate, Historic aerial photographs, <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#>

<sup>860</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*

Redevelopment of Willagee, Redcliffe and Bayswater continued in 1991-92, and new redevelopments were commenced at Rivervale and Manning. In addition, planning for redevelopment of Hilton and Hamilton Hill began, spurred by funding from the Commonwealth's Better Cities program.<sup>861</sup> The funding was used initially to install deep sewers.<sup>862</sup> Further Better Cities funding in 1993-94 was used for additional infrastructure works at Hamilton Hill, Hilton and Palmyra, including deep sewerage, roads and water treatment facilities.<sup>863</sup>



Redevelopment in Rivervale, early 1990s

SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1994*

Homeswest felt its urban consolidation programs and focus on medium-density housing were contributing greatly to reducing urban sprawl and providing 'more suitable' homes for smaller families, singles and seniors. However, the public perception remained that medium density housing was 'unattractive, unsuitable and devalues surrounding properties'. Homeswest asserted that 'the opposite is true but the image remains'.<sup>864</sup> Redevelopment continued into 1993 in Redcliffe, Willagee, Bayswater, Rivervale, Manning, Hamilton Hill and Hilton, and in the country at Carey Park Bunbury, Wilson Park Collie and Lockyer in Albany.<sup>865</sup>

*Places that remain in 2014:*

From the renewal projects mentioned above, DOH retains the following (arranged roughly in chronological order)

Midvale	72 units noted as 'Midland' but surrounding Midvale Primary School, dated 1977 to 1978, mostly townhouses, cluster houses and duplexes (no units of the period listed as 'Midvale')
Beaconsfield	DOH retains 79 units dated 1979 and 1980, particularly single-storey townhouses, and another 91 from 1984 and five from 1985. Almost all are in close proximity.
Willagee	1970s renewal appears to have focused on upgrading existing housing stock rather than replacing it. There are only three DOH properties from 1976-1985 in Willagee. However, 42 places remain dated 1951 to 1964 and these would likely show evidence of significant upgrades in the late 1970s. A second round of 'renewal' from the late 1980s appears to have had more of a replacement focus. DOH retains 433 units dating 1987 to 2013, of which 273 date from 1991 to 1993.
Maniana (Queens Park)	All the original 1954-55 units, which were renovated in 1978-80, were reported as demolished in 2005. DOH retains one residence each from 1953, 1958, 1972, 1974 and 1977.

<sup>861</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1992*

<sup>862</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1993*

<sup>863</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1994*

<sup>864</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1992*, quote from p.4

<sup>865</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1993*

Redcliffe	Although plans were reported from 1977, DOH housing stock suggests redevelopment was not significantly undertaken until the 1990s. DOH retains 148 units dated 1990-1994, mostly single-storey townhouses.
Belmont	DOH retains 45 units dated 1979 to 1985. DOH retains 266 units dated 1987 to 1995, most of which are in the section adjoining Redcliffe.
Bayswater	DOH retains 177 units dated 1987 to 1994, of which 89 are from 1989. These include some quite large complexes for aged housing.
Bentley	Bentley appears to have been steadily redeveloped between 1989 and 2008, with DOH retaining 249 units spread across this period.
Palmyra	DOH retains 156 units dated 1984 to 1995, spread fairly evenly across this date span, suggesting a gradual building program rather than a targeted renewal push.
Rivervale	DOH retains 476 units dated 1986 to 1995, including 116 from 1989 and 238 from 1992. Most of these are within the original 1940s portion of the suburb, including some large townhouse complexes of up to 36 units
Manning	DOH retains 97 units dated 1992 to 1996, located within the original Garden City subdivision.
Hilton	Although planning for renewal began in the early 1990s, no particular increase in DOH properties is evident in current property holdings from this period.
Hamilton Hill	DOH property listings show a steady spread of dates from the 1950s to the present. This is because the 'Southwell' estate was being built new in the 1980s and appears to have crossed over with renewal of the older 1950s and 1960s areas of Hamilton Hill. Because of this mix, it is difficult to identify an area of renewal-linked properties without mapping all DOH housing stock in the suburb.
Carey Park (Bunbury)	DOH retains 163 units dated 1993 to 2003, spread fairly evenly across the period.
Wilson Park (Collie)	DOH does not identify 'Wilson Park' in its current records, but it appears to refer to the early Garden City subdivision. There is no particular renewal period evident in current housing stock. However, DOH retains 77 places dated 1944 to 1955 in Collie, a relatively high number, and it is likely the renewal program upgraded rather than replaced these houses.
Lockyer (Albany)	DOH retains properties from the early 1950s in the area. DOH retains around 15 units from 1981 and 50 from 1994 to 1998, which may relate to renewal programs. Numbers are approximate as DOH does not identify 'Lockyer' in its current records.

#### Upgrades to Flats/Apartments

It is not possible to easily identify from DOH records which blocks of flats received upgrades in the 1980s. However, it is likely that those that have been retained would all show evidence of upgrading, as this was a wide spread program to improve housing stock.

## 15 NEW NAME AND NEW CLIENTS (1980S-1990S)

Through the early 1980s, demand for housing assistance increased, as the number of persons living on social security benefits or pensions increased, and low-cost private rentals decreased. In 1980, the Commission had 5,271 applicants on its waiting list. Within three and a half years this had risen to 9,339. The incoming State Labor government in 1983 committed to providing 5,000 homes within its first term. The consequent expanded building program led to a reduction of the waiting list by around 14.5% by June 1985.<sup>866</sup>

In 1983-84, negotiations with the Federal government led to plans to expand the eligibility criteria for public housing to include youth, single working people and single invalid pensioners, all previously excluded from Commission services.<sup>867</sup> A new *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* in 1984 allowed that all persons over 18 years of age were eligible to apply for housing assistance, which would be assessed on a needs basis. These changes were accompanied by a substantial increase in Commonwealth funding, dramatically increasing the workload of the Commission.<sup>868</sup> Rents were also returned to an economic/cost-recovery basis rather than market rates.<sup>869</sup> This was the first time that youth, disability pensioners, unemployed single people and other disadvantaged groups besides families and the elderly were eligible for government housing assistance.

Increasing numbers of unemployed applicants and single-parent families, an ageing population and the expansion of eligibility criteria all contributed to a continuing rapid increase in demand for public housing. At the same time, private rents were rising through the mid-1980s in response to high demand and limited supply.<sup>870</sup>

To cater for its expanded client base, the Commission initiated the 'Local Government and Community Housing Program', in which local government and community groups were offered funding and support to provide low-cost rental accommodation. It was intended that these housing projects would also include tenants in their management. A portion of the funds was specifically targeted at youth-related projects. Six groups took up the scheme in its first months of operation, with projects to house over 100 people.<sup>871</sup> Although offering a similar service to the joint venture projects that had been operating since 1980, the new program did not require agencies to provide capital outlay. Rather, it focussed on partnering with organisations that would provide and manage an ongoing service, often including specialised client services such as counselling and social support, using the DOH-funded buildings once they were erected.

In 1984, Cath Bugden was appointed to the Board of Commissioners. She was a single parent and Commission tenant, who had also rented privately and spent time in a women's refuge. Early in her term as a Commissioner, she identified the fear and hostility with which the SHC was often viewed, especially by those on waiting lists hoping for accommodation. She lobbied strongly for improved mechanisms to allow the voice of SHC clients to be heard, along with community groups and service providers. Bugden anticipated this would improve coordination of services between agencies such as the SHC, schools, child care, local governments and community groups, make policy more responsive to changing community needs, and enable positive responses to the particular needs of special interest groups such as youth, disabled persons, the aged, migrants, Aboriginal persons, rural clients and all those on waiting lists. It was

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<sup>866</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

<sup>867</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1984

<sup>868</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

<sup>869</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.194

<sup>870</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>871</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

also hoped that being more responsive to tenants' would improve tenant experiences and improve staff morale through less combative client relationships.<sup>872</sup>

Bugden served as a Commissioner until 1990.<sup>873</sup> Her six years' service appears to be the only time that a State Housing Commission client was involved in the Board of Commissioners. In earlier periods, a woman was appointed to represent women's interests, but these women were linked to women's community groups such as the CWA rather than being SHC tenants. Similarly, a representative of the RSL was appointed to the Board for many years, but there is no indication that these representatives lived in War Service Homes. R.J. Stoddart, who represented returned servicepersons on the Board from 1949 to 1971, was a barrister and solicitor, unlikely to have been eligible for a War Service Home.<sup>874</sup>

From 1 September 1985, the State Housing Commission adopted the trading name 'Homeswest' as part of a program to improve the image of the Commission and of public housing in general. Other measures believed to be addressing the stigma attached to public housing were 'a reduction of Homeswest's presence in the older (SHC) housing estates, continuing Select and Construct program, private land sales in Homeswest subdivisions, spot purchase of existing dwellings in many suburbs, home purchase assistance, rental support and bond assistance for those wishing to rent in the private market'. As a result, the Commission believed it was having some success in improving its image. In its 1986 annual report, it stated categorically that 'the days of the "Commission Suburb" are gone'.<sup>875</sup>

In 1985-86, the total housing produced by Homeswest in its many schemes was 1,933 housing units, the highest level achieved in ten years since Commonwealth funding began to be cut in the mid-1970s.<sup>876</sup> Commonwealth policy from the 1960s into the 1970s also pressured State departments to sell off rental properties.<sup>877</sup> By mid-1986, the SHC had built or purchased 43,586 housing units since World War Two for rental housing, including Aboriginal housing, but its existing rental stock was 30,792 units, indicating that nearly 30% of the State's public housing stock had been disposed off.<sup>878</sup> Five years later, in 1990-91, Homeswest's housing stock passed 35,000 units.<sup>879</sup>

In addition to rental housing, by mid-1986 the SHC had built 15,025 homes for purchase, and another 5,517 under various other schemes such as community housing, government employee housing and industrial and commercial workers' housing. The total number of housing units constructed or purchased by the department since 1944 was 64,128.<sup>880</sup>

One of the stated aims of Homeswest at the time of the name change was to 'actively promote, encourage and implement innovation in housing design'.<sup>881</sup> To cater for the influx of single applicants following eligibility changes, new designs were developed for singles accommodation. An architectural competition conducted in 1985 as part of 'International Youth Year' invited young architects and architectural students to submit innovative designs for singles housing. One of the award-winning designs, by a student, was subsequently constructed by Homeswest in 1986.<sup>882</sup> Located in Bunbury, it featured a shared communal area with separate sleeping arrangements to accommodate four single

<sup>872</sup> Cath Bugden, 'Housing: the uses and the moves', in SHC, *In House*, Vol.1 No.1 April 1985 p.8

<sup>873</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>874</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971

<sup>875</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986, quotes from pp.3&13

<sup>876</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>877</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.134-80

<sup>878</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 19-86

<sup>879</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>880</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>881</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>882</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

persons. Further designs for self-contained units, similar to aged persons' homes, were also developed.<sup>883</sup> Most Homeswest singles accommodation was in inner suburban areas, with houses both purchased and constructed.<sup>884</sup> It appears earlier flats and apartments designed for small families were also repurposed as singles housing.<sup>885</sup> In 1988-89, Homeswest developed a singles housing policy to increase options available for single applicants, including youth.<sup>886</sup> The first housing under this policy, purpose-designed units for single tenants aged sixteen to fifty, was constructed in 1989-90. Apartments contained separate



Housing for singles at Bunbury, designed through a 1985 architectural competition

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, small private courtyard and parking facilities. Sixty-five units were under construction at June 1990, of which 39 were in country areas and 26 in the Metropolitan area.<sup>887</sup> In 1990-91, a mezzanine sleeping level was included in eight single-persons units constructed in Oxford Street, Leederville, which was considered novel at the time.<sup>888</sup>

In 1985-86, Homeswest converted Graylands Migrant Hostel into 24 units for Western Australian College of Advanced Education students.<sup>889</sup>

Homeswest continued to upgrade older housing stock, including providing better fencing for improved privacy, and at multistorey units adding awnings and carports to ground floor units.<sup>890</sup> While the agency generally aimed to support tenants wishing to purchase their rental properties, from the mid-1980s the Commission was trying to hold onto its properties in older suburbs, where land prices had risen to levels that could make it difficult for it to buy back into the area. These tenants were instead offered assistance to purchase in the private sector.<sup>891</sup> By the 1990s, across Australia, more than half of all post-World War Two public housing had been sold into private ownership.<sup>892</sup> After ten years of Labor State government, the Liberal-National Coalition won power in Western Australia in 1993. In keeping with the Coalition's long preference for assisting home ownership rather than providing rental accommodation, eligibility for tenants to purchase their rental property was expanded the same year.<sup>893</sup> The 'Right to Buy' scheme was launched in December 1993, extending the option to purchase to all rental tenants. Long-term tenants

<sup>883</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

<sup>884</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1988*

<sup>885</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>886</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1989*

<sup>887</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*

<sup>888</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1991*

<sup>889</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>890</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>891</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 19-86*

<sup>892</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.15

<sup>893</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1993*

were offered up to \$20,000 discount on the purchase, a significant reduction when the median prices at the time for Perth houses and apartments were around \$120,000 and \$80,000 respectively. As a result, 700 rental properties were sold in 1993-94<sup>894</sup>

From 1987-88, Homeswest became the primary provider of serviced residential development lots for first home buyers. It was anticipated to provide around 3,000 such lots by June 1989.<sup>895</sup>

Door-to-door rent collection ceased in 1986-87.<sup>896</sup> In May 1991, a Homeswest card was introduced to allow tenants to pay rent through their local post office. Within two months, 17,000 clients were using the system.<sup>897</sup>

The language of 'blending in' continued to be used to characterise government housing design. For example, a development of seven aged persons' units was designed for Guildford in 1987-88. The units featured 'traditional style brickwork, corrugated iron roofs, special fencing and provision of verandahs front and rear' to 'reflect the traditional character' of Guildford.<sup>898</sup>

From 1986-87, Homeswest began taking up leases on properties in the City Northern Bypass Reserve, between Lord and Charles Streets, and upgrading them to improve the amenity of the north and east fringes of the city area. There was a high demand for inner-city housing in this area. In 1987, 66 properties were identified for Homeswest use, including ten lodging houses.<sup>899</sup> Two of the lodging houses were ready for use within a year, including Tom Burke House at the corner of Newcastle and William Streets.<sup>900</sup> Two years later, the State Planning Commission had leased 51 properties in the bypass area to



Single-storey residences designed to 'blend in' at Guildford, late 1980s

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1989*

Homeswest at peppercorn rental, as they were marked for demolition when the bypass was eventually built. Homeswest restored the residences in keeping with their 'original character'.<sup>901</sup> Restoration works were completed on all the properties by late 1990, mostly single detached homes and duplexes.<sup>902</sup>

<sup>894</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994; Abelson, Peter & Chung, Demi, 'Housing Prices in Australia 1970 to 2003', research paper for Macquarie University, Sydney NSW, 2004, pp.8&10 [http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/Econ\\_docs/research\\_papers2/2004\\_research\\_papers/Abelson\\_9\\_04.pdf](http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/Econ_docs/research_papers2/2004_research_papers/Abelson_9_04.pdf)

<sup>895</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>896</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987

<sup>897</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>898</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988, quote from p.28

<sup>899</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987

<sup>900</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>901</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989, quote from p.26

By this time, the government owned 55% of homes in the Bypass Reserve, many of which were extremely run down. Proposals for redevelopment aimed to continue providing public housing in the area while also developing high-end water front and inner city residences. It was noted, however, that there was 'clear evidence in Perth' that private property values adjoining large public housing developments were reduced by this proximity. While the redevelopment plans initially allowed for one third of the proposed 1,500 housing units to be public housing, later plans allowed for only fifty Homeswest residences, backing onto private apartments and with separate access-ways to private properties. In the end, after the Northbridge 'bypass' tunnel was opened in 2000, hardly any public or even low-cost housing was included in the redevelopment of East Perth.<sup>903</sup>

In 1986-87, construction was completed for a housing co-operative at Fremantle. The First Fremantle Housing Collective was partner in the development, at 124 Swanbourne Street, with Homeswest partially financing the project. A second housing co-operative project was also part-funded at Gidgegannup with the Gogulga Rural Housing Co-operative.<sup>904</sup> At least 75% of a co-operative had to be eligible for Homeswest rental housing for a co-operative to be eligible for seed funding and, if the venture proceeded to construction, a 40% grant towards building costs.<sup>905</sup> To support the newly emerging housing collectives, the not for profit organisation Federation of Housing Collectives (FOHCOL) was formed in 1987, and continues to operate to the present as the peak body for co-operative housing in Western Australia.<sup>906</sup>



First Fremantle Housing Collective, 1987  
SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

The early co-operatives of the 1980s and 1990s lived in housing owned entirely by Homeswest. In 1999, construction was completed on residences at Pinakarri Community, Hamilton Hill, which was the first to be a mix of government and private housing. Pinakarri was purpose-built with solar-passive design and included in its twelve residences one designed specifically for a tenant with severe mental and physical disabilities.<sup>907</sup>

Co-operative (or Collective) housing residents lived in individual housing units, owned by the Department of Housing, and paid rent to the Department. However, all residents participated in management of the Co-operative, including financial matters, establishing codes of conduct and sharing in maintenance works. Some co-operatives were co-located on one site and others comprised homes spread through a suburban area. In addition to providing affordable housing, co-operatives aimed to be environmentally and socially sustainable, providing housing security within a community based on mutual co-operation. From 2010, to meet DOH's proposed registration requirements for community housing providers, the

<sup>902</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*

<sup>903</sup> Gregory, *City of Light*, 2003, pp.318-320.

<sup>904</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

<sup>905</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1989*

<sup>906</sup> FOHCOL <http://www.fohcol.org.au> accessed 1 July 2014

<sup>907</sup> Pinakarri <http://www.pinakarri.org.au/> accessed 1 July 2014

not-for-profit company 'Co-operation Housing' was established to support Western Australia's co-operative housing initiatives.<sup>908</sup>

While there are numerous housing co-operatives, collectives or intentional communities in Western Australia, in 2014 only nine are linked with DOH. Four of these are members of Co-operation Housing, all of which have their properties completely owned by DOH. Some of the other five (eg. Pinakarri Community, Hamilton Hill) operate with shared equity, where some homes are owned by DOH and some privately, but all residents are equal members of the community. It appears that housing collectives established in partnership with DOH have been relatively successful, as current members are not aware of DOH-linked communities that have folded.<sup>909</sup> However, no information regarding the 1980s collective in Gidjegannup has been located and it appears this may not have proceeded.<sup>910</sup>

By 1987, migration from Eastern Australian and overseas was substantially increasing the State's population, with a 21,400 net migration increase in 1986-87. New migrants added pressure to the rental market as most preferred to rent initially, even if they intended to eventually buy. An additional pressure on rental markets was the increasing trend for young single adults to live independently at a younger age. Average household size was falling. While Homeswest estimated that a vacancy rate in the private rental market of 3% created stable rental conditions, by November 1986 the vacancy rate was as low as 1.1%. Private rents had increased by around 29% through 1986. However, by the end of the financial year, rents had stabilised and vacancy rates were again at sustainable levels. To assist private sector tenants, Homeswest provided bond assistance and rental support to clients in private rentals, and supplied land to private developers on the condition that homes erected were available to rent for at least three years after construction. In the latter program, tenants were often given first option to purchase the home when it was put on the market, with a sound rental record being considered as a good credit basis for the purpose of a home loan.<sup>911</sup>

Negative gearing, quarantined in 1985, was returned for rental properties from September 1987. At the same time, interest rates began to decline and, in October 1987, the stock market crashed. The combined result was an increase in demand for investment properties from around 9% of the property market in mid-1987 to around 20% by November the same year, a proportion that continued for the rest of the financial year.<sup>912</sup> In 1988, various factors including high migration caused a major land shortage in Perth and pushed house prices up at the same time as interest rates rose. Homeswest increased its provision of developed residential lots by over 300% to 4,008 lots in 1988-89, with most of the lots being sold to first home buyers.<sup>913</sup>

As private interest rates increased, Homeswest developed programs to refinance mortgages for private home buyers who could no longer meet their repayments.<sup>914</sup> The Keystart loans program was also launched early in 1989, providing finance through the private market for low- to middle-income home buyers who were eligible for neither Homeswest nor commercial home loans. Keystart was planned to be self-funding. In the first four months of its operation, 637 Keystart loans were approved, compared with

<sup>908</sup> Co-operation Housing <http://www.co-operationhousing.org.au> accessed 24 June 2014

<sup>909</sup> Co-operation Housing <http://www.co-operationhousing.org.au> accessed 24 June 2014; Leila Jabbour, Communications Officer, Co-operation Housing, phone conversation with Clare Menck, 1 July 2014; Pinakarri <http://www.pinakarri.org.au/> accessed 1 July 2014

<sup>910</sup> Enquiries with Co-operative Housing and various Google searches, July 2014

<sup>911</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 19-87*

<sup>912</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1988*

<sup>913</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1989*

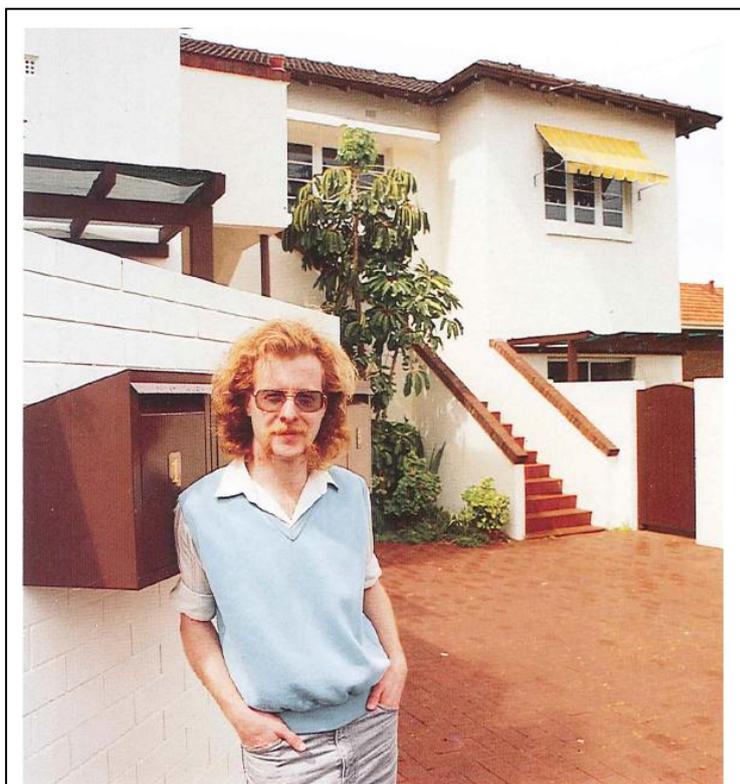
<sup>914</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

853 loans approved in the whole financial year through existing Homeswest loan schemes. Recipients of Homeswest loans had been on the waiting list for over three years.<sup>915</sup>

Keystart was so successful that by 1994 it was the prime source of funding new Homeswest home loans. However, Homeswest also continued to manage the many home loans issued under previous programs.<sup>916</sup> After ten years of operation, Keystart was recognised as 'the most successful Government-backed home ownership scheme in Australia', having provided over 30,000 home loans to low and moderate income earners since 1989.<sup>917</sup>

Homeswest began experimenting in 1987-88 with construction of a new house to the rear of an existing home, to double the density of the area without requiring demolition of earlier housing stock. The first trial of this approach was in Como.<sup>918</sup>

Joint venture housing projects continued through the 1980s. The original focus on accommodation for the elderly was expanded to include other styles of housing, including a development opened in 1988 with the Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association. By 1988, Homeswest was requiring a more substantial contribution from new venture partners, thereby expanding the number of housing units produced without committing any additional government funds.<sup>919</sup>



North Perth apartments refurbished for singles housing, 1988  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1988 p.31*

From the late 1980s, Homeswest participated in a Built Environment Task Force to address safety issues in housing design. Deficiencies in design had been highlighted by the Child Accident Foundation of Australia and Homeswest committed to formulating safety guidelines for design in public housing.<sup>920</sup> Subsequently, all aged care units were to have security doors and window screens and emergency access doors to bathrooms, while all houses were to include child-resistant catches for laundry trough cabinets and a child-resistance compartment in kitchen cupboards for storing poisons.<sup>921</sup>

By 1988, Homeswest had specially focussed programs providing accommodation for women's emergency situations, youth, general supported clients (eg ex-

<sup>915</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>916</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

<sup>917</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999, quote from p.16

<sup>918</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>919</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>920</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>921</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

prisoners), emergency shelter, and disabled tenants. Joint ventures with local authorities, community groups and rental co-operatives provided additional housing, and lodging houses were brought into service to provide long-term secure accommodation for older single persons.<sup>922</sup> For more information on crisis and disability housing see [Section 15.1](#) and [Section 15.2](#).

In 1989, Homeswest launched a community residential tenancy scheme, allowing community organisations to lease Homeswest properties in order to provide accommodation services for youth or those with disabilities. Homeswest allocated the properties and the community groups selected residents and provided support services for them.<sup>923</sup> In addition to supported community housing for youth, Homeswest set aside a portion of its rental stock to house applicants under 18. By June 1992, there were 52 units set aside for youth housing.<sup>924</sup>

By the end of the 1980s, Homeswest was actively working to increase population densities through an 'urban consolidation program'. In 1988-89, 68 existing properties were demolished and replaced on site with 214 units, another five homes were built at the back of existing Homeswest properties, and 62 were constructed on purchased infill sites. This was out of a total of 1,400 properties purchased or built for rental housing in the year. Redevelopment was an increasing emphasis in the provision of rental properties. Buildings earmarked for demolition in the urban consolidation program were generally in inner city areas, more than 35 years old, timber-framed and fibro-clad, with high maintenance costs. In addition, new developments incorporated designs to maximise the percentage of land utilised for building, such as commercial lots auctioned at Mirrabooka with a resultant 68% site coverage.<sup>925</sup> Urban consolidation was a national trend from the 1980s.<sup>926</sup>

The Burke Labor government (State) in 1986 adopted a 'New Public Management' policy to restructure the public service, following trends in government that were emerging globally in the 1980s. New Public Management approaches involved the public sector shifting towards more market-based commercial models of operation, and were articulated in Burke's 1986 policy document 'Managing Change in the Public Sector'.<sup>927</sup>

A subsequent major internal restructure of Homeswest between 1987 and 1989 saw a 10% reduction in staff numbers and much reorganisation of internal processes. The organisation claimed that as a result of the changes it was 'leaner', relying more heavily on private sector skills and resources, while providing better multi-skilled training for internal staff. A new emphasis on 'project management approach' was implemented. The increasing use of private sector designs and consultancy services expanded the range of building designs available at competitive costs. By the end of the 1980s, the proportion of Homeswest properties designed in-house and constructed by public tender was declining, with preference given to select-and-construct or spot-purchase schemes.<sup>928</sup>

These changes were in keeping with a general shift across Australia in the 1980s to a neo-liberal ideology emphasising free market, deregulation and privatisation of government assets.<sup>929</sup>

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<sup>922</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>923</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>924</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>925</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

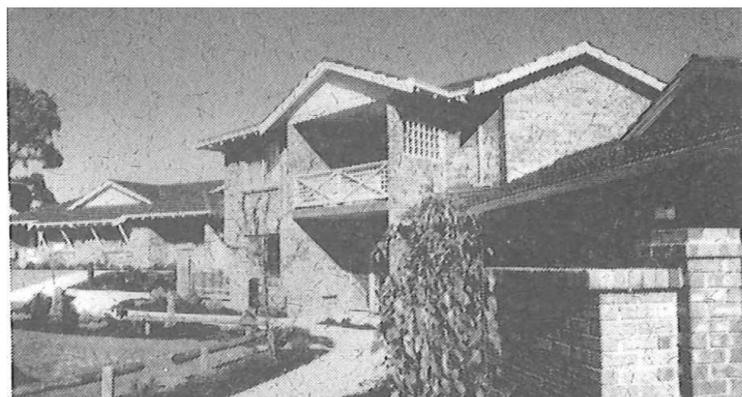
<sup>926</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.36-37

<sup>927</sup> Rainnie, A, Fitzgerald, S, Gilchrist, D & Morris, L, 'Putting the Public First? Restructuring the West Australian human services sector', in *International Journal of Employment Studies*, Vol.20 No.1 April 2012 p.104ff

<sup>928</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989, quotes from p.13

<sup>929</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.36-37

In 1988-89, 6,773 applicants were placed into Homeswest rental accommodation, with a further 8,271 given financial assistance towards private rental. Of those placed, 1,028 were allocated priority housing and another fifty received emergency accommodation. In the same period, 7,365 Homeswest properties were vacated, 1,475 new properties were acquired and the vacated properties took an average of 18 working days to re-tenant. At



New Homeswest rental housing, c.1990  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1991 p.11*

the end of the year, 15,552 rental applications were awaiting placement, presumably including most of those who were receiving rent assistance in private accommodation while on the waiting list. Homeswest managed 33,189 rental properties at the time, of which 2,306 were specifically for Aboriginal housing. It was estimated that around 2,500 'regular' Homeswest units were also occupied by Aboriginal tenants. New Homeswest rental properties were designed to be functional, low cost, and blended with their surrounds.<sup>930</sup> For more information on Aboriginal housing in this period see [Section 21.4](#)

The *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* of 1989 broke from the usual 5-year pattern by being established to run until 1996.<sup>931</sup>

In the mid-1980s, a program of centralising and focussing local Homeswest offices was undertaken, resulting in some new offices (eg. Mandurah, Harvey, Morley (relocated from Lockridge)), relocation of offices to new premises (eg. Midland, Collie, Manjimup, Broome, Roebourne, Karratha, Kalgoorlie, Busselton) and upgrades to existing offices.<sup>932</sup>

In 1989, Homeswest announced a 1,000-lot residential development at Stratton (Middle Swan). It was viewed as an innovative project, demonstrating 'joint venture' and 'Green Street' principles. As was standard for Homeswest developments of the period, Stratton economised the use of land by providing flexible lot sizes, reduced set-backs, narrower road widths and 'increased amenities'. By mid-1989, Homeswest lot sizes averaged 723sqm, compared with a State average of 867sqm.<sup>933</sup> A design competition for homes specifically for Stratton was run in 1989, and the first lots were released in December 1990.<sup>934</sup> Land sold well, with Homeswest claiming this proved that the public appreciated the benefits of 'Green Street' principles.<sup>935</sup>

'Green Street' ventures were intended to produce more sustainable suburban designs.<sup>936</sup> 'Green Street' planning also aimed to integrate house designs and streetscapes and create 'pedestrian friendly' streets. Subdivisions paid increasing attention to environmental studies and provision for community facilities, with 'innovative street design', landscaping and increased public open space<sup>937</sup> Critics of 'Green Street'

<sup>930</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>931</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.201-24

<sup>932</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986, 1987

<sup>933</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989, quotes from p.20

<sup>934</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990, quote from p.8

<sup>935</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>936</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.33

<sup>937</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990, quote from p.8

development claimed it was merely a green-washing exercise that allowed reductions in planning standards and ideologically-driven commitments to denser suburbs. Provisions such as 'zero-lot lining' allowed party walls and lower housing standards, while narrow streets and increased density reduced the overall vegetation of areas, particularly substantial trees.<sup>938</sup> However, others saw Green Streets as allowing 'more flexible, economical and site-sensitive residential planning', and it shaped much residential development in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>939</sup>

The Commonwealth renamed its 1982 'Joint Venture for More Affordable Housing' the 'Green Street Joint Venture' in 1990. It aimed to maintain or improve environmental quality in residential developments while also providing cost-effective housing and increasing home-buyers' choice, by developing an 'Australian Model Code for Residential Development' (AMCORD). In Western Australia, these principles were codified in the 2000 policy 'Liveable Neighbourhoods'. The resulting suburban design emphasised 'walkable, attractive, energy efficient and safe mixed-use neighbourhoods with strong site-responsive and place-making identities'.<sup>940</sup>

Associated with 'Green Streets' was the design philosophy of 'New Urbanism', which also emerged in the 1980s. New Urbanism emphasised walkability. Subdivisions were to be well-designed, diverse, mixed-use neighbourhoods, designed for connectivity (often returning to grid layouts), with increased densities and 'green' transport options maximising sustainability.<sup>941</sup> Within a short time, 'New Urbanism' had become the new 'orthodoxy' in Australian residential planning, and it remains dominant to the present.<sup>942</sup>

Heading into the 1990s, Homeswest identified the challenge of an ageing housing stock, much of it over forty years old, with even some 'constructed as late as the 1970s that are clearly inappropriate to customers' needs'.<sup>943</sup> Further challenges were Perth's rapid population growth, an ageing population, increased demand for housing assistance, a need for urban renewal and the perpetual shortage of Government funds to meet these myriad challenges. By this time, Homeswest was 80% self-funded. From 1984 on, Commonwealth funding had declined in real terms, and the State Government was meeting much of the shortfall.<sup>944</sup>



Housing in new subdivisions, early 1990s  
SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991 p.7

Following the success of Stratton, Homeswest developed Ballajura as its second 'Green Street community' in 1992-93. Land at Lockridge was also earmarked for Green Street subdivision following the demolition of Clare Court, a 1960s complex of 136 multistorey walk-up flats.<sup>945</sup> The western portion of Lockridge, which was subdivided from the late 1980s, was renamed 'Kiara'

<sup>938</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.202&223

<sup>939</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.201

<sup>940</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.66-68 (quote from p.68)

<sup>941</sup> New Urbanism <http://www.newurbanism.org/newurbanism/principles.html> accessed 19 June 2014

<sup>942</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.202

<sup>943</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990, quote from p.5

<sup>944</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>945</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

around this time in an attempt to separate it from the stigma associated with Lockridge. In 1994, the southern portion of Balga was renamed 'Westminster' for similar reasons.<sup>946</sup>

In noting significant projects of 1989-90, Homeswest identified key design principles for many of them. Design in keeping with surrounding areas was paramount, especially in older suburbs such as Fremantle (eg. Buckland Hill Mosman Park, Sewell & King Street East Fremantle, Thompson Road North Fremantle). New estates were designed to slow urban sprawl and maximise the benefits of costly infrastructure such as roads, electricity and sewerage (eg. Jamieson Estate Belmont, Mitchell Street Bentley). A mix of ages, especially aged persons' units and family homes, was seen as desirable and applied in almost all developments. Siting close to community and commercial facilities was also attempted, with attention to pedestrian use of streets. Even small sites aimed to give all residents their own yard and landscaping emphasised privacy (eg. Lord Street Highgate, Coode and Haddrill Streets Bayswater). Utilisation of steep and difficult sites to provide housing closer to services was acknowledged in some instances (eg. Kirkham Hill Terrace and Peninsular Road Maylands, Walcott Street Mount Lawley). At Esther Street Belmont, preservation of established trees amongst a complex of nineteen new aged peoples' units was praised. At Charles Street North Perth a 10-unit complex featured passive solar design. Almost all the 'notable projects' listed in the report were designed by private architectural firms.<sup>947</sup>

In 1990-91, a project displaying many of these features was a 10-unit elderly persons' complex at the corner of Geddes and Horden Streets, Victoria Park. It featured brick banding, terracotta tiles and 'period colours' in keeping with local architecture, took into account solar efficiency and emphasised privacy and security.<sup>948</sup> *For more information regarding energy efficient design see [Section 16.2](#)*

In 1990, Homeswest began to take note of the health problems associated with asbestos in building materials. At the time, around 10,000 of its 33,273 rental properties contained asbestos, mostly in wall cladding or roof sheeting.<sup>949</sup> A report in August 1990 by the Western Australian Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances concluded that 'installed asbestos cement products pose negligible risk to health' and this advice formed the basis of Homeswest policy towards its asbestos-clad assets.<sup>950</sup> A database of all properties containing asbestos was created to ensure appropriate maintenance on these homes.<sup>951</sup>

Upgrading of properties by 1990 focussed on apartment complexes, with security screens and doors, fencing and 'outdoor equipment' progressively installed.<sup>952</sup>

By 1990, programs to houses special needs groups such as the homeless, single people, women escaping family violence, clients from non-English speaking backgrounds, youth and people with disabilities were together referred to as 'community housing'. Emergency housing, lodging houses, crisis accommodation and various projects under the Local Government and Community Housing Program were all included in this category, along with housing schemes to involve tenants in the design and management of their collective homes.<sup>953</sup> Community housing was intended to provide 'alternatives to traditional housing'.<sup>954</sup> *For more information on community housing see [Section 15.1](#) and [Section 15.2](#).*

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<sup>946</sup> City of Stirling <http://www.stirling.wa.gov.au/about-the-city/suburbs/pages/westminster.aspx> accessed 10 July 2014

<sup>947</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990, quotes from pp.10&11

<sup>948</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>949</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>950</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991, quote from pp.11-12

<sup>951</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, p.20

<sup>952</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>953</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

By 1991, Homeswest was leasing 112 properties other than residences for various purposes, including shops, factories, warehouses, service stations and blocks of land.<sup>955</sup>

The first Homeswest development to implement the agency's 'art in public places' policy was a 43-unit redevelopment at Lord Street, Highgate, which included a landscaped Japanese water garden amongst 21 family townhouses and 22 units for seniors.<sup>956</sup>

By mid-1990, the housing bubble had burst, sales slowed, and Homeswest pulled back on its release of residential land.<sup>957</sup> The following year, the building industry remained depressed and Homeswest targeted its various programs to assist as best it could with generating work and encouraging home buyer confidence. The economic downturn impacted on demand for housing assistance, with 25,951 applicants on Homeswest's waiting list (a list combining applications for rental properties and home loans), a 25% increase on the previous year. Of these, 17,784 applicants were registered for rental accommodation. In the same period, Homeswest halved its construction program for rental properties due to the tight economy, and managed to place 7,705 applicants into rental homes.<sup>958</sup> The following year, however, as the recession continued and unemployment rates increased, Homeswest expanded its building program and approved 2,275 Keystart loans, reducing the waiting list and providing support for the struggling building industry.<sup>959</sup>

Despite strong policy statements in the early 1980s about housing as a right for all Australians, commitments to improve and increase public housing, and a mid-1980s burst of additional home construction, Federal housing policy in practice changed little through the years of the Hawke Labor government and public housing stocks remained well below levels of demand.<sup>960</sup>

From the early 1990s, faced with long public housing waiting lists across the country, the Federal government substantially increased the level of funding assistance it provided to tenants in private rental who received government payments – the Commonwealth Rental Assistance Scheme. It was hoped this would allow greater numbers of tenants to utilise private rentals rather than continuing the demand for



New multistorey apartments at Colin Street West Perth, mid-1990s  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

<sup>954</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993, quote from p.19

<sup>955</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>956</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>957</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

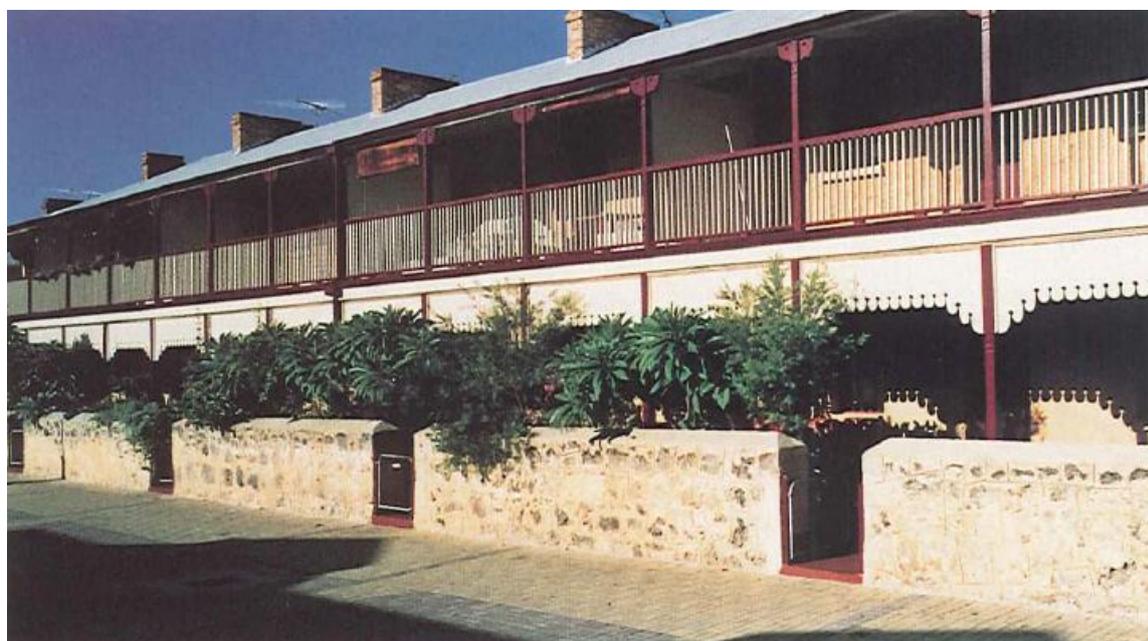
<sup>958</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>959</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>960</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.192-98

public housing.<sup>961</sup> Homeswest by this time was the State's largest property developer. Homeswest rental properties made up around 5% of all Western Australian homes.<sup>962</sup>

For some years, Homeswest had been redeveloping the sites of former commercial buildings. Generally the former buildings were removed. However, in the early 1990s some projects worked to redevelop historic buildings. In 1991-92, work began on converting the former Fremantle Prison warders' cottages for Homeswest rental purposes. Plans were also commenced for redevelopment of Elders Woolstores Fremantle, the West Australian Newspapers building in Fremantle, and the Railway Institute Building in central Perth.<sup>963</sup> The Woolstores project was subsequently cancelled due to projected high costs. Homeswest reported that a 'similar' project in Colin Street West Perth was picked up instead.<sup>964</sup> However, the Colin Street project (79 Colin & 15-19 Mayfair St) rebuilt on a cleared site.<sup>965</sup> In 1994-95, Homeswest won housing design awards for the redevelopment of 'Newspaper House', Fremantle, to create 45 units and a shop; redevelopment of the Railway Institute Building, 601 Wellington Street, to create 79 units suitable for seniors, and a develop of 100 aged persons' units at Goderich Street, East Perth, that incorporated existing residences with new sympathetic development.<sup>966</sup>



Warders' Cottages Fremantle, upgraded and converted for Homeswest rental purposes, early 1990s  
SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

The National Housing Strategy in 1992 defined 'affordable housing' as housing available to persons with the lowest 40% of income 'without having to pay more than 30 per cent of household income to meet

<sup>961</sup> Morris, Alan, 'The lack of a right to housing and its implications in Australia', in *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 1, January 2010  
<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+lack+of+a+right+to+housing+and+its+implications+in+Australia.-a0318753517> accessed 8 May 2014

<sup>962</sup> Tapper, Alan 'Homeswest: A Case Study of Welfare Failure: Evidence submitted to the Industry Commission's Public Housing Inquiry', February 1993, p.1

<sup>963</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>964</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>965</sup> Historic aerial photographs <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#> accessed 25 June 2014

<sup>966</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995

housing costs', either as rent or as loan repayments. This definition grounded the Commission's planning for provision of affordable housing well into the twenty-first century.<sup>967</sup>

After a slow period at the start of the decade, Homeswest's building program picked up. In 1991-92, the agency purchased or began to build 1922 homes, a near-record, and the following year this increased to 2,362 homes purchased or started, with 2,449 completed within the year.<sup>968</sup> In 1993-94, 1906 homes were commenced or purchased.<sup>969</sup>

Homeswest maintained an approved materials list for builders working on its projects. The list appears to have been fairly extensive. However, from time to time items were removed from the list when technical standards changed or in preference for Australian-made products when they became available.<sup>970</sup>

On 30 June 1993, Homeswest disbanded its large maintenance workforce. Employees were offered transfers or redundancies and apprentices were found other employers. Maintenance was subsequently to be provided by private contractors.<sup>971</sup>

The large stock of 1960s multistorey apartment buildings was by the 1990s becoming a problem for Homeswest, which acknowledged that many were poorly designed. A strategy launched in 1991-92 allowed for modification, demolition or sale of these blocks of flats.<sup>972</sup> Major refurbishments were undertaken in 1992-93 at seven apartment blocks, including Coram Court Fremantle, Karri Flats Balga, and Kurrari and Brownlie Towers Bentley.<sup>973</sup>

It seems Homeswest was subject to almost constant efficiency measures through the 1990s. In 1993-94, the agency made a \$13.3million profit, up from \$5.4million the previous year. However, it remained concerned at high losses on its rental operations - \$31.4million in the same year. Measures were subsequently taken to address these losses and improve efficiency in the rental sector, such as revising the system of charging tenants for damages, continuous review of waiting lists, changes to transfer policies and a zoning system to simplify allocations.<sup>974</sup> The previous year, the time lapse between rent falling into arrears and tenants being evicted had been reduced, reducing rent owed by removing non-paying clients.<sup>975</sup>

Efficiency changes from 1993-94 were in part the result of recommendations of the McCarrey Report into government sector reform.<sup>976</sup> McCarrey's 1993 report continued 'New Public Management' trends in government that had emerged of the 1980s. McCarrey in particular recommended \$1.2 billion of services that could be transferred to competitive private tenders rather than provided directly by the public sector.<sup>977</sup>

By June 1994, applicants waited on average 1yr 7½months for placement in a Homeswest rental property. Almost a quarter were housed in under a month, and over half waited less than a year, but some who chose to apply in areas with low turnover waited over three years.<sup>978</sup>

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<sup>967</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, for the period 2005-06, quote from p.18

<sup>968</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>969</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>970</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>971</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>972</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>973</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>974</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

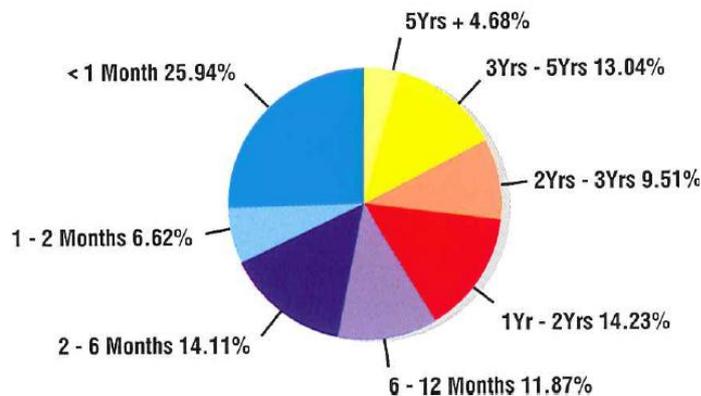
<sup>975</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>976</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

<sup>977</sup> Rainnie, Fitzgerald, Gilchrist & Morris, 'Putting the Public First?', 2012 p.104ff

<sup>978</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

### Distribution of Waiting Times for Accommodation 1994/95



Wait times for rental accommodation, 1994-95  
SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

A competition in 1993-94 to design six affordable units for a difficult limestone site adjacent to Coram Court in Fremantle received 14 entries, with winning design – required to cost under \$365,000 – to be built on the site. Homeswest also sponsored an annual prize for Curtin University students to for the best combination of 'social, environmental and planning considerations in a subdivision design'.<sup>979</sup> The Coram Court project was to use the site of a 'surplus carpark'.<sup>980</sup>

Homeswest periodically won design awards for its projects, and also attempted to include design ideas

generated by competitions into its ongoing design work. In 1993-94, it came second in two international design competitions.<sup>981</sup>

In 1994-95, Homeswest launched 'Real Start Shared Equity Loans', a scheme by which Homeswest could own up to 30% of a home with occupants obtaining a loan for the remaining 70% (or more if they were able). This allowed low-income clients to take out smaller home loans. Occupants retained the option to buy out Homeswest for the remaining portion of their home when they were financially able to do so. The new scheme, along with Keystart, WiseChoice (for seniors) and Right to Buy (for tenants), allowed Homeswest to advance 2,622 home loans in 1994-95, and to sell an additional 1,105 homes through WiseChoice or Right to Buy.<sup>982</sup> Real Start was later rebranded as GoodStart.<sup>983</sup>

Homeswest increasingly worked to cater for special needs of its clients. By the mid-1990s, a policy had been implemented to ensure clients had access to an interpreter on request. Homeswest provided interpreters in five languages, and maintained a register of staff speaking languages other than English who could be called on to assist clients if necessary.<sup>984</sup> By 1996, 11% of Homeswest tenants were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.<sup>985</sup>

<sup>979</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1994*, quote from p.25

<sup>980</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

<sup>981</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1994*

<sup>982</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

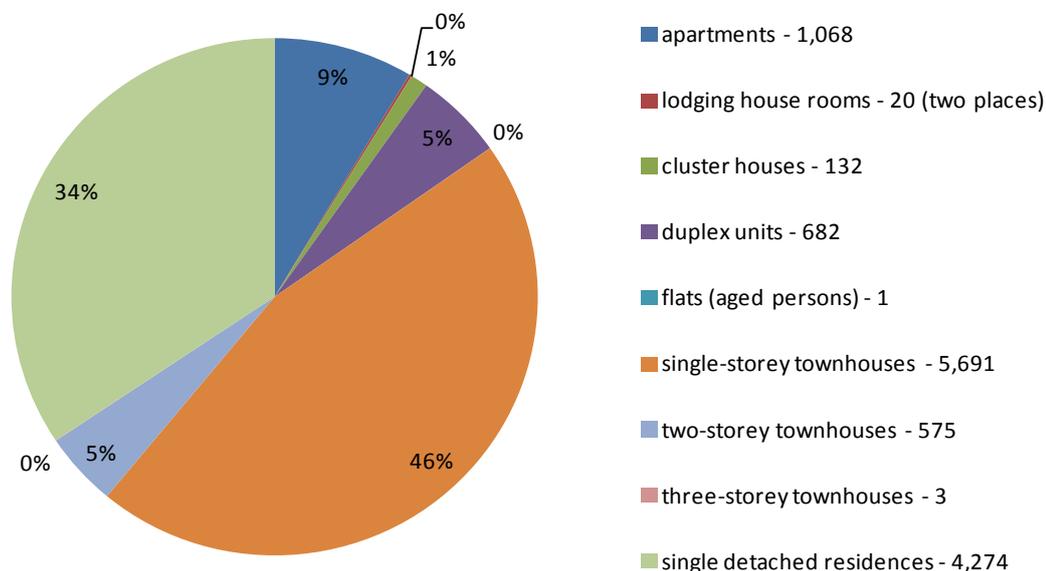
<sup>983</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>984</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1995*

<sup>985</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 12,446 housing units dated 1986 to 1995, and another 955 in Community Housing stocks. The Community Housing units are mostly 'non standard' or have no dwelling type listed. The regular DOH units divide as follows:



Combined cluster houses and townhouses comprise 51.5%.

Places mentioned in annual reports noted above

Bunbury	A 4-bedroom 1986 house is retained by DOH that appears to be the competition-winning design described in annual reports.
Guildford	DOH retains fifteen 1988 single-storey townhouses in three complexes
Highgate	DOH retains a complex of 43 units from 1989 at Lord St, a mix of two-storey family townhouses and aged persons' apartments. DOH also retains a complex of 14 single-storey townhouses from 1990 two blocks away.
Leederville	A complex of eight one-bedroom two-storey townhouses in Oxford Street is probably the 1990-91 group with mezzanines mentioned as 'novel' in annual reports.
Mosman Park	DOH retains 73 single-storey townhouses at Buckland Hill dating from 1989, in close proximity.
East Fremantle	DOH retains a complex of 16 single-storey townhouses in a complex between King and Sewell Streets, dated 1989.
North Fremantle	DOH retains a 1989 complex of 18 one- and two-storey townhouses at Thompson Rd.

Belmont	The exact location of Jamieson Estate is not known, and the 91 DOH units retained from 1989 are not all located close to each other, but one substantial block remains almost entirely in DOH ownership and all dated 1989.
Bentley	The 'Mitchell Street' project appears to refer to the creation of two new streets off Mitchell Street, along with around 40 housing units, but DOH retain no houses in these new streets or in Mitchell Street.
Bayswater	DOH retains 23 aged persons units in Bayswater dated 1988 and a further 80 from 1989, including 21 at Coode and Haddrill Streets.
Maylands	DOH retains 33 units at Kirkham Hill Tce and 30 at Peninsular Rd, all for aged persons and dated 1989.
Mount Lawley/North Perth	DOH retains 19 one- and two-storey townhouses at Little Walcott St, a mix of aged and family units.
North Perth	Tom Burke House has been retained by DOH, comprising 18 lodging house beds
Victoria Park	The noted aged care group from 1990-91 has been retained
Fremantle	DOH retains the six 1993-94 competition-winning single-storey townhouses adjacent to Coram Court, as well as Coram Court itself (see below).
Heritage redevelopment projects	
Warders' Cottages, Fremantle	DOH retains the State-registered complex (P00877), but the units are currently vacant and being prepared for sale.
West Australian Newspaper warehouse, Fremantle	The former newspaper warehouse site in Fremantle was converted to townhouses with two large old building repurposed and other areas cleared for new construction. DOH retains 45 units in the converted old building (HCWA P01001 MI Cat3) and 14 townhouses built on cleared land.
Railway Institute, Perth	DOH retains 77 units at converted building, which is entered into the State Register of Heritage Places (P02146).
Goderich St, East Perth	DOH retains a 105-unit complex in Goderich St East Perth, but it is not known if any of these are in the two historic houses on Goderich St (inc. HCWA P16884).

## Refurbished 1960s-1970s flats

Coram Court	DOH retains 57 units at Coram Court, Fremantle.
Karri Flats	Karri Flats appears to have been sold or demolished.
Brownlie Towers/Kurarri	The two-, three- and ten-storey blocks of Brownlie Towers remain and it is presumed one of these blocks has also been known as Kurrari.
Other	In addition to these three mentioned in annual reports, many others were refurbished. As noted in <a href="#">Section 14.1</a> , the DOH database does not identify which have been upgraded but it is likely that those that have been retained would all show evidence of upgrading.

## Housing co-operatives (DOH-linked)

Hamilton Hill	Pinakarri Community, formed 1991, buildings from 1999, twelve purpose-built residences, mostly families
Margaret River	Whole Earth Housing Collective
Hilton	Freo Fringe Housing Collective  Inanna's House, formed 1992, first house 1997; women-managed; nine homes, co-located, three renovated and six purpose-built
Broome	Broome Community Housing Group
Denmark	Mia Mia Housing Collective
Dianella, North Perth, West Leederville & Yokine	Subiaco-Leederville Housing Collective, formed early 1980s; six homes; various sites
Bunbury	Alternative Resource Community Housing, eight homes; co-located; mostly for over-50s; formed 1992, first house 1997
Fremantle	First Fremantle Housing Collective, founded 1985, first home 1987; 14 homes; mix of singles, couples, children, youth  A tenth collective is being developed in association with DOH in 2014 within the new 'Knutsford' development area.

## Green Streets

Recent aerial photographs show both Stratton and Ballajura as tightly packed subdivisions of winding cul-de-sacs, small house lots and curved layouts. The section of Lockridge proposed for Green Streets redevelopment was probably within what is now Kiara, which demonstrates similar characteristics, although less pronounced, possibly as it is a smaller area surrounded by older subdivisions.

Stratton

DOH retains 73 units dated 1993 to 1995

Ballajura

DOH retains 191 units dated 1992 to 1995. However, it also retains 31 properties within the subdivision dated 1987 to 1991, before the area was reported to be open for building

Kiara/Lockridge

At Kiara, DOH retains 23 housing units dated 1992 to 1995, mostly on one street, one from 1996 and then no more until 2005. At Lockridge, DOH retains no housing units from 1986 to 1995, and 58 units dated from 1996 to 2001. DOH retains two units in the redeveloped area where Clare Court was demolished, both dated 1996.

#### Singles housing

DOH retains 578 units designated for singles dated 1986 to 1995. Of these, 36 date from before the 'singles policy' was introduced in 1989. From the first two years of the policy, 1989-1990, DOH retains 117 units. These are mostly single-storey townhouses, with a small number of duplexes and two-storey townhouses. Many early flats designed for small families are now designated as singles units. Singles units are also listed with Community Housing (see below).

#### Youth housing

DOH notes 31 housing units in its regular housing stock as for youth. Community Housing stock includes four units designated for youth and another 100 for homeless youth. Another 25 Community Housing units are linked with youth-services agencies and probably provide youth housing. However, it is likely that many singles residences are sometimes used for youth, and that other Community Housing units with no target group noted or generic provider agency names are in fact youth housing

#### Groups of DOH units dated 1986 to 1995:

Over 250: Belmont (266), Broome (401), Mandurah-Coodanup-Greenfields (342), greater Geraldton (280), greater Rockingham (450, inc Cooloongup, Waikiki, Port Kennedy, Warnbro), Willagee (314)

Over 100: Albany (232), Armadale (120, plus 52 at Brookdale), Ballajura (220), Balcatta (184), Bassendean (143), Bayswater (178), Beechboro (215), Boulder (141), Bunbury (169, plus 73 at Carey Park/Withers), Busselton (176), Derby (113), East Victoria Park (139), Fremantle (142), Gosnells (187), Joondalup (112), Kalgoorlie (220), Karratha (141), Kununurra (102), Maddington (99), Marangaroo (119), Maylands (209), Midland (104), Mirrabooka (235), Palmyra (139), Parmelia (132, plus 144 across other 'Kwinana' suburbs), Redcliffe (148), South Hedland (159, mostly at Koombana – 125), Thornlie (100), Yangebup (119)

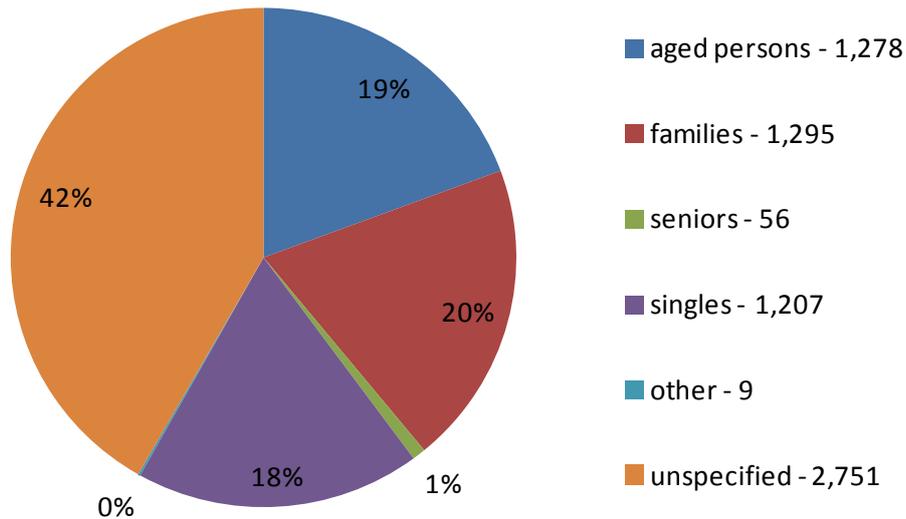
As many housing developments of this period were groups of townhouses, these large concentrations generally include several large groups of townhouses, often in relatively close proximity. The large numbers in the greater Rockingham-Mandurah region are representative of this area's growth in this period.

See also [Section 14.1](#) for DOH places from this period built under renewal projects

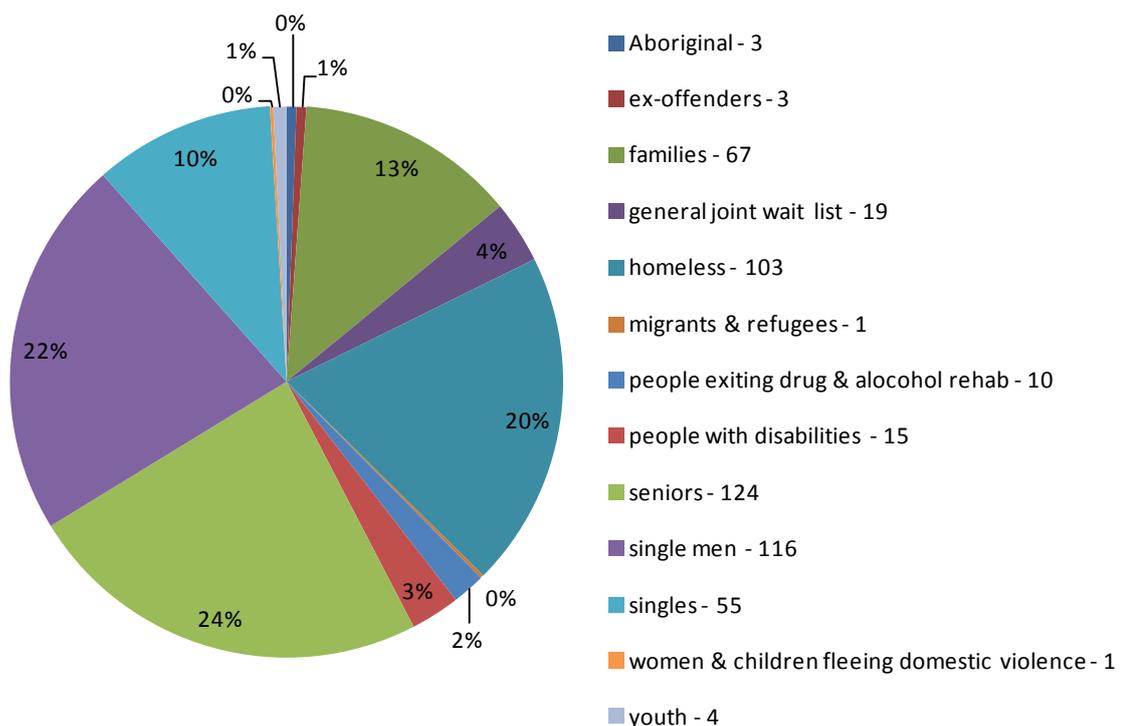
Community Housing

As of 31 May 2014, DOH has 6,597 housing units in its Community Housing stock. However, Community Housing appears to use 'housing unit' inconsistently in its records, as some places are listed as a single unit while housing up to twelve households, while others list each room in (for example) a lodging house as a separate unit. The high number of places for which various data has not been entered also makes comparisons difficult. These variances cannot be easily removed from figures that follow, but must be remembered when using the data.

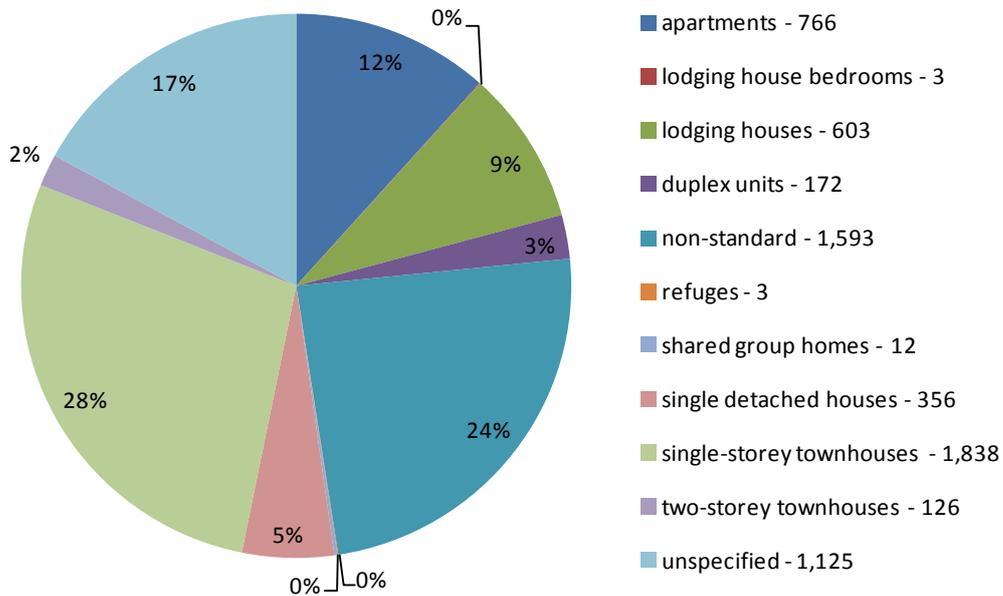
The 6,597 units divide into the following client groups ('dwelling use'):



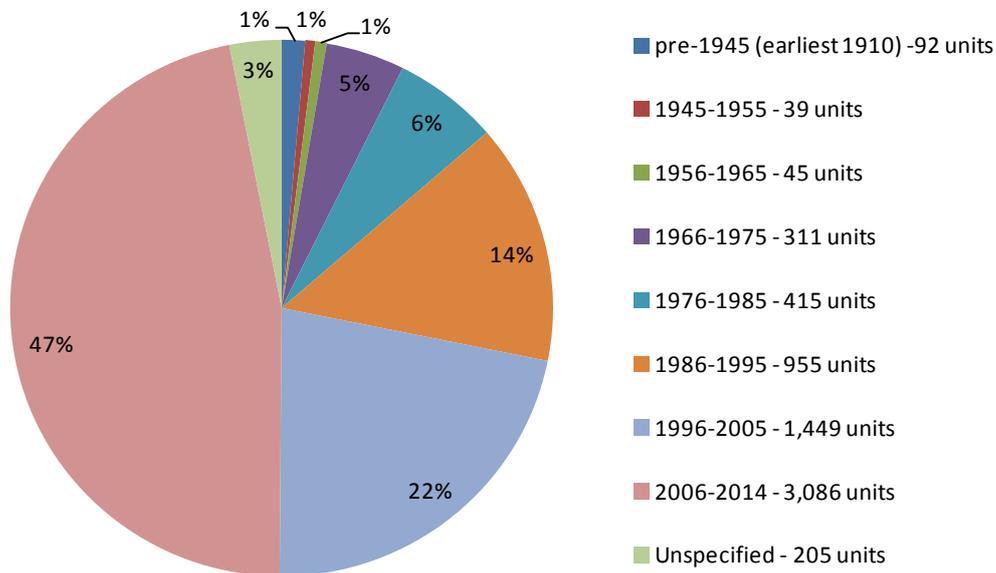
Client groups may also be determined from the 'target group' category, which overlays 'dwelling use' [for example, a unit may be for family (use) and ex-offenders (target group)]. However, only 521 (less than 8%) of Community housing records have a target group identified. This small portion divides as:



Community Housing stock may also be considered in terms of its building type:



Community Housing stock may also be considered in terms of its construction date. As Community Housing programs only began in the mid-1980s, excepting some aged care programs from the 1970s that were later added to the Community Housing portfolio, most places built prior to the mid-1980s can be assumed to have been purchased rather than constructed for community housing. Housing stock dates as follows:



## 15.1 CRISIS ACCOMMODATION & HOMELESSNESS ABATEMENT (1980S-2014)

An emergency housing office for immediate assistance to homeless persons was established by the SHC in 1984-85.<sup>986</sup>

In nineteenth century Australia, the destitute were housed in 'benevolent asylums and hospitals', supported with government funds, as Australia did not generally erect 'poorhouses' or 'workhouses' in the manner of those in Britain and Ireland. In Western Australia, there was an official government 'poor house', administered by the Immigration Department, with a small staff. Psychiatric asylums also provided shelter for the homeless, even those without any mental illness.<sup>987</sup>

Some government hostel accommodation for homeless and 'vagrant men' was provided from the mid-nineteenth century at Mount Eliza Depot, which moved in 1906 to Claremont Old Men's Home, later Sunset Hospital, in Dalkeith.<sup>988</sup> Homeless women could obtain shelter at the Perth's government poor house in central Perth, which operated from 1851 to 1909. It was then relocated to Fremantle, into the vacated Lunatic Asylum, where it operated until 1942.<sup>989</sup> Other hostels for the homeless were provided by charitable institutions such as the Salvation Army.<sup>990</sup>

Around the turn of the twentieth century, various policy changes moved assistance for the poor away from a charity-based system towards one of universal entitlement to basic provisions, such as a living wage (introduced 1907) or aged and invalid pensions (introduced 1908). This was in part a result of the 1890s Depression in the eastern States, which overwhelmed charitable institutions and required government intervention. Homelessness was most strongly linked with cycles of unemployment, and by the 1930s Depression Australian governments were still ill-prepared to respond to the sudden spike in both unemployment and homelessness. With the exception of the McNess Housing Trust (*see Section 9.1*), the Western Australian government did not provide any emergency housing in response to the wave of homelessness in the 1930s. The lack of a government housing response in this period, coupled with a general slowing of private building, contributed significantly to the post-war housing crisis.<sup>991</sup>

Government emergency housing was provided for families in Western Australia from at least 1947, initially by placing them in repurposed army camps (*see Section 11.4*). After 1951, this catered especially for families being evicted from private rentals. Priority waiting lists for regular SHC rental accommodation were also established in the 1950s to ensure families with urgent accommodation needs were housed as soon as possible.

In ensuing decades, many emergency housing cases were single parents, mostly women. The Commission attempted to 'disperse' them through SHC housing, but recognised that many ended up in

<sup>986</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

<sup>987</sup> Lloyd, Clem, 'Poor Naked Wretches: A Historical Overview of Australian Homelessness', in P. Troy (ed), *A History of European Housing in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 2000, pp.287-305

<sup>988</sup> HCWA, Register documentation for P03374 *Sunset Hospital*, September 1997

<sup>989</sup> Hobbs, Victoria, *But Westward Look: Nursing in Western Australia 1829-1979*, UWA Press, Nedlands WA, 1980, p.5; Find & Connect: History & Information about Australian orphanages, children's Homes and other institutions <http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE01150b.htm> accessed 30 May 2014; HCWA Register documentation for P00875 *Museum and Arts Centre Buildings, Fremantle*, November 1993

<sup>990</sup> HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register Documentation for P13668 *Peace Memorial Rose Garden*, January 2007

<sup>991</sup> Lloyd, 'Poor Naked Wretches', 2000, pp.287-305

apartments on account of family size.<sup>992</sup> The number of single parents applying for housing assistance increased steadily through the 1970s, noted by SHC as a 'trend [that] reflect[ed] what [was] occurring throughout society'.<sup>993</sup>

In 1975, a national inquiry into poverty identified a need for government funding of emergency housing for families in crisis, particularly through illness of or abandonment by a male breadwinner or women fleeing their husbands. The report also recommended funding for agencies to provide night shelters as well as medium and long-term hostel accommodation for the homeless, and half-way houses for ex-prisoners, who were over-represented among the homeless. However, homelessness was barely mentioned in the 320-page report.<sup>994</sup>

The huge post-war building effort, both government and private, essentially removed homelessness caused by lack of housing stock, and it was the 1980s before homelessness was again identified as a serious social problem. Housing stocks again began to fall below required levels, cycles of unemployment pushed people out of housing, and there was also an increase in youth homelessness.<sup>995</sup>

From 1982, the Commonwealth made some funding available to provide crisis accommodation for families.<sup>996</sup> Crisis accommodation facilities, such as women's shelters and youth services, provide short-term accommodation for individuals and families who become homeless, most commonly through situations of violence or a need to access medical treatment away from a usual place of residence. Generally services will provide up to twelve weeks shelter and, in some cases, also have transitional housing programs to move clients towards more stable long-term homes.<sup>997</sup>

Funds for crisis accommodation were made available under the 1984 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*. Subsequently, Homeswest provided funds to applicants for capital housing works related to crisis housing, including in 1985-86 six projects for women's emergency support and twelve for youth accommodation. As part of community housing partnerships, houses were purchased for youth crisis accommodation in Victoria Park and Fremantle, with another to follow in Langford and a duplex for a women's refuge in Geraldton.<sup>998</sup> By June 1987, Homeswest had provided 1,500 crisis beds in the State.<sup>999</sup>

From the late 1970s, the SHC oversaw funding to accommodate women fleeing family violence. The first women's refuge in Australia, 'Elsie', was started by a women's feminist collective in Sydney in 1974, initially by squatting in abandoned houses in Glebe. Within a year there were eleven refuges around the country and in 18 months, refuges nationally had sheltered 13,500 women and children. Federal funding followed.<sup>1000</sup> In Western Australia, the first refuge to receive funding was Nardine Wimmin's Refuge, in 1975. Earlier women's shelters provided by agencies such as Catholic religious orders and the Salvation Army generally provided only very short-term accommodation and focussed on reuniting families, where government and independent refuges tended to emphasis safety of women and children and longer-term

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<sup>992</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1976

<sup>993</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977, quote from p.32

<sup>994</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.216-17, 295-96

<sup>995</sup> Lloyd, 'Poor Naked Wretches', 2000, pp.287-305

<sup>996</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.189

<sup>997</sup> Shelter WA, 'Crisis Accommodation', [http://www.shelterwa.org.au/housing\\_options\\_kit/crisis-accommodation/](http://www.shelterwa.org.au/housing_options_kit/crisis-accommodation/) accessed 2 May 2014

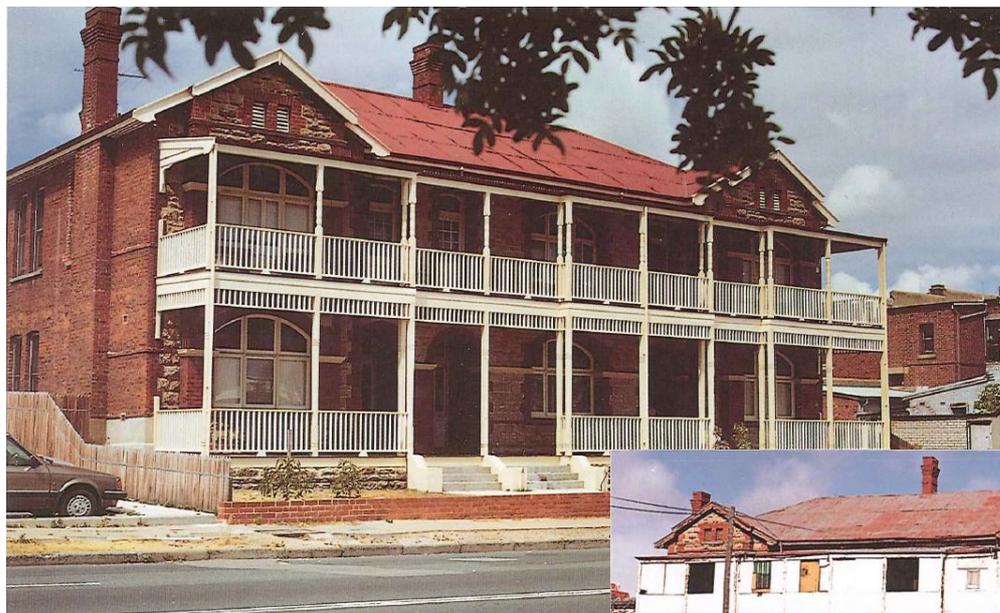
<sup>998</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>999</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987

<sup>1000</sup> Sayer, Mandy, '40 years of Elsie', in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 2014 <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/40-years-of-elsie-20140411-36h9v.html>, accessed 1 May 2014

support for families seeking to permanently leave violent situations.<sup>1001</sup> By 1980 there were around 100 women's refuges nationally. From 1976 the Commonwealth gradually handed responsibility for women's refuges to the States, with all Federal funding ceasing in 1981-82.<sup>1002</sup> Western Australia reluctantly provided limited funding through the Public Health Department.<sup>1003</sup> However, from 1985 a joint Commonwealth-State funding arrangement was reached (Supported Accommodation Assistance Program) to ensure the continuation of women's refuges, along with other crisis services.<sup>1004</sup> By 1990, the SAAP funds were supporting women's refuges in Albany, Geraldton, Broome, Kununurra and Carlisle, youth accommodation at Geraldton, Hedland and Cockburn, and crisis accommodation at Esperance and Midland.<sup>1005</sup> Crisis facilities established in earlier years, which were not mentioned in 1990, presumably also continued to receive funding.

In 1986-87, Homeswest agreed to progressively take over ten registered lodging houses in East Perth. Two lodging houses had also been purchased at Fremantle, providing accommodation for older single men, especially during the America's Cup. Upgrading these lodging houses was part of Homeswest's \$700,000 contribution to International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987). Education kits, research projects and an architectural competition for the design of crisis accommodation were also projects undertaken for the Year.<sup>1006</sup>



Tom Burke House, Northbridge, c.1988  
Before (right) and after refurbishment as a lodging house



SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>1001</sup> Fisher, C, Hunt, L & Adamsam, R, 'Women's Participation in Domestic Violence Health Policy Development', Women's Domestic Violence Health Project, April 2005, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wdvhp/html/files/WDVHPAustralia.pdf>

<sup>1002</sup> Laing, Leslie, 'Progress, trends and challenges in Australian response to domestic violence', in *Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse*, Issues Paper 1, 2000, <http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/issuespaper1.pdf>

<sup>1003</sup> Fisher, Hunt & Adamsam, 'Women's Participation in Domestic Violence Health Policy Development', 2005

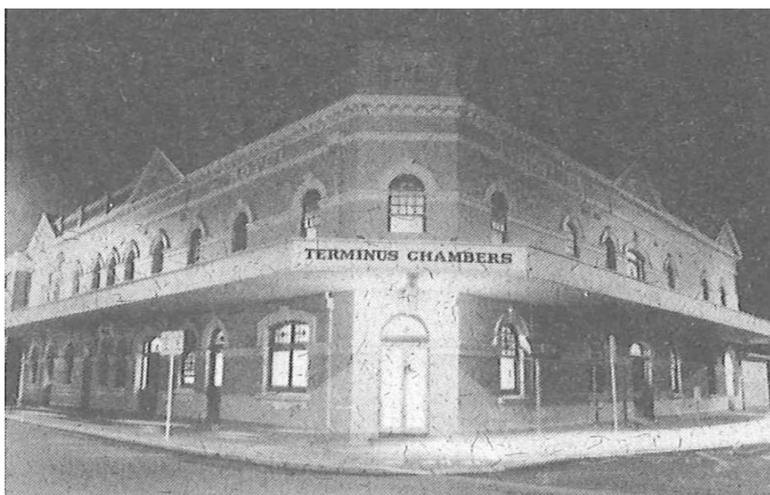
<sup>1004</sup> Laing, 'Progress, trends and challenges in Australian response to domestic violence', 2000

<sup>1005</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>1006</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987

Two additional properties were purchased in 1988-89 to be renovated for use as lodging houses – Heytesbury Road Lodging House in Subiaco and Terminus Hotel in Fremantle. By this time, Homeswest was offering 42 lodging house beds in seven lodging houses in the Metropolitan area.<sup>1007</sup> A year later, ten lodging houses were operating, providing 86 beds.<sup>1008</sup> By June 1991, fourteen lodging houses were operating, including the 24-bed Yanget House at Bunbury, the first such government residence in a country centre.<sup>1009</sup> The number of lodging houses remained stable at fourteen until at least 1994.<sup>1010</sup> In 2000, the Ministry of Housing purchased an additional 19-bed lodging house at East Perth, in conjunction with City Housing, to house single homeless persons.<sup>1011</sup> The following year, it purchased another 15-bed Metropolitan lodging house for homeless men and completed construction on hostels at Port Hedland (10-bed, for Aboriginal persons) and Maylands (24-bed, for homeless men).<sup>1012</sup>

In 1993, Homeswest noted that it provided emergency housing to families who became homeless 'through no fault of their own'.<sup>1013</sup> The tone of this quote suggests the agency saw its services as limited to 'deserving' clients, on some moral scale beyond financial or social need. Emergency housing at times included placing applicants into substandard housing that was vacant awaiting



Terminus Chambers, Fremantle, refurbished as lodging house c.1990  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1991*

demolition or refurbishment. Although intended as a short-term emergency measure, tenants were not always able to subsequently arrange transfer to more suitable housing as they were deemed 'adequately housed' and therefore not a priority. In addition, as the houses were earmarked for development, tenants reported difficulties in getting even urgent maintenance issues attended to.<sup>1014</sup>

In the community housing sector, joint venture programs were State funded, while Crisis and Community Housing programs (including Aboriginal housing) were Commonwealth funded.<sup>1015</sup>

In 1994, the Commonwealth passed the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act*. This important legislation provided a range of support services for the homeless, especially those without accommodation due to crisis, and included funding for housing.<sup>1016</sup> It built on the Support

<sup>1007</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>1008</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>1009</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>1010</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994. Note: lodging house figures not reported from 1995 report onwards.

<sup>1011</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000

<sup>1012</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2001

<sup>1013</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993, quote from p.16

<sup>1014</sup> Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC, 'Finding a Place: An Inquiry into the existence of discriminatory practices in relation to the provision of public housing and related services to Aboriginal people in Western Australia', December 2004, p.181

<sup>1015</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995

<sup>1016</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.225

Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) that had been operating since 1985. The new SAAP continued to be a joint venture between State and Commonwealth governments that provided funding to not-for-profit agencies to deliver accommodation and services to those without homes or at risk of becoming homeless.<sup>1017</sup>

Homeswest was increasingly aware of issues of family violence amongst its tenants, and was involved in policies and planning to address violence, including ongoing staff training. From 1994, the agency focussed on 'exit-point housing' (transitional housing) for clients leaving crisis care (women's refuges etc).<sup>1018</sup> In 1996-97, women's refuges were constructed at Bayswater and Carnarvon and additional safe houses for women built in Aboriginal communities at Lake Gregory and Roebourne, with plans for more to follow.<sup>1019</sup>

In 2002, the Department of Housing and Works (DHW, which included the SHC/Homeswest at the time) stated that it did not provide crisis accommodation, only priority assistance for long-term housing. Clients in need of immediate emergency housing were referred to crisis care agencies.<sup>1020</sup> While technically true, as DHW did not manage services operated from crisis care facilities, it was a somewhat misleading assertion, as DHW did continue to fund construction of premises for crisis accommodation, and retained ownership of those buildings. It has not been established in researching this project when the Department ceased to provide its own emergency housing service.<sup>1021</sup> Responsibility for emergency accommodation, including youth crisis care and women's refuges, now lies with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. However, the two departments work together to provide services, including DOH maintaining its Homeless Advisory Service that daily updates information on the available beds in crisis accommodation services.<sup>1022</sup>

Homelessness was becoming an increasing community concern by the early 2000s. The Ministry of Housing established a homelessness helpline in 2000-01, which by June 2001 had received 460 calls and resulted in 130 individuals being housed by Homeswest.<sup>1023</sup> However, the Tenant Advice Service later stated that 60% of those who contacted the helpline in 2001 received no assistance.<sup>1024</sup>

The shift away from long-term psychiatric institutions increased the numbers of mentally ill individuals without accommodation.<sup>1025</sup> A 2001-02 State Homelessness Taskforce, reporting in May 2002, made 68 recommendations targeted at preventing homelessness, supporting those who were homeless, and supporting formerly homeless persons in retaining their accommodation. The SHC was to play a

<sup>1017</sup> Department for Community Development and Department of Family and Community Services, 'SAAP Service Standards: Western Australia 2002', <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au> accessed 29 May 2014

<sup>1018</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

<sup>1019</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1020</sup> Gordon, S. Hallahan, K. & Henry, D. *Putting the picture together, Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia, 2002, p.189

<sup>1021</sup> Emails from DOH staff, forwarded by Beth Feriardi, DOH, to Clare Menck, 24 June 2014

<sup>1022</sup> Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Finding a Place: Final Report for the Section 100 Implementation and Monitoring Committee of the Inquiry into the Existence of Discriminatory Practices in Relation to the Provision of Public Housing to Aboriginal People in Western Australia', 2011 ('Implementation of Finding a Place' or 'Final Report of the Implementation and Monitoring Committee' – alternate titles used in report), p.45; Department for Child Protection and Family Support <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au> accessed 8 May 2014

<sup>1023</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1024</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.32

<sup>1025</sup> Shelter WA, 'Submission to the Western Australian Mental Health Commission', September 2010, [http://shelterwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Shelter\\_WA\\_MHC\\_submission\\_sept2010.pdf](http://shelterwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Shelter_WA_MHC_submission_sept2010.pdf) accessed 6 May 2014

significant role in implementing the recommendations and accordingly applied for additional funding. Five million dollars was granted to provide 60 units of public housing specifically for homeless clients, and another \$5.5million for clients with special needs. Thirty-eight new units would be allocated for clients leaving psychiatric institutions and 27 for clients leaving prison. Additional funding was also granted to the Special Housing Assistance Program to support vulnerable Homeswest tenants in retaining their tenancies.<sup>1026</sup>

In 2006, the SHC partnered with the St Vincent de Paul Society to construct a complex in Woodbridge for homeless men, to be known as 'Vincentian Village'. It replaced a former 1928 private hospital on the site, which had been used as a men's home since 1986, increasing the accommodation from 16 to 28 beds, and moved from shared hostel accommodation to self-contained units.<sup>1027</sup> The new premises were opened in March 2008.<sup>1028</sup>

The Housing Authority (a rebranding of SHC within DHW) entered into joint venture projects in 2006-07 with Foundation Housing to build a 50-bed lodging house, 18 apartments and six commercial units at Newcastle St Northbridge, and 22 two- and three-bedroom units in the redevelopment of the former Midland Railway Workshops.<sup>1029</sup> Both projects were completed, with some amendments, in 2011.<sup>1030</sup> A smaller hostel operated in Aberdeen Street Northbridge between 2005 and 2010 in a Federation-era house purchased by DHW for Foundation Housing to provide accommodation for up to eight homeless men. In a move indicative of some of the problems faced by inner city hostels, it was closed when a nearby nightclub expanded onto the adjacent property, making the house untenable as a residence.<sup>1031</sup>

Two of the first projects under a 2008-09 DOH scheme outsourcing major housing projects were a multi-storey residential complex in Lime Street, East Perth, to house 148 persons including seniors and homeless persons, and a 100-bed 'Foyer' project in Oxford Street Leederville. The latter implemented the internationally-used 'Foyer' model to address youth homelessness through an integrated program of education, employment opportunities, health and community services, and accommodation.<sup>1032</sup>

In August 2010, the Housing Authority purchased the former St Emilie's Convent (Kalamunda Road Kalamunda) for repurposing as a supported accommodation facility for youth at risk of homelessness.<sup>1033</sup>

By 2013, homelessness remained a pressing concern, despite measures to address it. Under community housing joint-venture initiatives, the Housing Authority opened a new 37-bed lodging house in Victoria Street Bunbury in 2012-13, as well as the landmark Lime Street facility 'St Bartholomew's House' in East Perth, housing 148 residents.<sup>1034</sup>

In 2014, DOH provides capital funding to community organisations to build or purchase premises for crisis accommodation, including women's shelters, night shelters, crisis housing for youth, and transitional housing for individuals leaving prison or drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. The agencies must demonstrate that they have appropriate funding to offer suitable services from DOH premises, which is

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<sup>1026</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1027</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1028</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2008*

<sup>1029</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1030</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1031</sup> HCWA, GHPDP preliminary review for P15777 *House & fence*, 92 Aberdeen Street Northbridge, May 2010

<sup>1032</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2010*

<sup>1033</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1034</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

generally provided through the SAAP, administered by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. The service providers rent their facilities from DOH at peppercorn rates.<sup>1035</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

In 2014, DOH retains 548 housing units through its community housing program that are designated as 'Crisis Accommodation Program'. These date from 1910 to 2014.

#### Homeless persons' accommodation

There are 103 Community Housing units designated as accommodation for homeless persons. However, it appears many places catering for the homeless do not have this information entered into the database. It is likely at least 300 Community Housing units are actually accommodation specifically for the homeless, and possibly many more.

#### Lodging houses

Lodging houses are frequently, but not exclusively, a measure to address homelessness. DOH provides over 600 beds in 19 lodging houses as part of its community housing stock (Bassendean, Beaconsfield, Bunbury, Embleton, Esperance, Fremantle x2, , Geographe [Busselton], Kalamunda, Leederville, Mount Lawley, Northbridge, Perth x3, Redcliffe, Subiaco x2, and Woodbridge.

There are also twelve lodging houses provided through regular DOH programs, providing 112 rooms (Bassendean x2, Beagle Bay, Eden Hill, Fremantle x3, Northbridge x5)

#### Women's refuges

DOH retains at least 22 women's refuges, at Albany, Fitzroy Crossing, Newman, East Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Carlisle, Mount Pleasant, Cloverdale, Bunbury (3), Parkwood, Bateman, Shelley, Broome, Port Hedland, Brentwood (2), North Perth, Redcliffe, Joondalup and Geographe (Busselton). Others are possibly at Wyndham, Wanneroo, Heathridge, Joondalup, Merriwa and Ridgewood, although some of these are transitional housing for women fleeing domestic violence rather than a refuge per se. As the Community Housing database mostly does not specifically identify women's refuges, this list is largely based on the registered providers known to offer refuge services, including Patricia Giles Centre, Nardine Wimmin's Refuge, South West Refuge and Zonta House Refuge Association. It appears Community Housing provides crisis accommodation for around 94 families or individuals fleeing violence, as well as some transitional housing.

#### Ex-offenders

Information regarding housing services for individuals leaving prison is mostly not included in the Community Housing database. However, Outcare is an agency specifically serving ex-offenders, and provides 24 housing units through DOH, in twenty metropolitan suburbs.

<sup>1035</sup> DOH 'Crisis Accommodation Program'

<http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/investorsandpartners/communityhousingorganisations/crisisaccommodation/Pages/default.aspx> accessed 24 June 2014

## 15.2 DISABILITY HOUSING (1980S-2014)

In 1985-86, the State Housing Commission established the 'Office of Housing' to provide policy advice on all matters relating to housing in Western Australia, not just public housing issues. One of the first tasks of the Office was to research and develop policy for housing of disabled persons.<sup>1036</sup>

In the nineteenth century, disability was generally hidden as a domestic matter. Public buildings and homes in general did not cater for physical disabilities in any way. Those who were mentally ill were dealt with through the penal system. From the turn of the century, large psychiatric hospitals were developed as permanent residential facilities for the mentally ill. They also accommodated the elderly, addicted and intellectually handicapped. Western Australia had one such institution: Claremont Hospital for the Insane (1904, replacing Fremantle Lunatic Asylum). The Claremont site, now Graylands Hospital, continues to include a psychiatric hospital to the present.<sup>1037</sup>

A 1953 Federal government report recommended moving towards outpatient care for psychiatric disabilities. From 1955, a process of deinstitutionalisation began. Day hospitals, community housing and outpatient care were developed. The elderly, those with drug and alcohol problems and the intellectually disabled were moved to separate services. However, the chronically mentally ill and those who did not respond to available treatments remained in large institutions until the 1980s.<sup>1038</sup>

Early in the twentieth century, people with intellectual disabilities were either cared for by their families or in large institutions such as Claremont 'Hospital for the Insane' alongside those with mental illnesses. After World War Two, community organisations developed to separate the institutional care of intellectually disabled persons from those who were mentally ill. In 1966, the first intellectually disabled residents were transferred from Claremont to Pynton, in Eden Hill, a dormitory-style government residential training facility.<sup>1039</sup>

From the 1970s, policy for disabled persons was influenced by principles of 'normalisation' and 'social role valorisation', developed internationally from the late 1960s and articulated by W. Wolgensberger in 1972. This approach sought to allow persons with disabilities to live a life as close as possible to the 'normal' conditions within their culture, including housing, schooling, employment, exercise, recreation and freedom of choice, and to support them holding valued social roles. The United Nations in 1974 issued the Declaration of Rights of Disabled Persons, signifying and furthering international recognition of disabled individuals.<sup>1040</sup>

The 1975 Henderson Report into poverty in Australia found that illness and disability were significant predictors of poverty, as those physically or mentally disabled had both higher living costs and fewer, often lower, income opportunities. Around 5% of the population outside of institutions were identified as having a disability, which for about half kept them out of work. In most states, including Western Australia, a majority of the chronically mentally and physically ill were living in 'sleazy boarding houses'

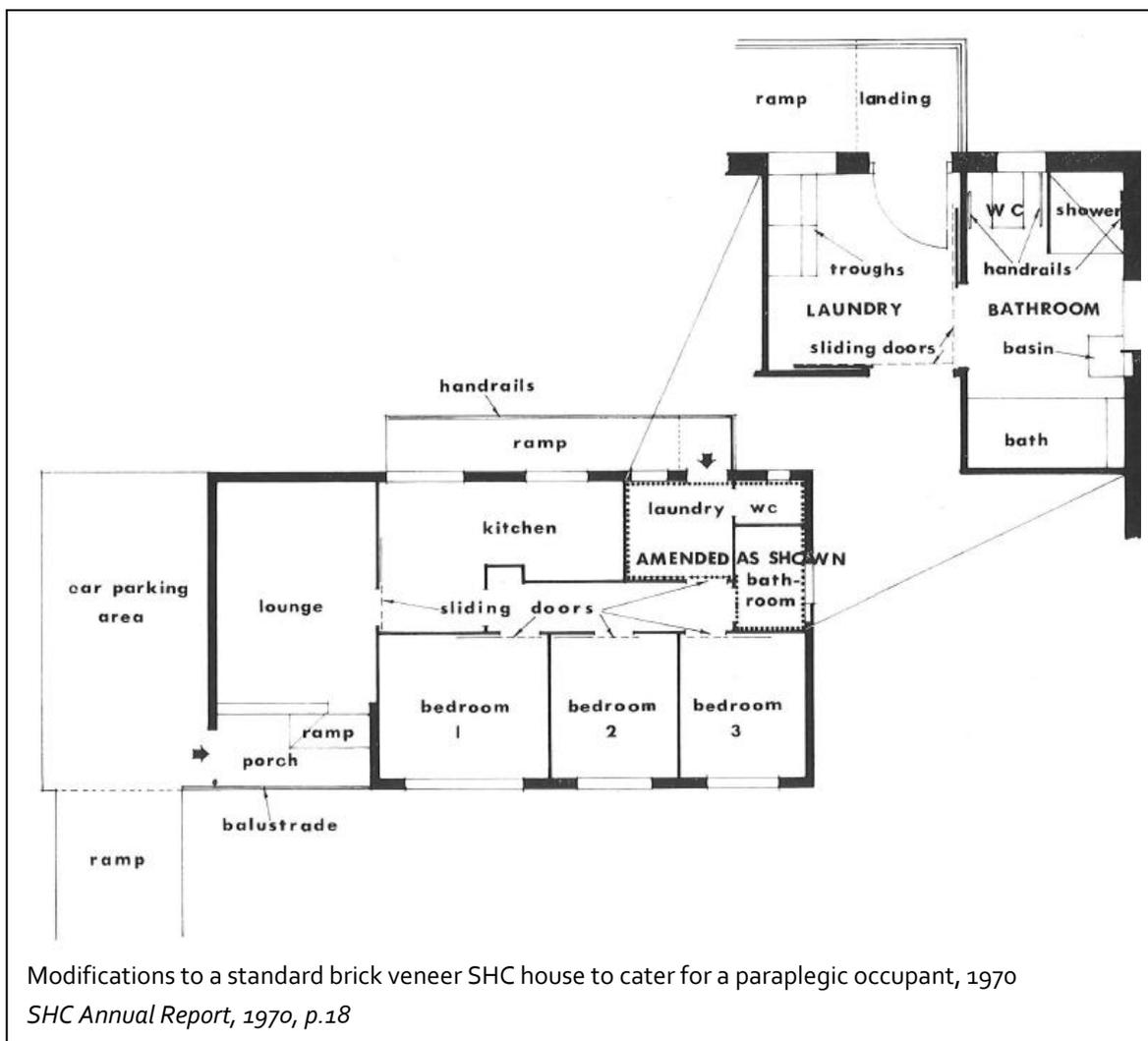
<sup>1036</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1986

<sup>1037</sup> HCWA (Kris Bizzaca) Register Documentation for P13630 *Graylands Hospital*, 2002, pp.5-6

<sup>1038</sup> Henderson, J & Walter, B, 'Organising care for the mentally ill in Australia', in Willis, E, Reynolds, L & Heleher, H, (eds.) *Understanding the Australian Health Care System*, Elsevier Australia, Chatswood NSW, 2009, pp.143-154

<sup>1039</sup> Disability Services Commission WA (DSC), 'History of Disability Services', <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/understanding-disability1/understanding-disability/history-of-disability-services> accessed 6 May 2014

<sup>1040</sup> Disability Services Australia, 'History of Disability', 2013, accessed 24 June 2014 <http://www.dsa.org.au/Pages/BeInformed/History-Of-Disability.aspx>



that often charged exorbitant board in exchange for poor-quality facilities and substandard food. The report recommended funding for improved hostels and home-help services, but in keeping with its position that government housing should be reduced and replaced with housing assistance payments did not recommend provision of government housing suitable for disabled persons.<sup>1041</sup>

From 1982, the Commonwealth provided targeted funding to provide special housing for disabled and handicapped persons.<sup>1042</sup>

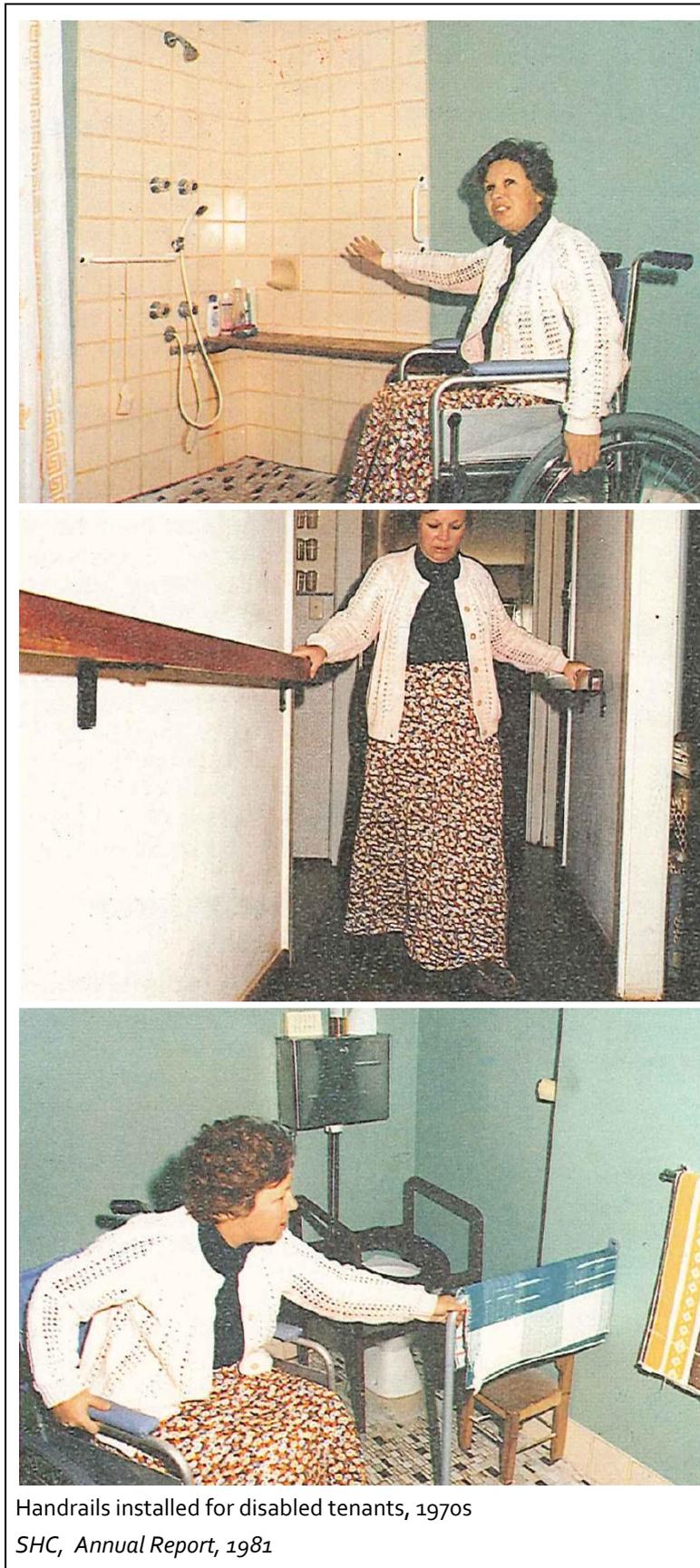
The United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 was significant in raising awareness of disability. An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey for the first time identified the number of disabled persons in Australia and their range of needs. Several years of consultation followed, including hearing from those with disabilities and their families, and resulting in significant government policy shifts, including respite and support for in-home carers. Consultation revealed that services for the disabled were inadequate. The review period culminated nationally with the *Commonwealth Disability Services Act (1986)*.<sup>1043</sup> This Act brought into legislation many of the principles that had been increasingly accepted from the 1970s, and particularly emphasised deinstitutionalising services for disabled persons.<sup>1044</sup>

<sup>1041</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.282-97, quote from Department of Health submission, Sydney, given at p.292

<sup>1042</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.189

<sup>1043</sup> DSC, 'History of Disability Services'

<sup>1044</sup> Disability Services Australia, 'History of Disability', 2013



Handrails installed for disabled tenants, 1970s  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1981*

Prior to 1985, disabled persons who were not elderly or part of an eligible family unit had not been eligible for SHC housing assistance. While existing disabled SHC tenants had in some instances been provided housing modifications to suit their physical abilities,<sup>1045</sup> there had been no overall policy for provision of housing suitable for clients with disabilities. Significant steps were taken in the provision of housing for people with disabilities with the adoption in November 1986 of a Public Housing Policy for Disabled Persons. Rental rebates were subsequently calculated with allowances for the increased cost of living experienced by those with disabilities. Recognising that many disabled persons required home-based care, provision was made for disabled tenants to share their homes with a carer, regardless of the carer's eligibility for housing assistance. The policy outlined the needs for physical modifications to homes to cater for wheelchair-bound residents. New designs were developed, and modifications made to suitable 'spot purchase' homes. It was proposed to develop a stock of public housing accessible for physically disabled persons. Recognising that homes suitable for disabled residents were often more expensive than comparable homes, the purchase limit for disabled applicants seeking Homeswest assistance to buy their own home was raised.<sup>1046</sup>

<sup>1045</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1981*

<sup>1046</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

By 1989, Homeswest was working towards having 10% of its rental stock capable of easy modifications for disabled tenants.<sup>1047</sup>

Aged care units were subsequently modified to accommodate tenants with disabilities in accordance with new disability policy.<sup>1048</sup>

The Federal disabilities legislation of 1986 moved the focus of funding from large institutions smaller care facilities and integrated employment opportunities. After some years of confusion about how the new approach was to be implemented, the *Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement* of 1991 clarified areas of responsibility, with accommodation one of the areas agreed as a State responsibility. In Western Australia, several pieces of legislation impacting on disability care had been passed in the 1980s, increasingly protecting and advancing the 'rights, responsibility, dignity, development and community participation' of those with disabilities. Finally, the Disability Services Commission (DSC) was formed in 1993, the first State department for disabilities in Australia.<sup>1049</sup>

These changes through the 1980s led to a shift in housing intellectually handicapped adults from hostel accommodation to supported group homes or duplexes.<sup>1050</sup>

The 1993 *Disability Services Act* required Homeswest to develop a plan outlining its products and services for disabled persons. From March 1995, Homeswest employed an occupational therapist to assess the needs of disabled clients and ensure their housing was adapted appropriately, expanding an occupational therapy service established in 1993. From 1996, the agency's design brief for disability housing was updated to incorporate the Australian Standards 4299-1995.<sup>1051</sup> This standard, which remains current to



Low-height kitchen fit-out for disabled tenant, 1970s

*SHC, Annual Report, 1981*

<sup>1047</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>1048</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987

<sup>1049</sup> DSC, 'History of Disability Services'

<sup>1050</sup> Sherriff, Jacqui, in association with Carrick & Wills Architects, 'Earlsferry' (Conservation Plan), prepared for the owners, November 2010, p.19

<sup>1051</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

2014, provided for 'adaptable housing' that could easily and cheaply be altered to suit the specific needs of future residents with any disability, by providing a base level of features to suit a range of disabilities and provision for additional modifications.<sup>1052</sup>

In 1993-94, Homeswest won a World Habitat award for the design of six townhouses in Belmont for residents with severe cerebral palsy that catered for their lack of mobility.<sup>1053</sup>

A focus of Homeswest Community Housing in the mid-1990s was construction and adaptation of homes for clients with disabilities. In 1994-95, 550 clients with disabilities were housed, out of a total of 7,582 new tenancy agreements in the year, while construction of 43 purpose-built 'mobility homes' commenced.<sup>1054</sup> By 1995-96, 11% of Homeswest's rental construction program was for clients with disabilities.<sup>1055</sup>

A policy initiated in 1995-96 allowed applicants living with HIV-AIDS eligibility for disability housing, and priority consideration, as well as some physical housing factors.<sup>1056</sup>

In 1996-97, 180 of the 5,868 new Homeswest rental allocations were of clients with disabilities. Construction commenced on 97 disability accessible units, and a further 69 were purchased.<sup>1057</sup>

A pilot program from 1996 trialled community-managed, supported rental housing for people with disabilities, and was formalised as the Community Disability Housing Program the following year. In its first year, the program provided 116 community-managed housing units, of which 78 were for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. This is the first specific mention in Homeswest annual reports of disability housing for those with psychiatric disabilities.<sup>1058</sup>

Deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill had accelerated from the late 1980s. Psychiatric wards were established at regular hospitals, and long-term psychiatric residents were moved to live in the community. The changes aimed to destigmatise mental illness and keep people close to their family and community supports. Public psychiatric hospital beds across Australia fell by 24% between 1993 and 2003. Psychiatric care also became increasingly privatised.<sup>1059</sup>

Deinstitutionalisation resulted in many individuals with mental illnesses becoming socially vulnerable. Their housing options tended to be unaffordable, insecure and/or of poor quality. Both stigma and genuine behavioural difficulties caused problems with potential landlords. Insecure housing in turn often exacerbated psychiatric conditions. The level of homelessness amongst those with mental illness increased.<sup>1060</sup> However, where those with chronic psychiatric illnesses were able to retain supportive

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<sup>1052</sup> Australian Network for Universal Housing Design, <http://www.anuhd.org/resources/standards-and-guidelines> accessed 2 May 2014

<sup>1053</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

<sup>1054</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995

<sup>1055</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1056</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1057</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997 and 1999 (p.48)

<sup>1058</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1059</sup> Henderson & Walter, 'Organising care for the mentally ill in Australia', 2009, pp.143-154

<sup>1060</sup> Shelter WA, 'Submission to the Western Australian Mental Health Commission', September 2010, [http://shelterwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Shelter\\_WA\\_MHC\\_submission\\_sept2010.pdf](http://shelterwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Shelter_WA_MHC_submission_sept2010.pdf) accessed 6 May 2014

community housing, such as group homes or individual residences with support services, studies have generally shown improved quality of life and housing satisfaction following deinstitutionalisation.<sup>1061</sup>

In 1996-97, Homeswest negotiated transfer of \$1.5million from the Health Department towards housing for young adults with acquired brain injury, who were at the time living in nursing homes. Homeswest committed to provide 60 homes for these clients within three years, with construction of the first twenty underway by June 1997. The project involved close liaison with the Health Department, Disability Services Commission and Homes of Peace.<sup>1062</sup>

Negotiations took place in the mid-1990s to transfer 54 homes and several hostels from Disability Services Commission to Homeswest.<sup>1063</sup> The houses were transferred in 1997-98. They provided supported group housing for 200 residents with a range of disabilities and needs. The homes were leased to a community organisation as managers.<sup>1064</sup>

Homeswest's arrangements with disability support agencies saw DSC or Health Department provide support needs, Homeswest provide houses, and community organisations provide property management services. With the proposed closure of Pyrtton training centre in Eden Hill in the late 1990s, Homeswest provided significant numbers of homes to relocate residents. In 1997-98, nine group homes were provided, with another 15 planned for the following year.<sup>1065</sup>

In addition to these 'community housing' provisions for disabled clients, Homeswest also continued to place disabled clients through its regular housing program. In 1997-98, 212 disabled clients were placed into regular Homeswest units.<sup>1066</sup>

To provide housing support for clients with disabilities, Homeswest offered the 'Access Home Loan Scheme' to assist disabled individuals and families with disabled members into appropriate home ownership. A free architectural design service was also provided to clients needing to modify or purpose-build a home to provide for disability needs. Homeswest continued to modify its own housing stock to meet the needs of disabled residents, including bathroom modifications for accessibility, grab rails, modified kitchens, level thresholds and, in some instances, additional bedrooms for live-in carers. Where existing properties could not be modified for a particular client, Homeswest would purpose-build.<sup>1067</sup>

A new approach was tried in 2003-04, using 'cluster' housing for disabled tenants. A first purpose-built complex using the concept erected seven units, providing 'discrete street frontage for some, while the remaining units through careful planning achieve privacy', and a sense of security. As increasing numbers of disabled adults left hostels and other more institutional housing, SHC had a steady demand for independent disability housing. In addition, from 2004, a policy of 'visitable standard' was implemented, which aimed to ensure that the majority of Homeswest residences were suitable for a disabled visitor.<sup>1068</sup>

Recognition of the rights of disabled persons was given a further boost internationally with the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One hundred and eleven countries have ratified the Convention, including Australia in 2008. Adherence with the Convention requires governments to recognise, protect and promote the particular human rights of disabled persons,

<sup>1061</sup> Hampel, Vera, 'The Impact of Deinstitutionalisation: Where to From Here?' in *Social & Public Policy Review*, Vol.3 Issue.1 2009 <http://www.uppress.co.uk/pdf/Hempel.pdf>

<sup>1062</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1063</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1064</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1065</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1066</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1067</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, for the period 1999-2000

<sup>1068</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2004, quote from p.35

including involving people with a disability in service delivery and ensuring them the greatest possible control over their lives and the services they receive. As a result of the Convention, models of service provision are moving away from traditional support services towards 'individualised, self directed models'.<sup>1069</sup>

A 2008 election commitment of the State government was the establishment of five respite facilities for disabilities care. The first such facility was purchased in Broome in 2009-10, with land purchased for three more at Rockingham, Gosnells and Clarkson, and a fifth earmarked for the Wheatbelt region.<sup>1070</sup> The Wheatbelt facility was eventually sited in York.<sup>1071</sup> All five facilities were completed by June 2013.<sup>1072</sup>

Commitments to the Mental Health Commissioner saw the provision of additional housing for clients with mental health challenges. Fifty additional units were provided between 2010 and 2012. Facilities were also purchased at Rockingham and Joondalup, and hostels at Moore Street Perth and Alma Street Fremantle were opened, the latter specifically a youth facility.<sup>1073</sup>

Funding was granted in 2011 to build an additional 169 homes for clients with severe disabilities, 100 community based homes for persons living with mental illness, and 15 transitional houses for clients leaving residential rehabilitation facilities. Works were to be completed over three years to 2014.<sup>1074</sup>

In 2014, DOH provides some disability housing directly to its own tenants, some through service-providers under the Community Housing program and some by shared arrangements with the DSC. The latter involves DOH leasing the properties to disability support agencies, funded by DSC, and often provides for a live-in carer.<sup>1075</sup>

A Productivity Commission Inquiry in 2010-11 recommended major national changes to the provision of disability services, including a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Commonwealth began plans to implement the NDIS, including complex negotiations with States, which each had different disability funding models. NDIS claims to be 'a new way of providing community linking and individualised support for people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers', by providing flexible, individual, whole-of-life planning and funding support. Funding was to be targeted to ensure individuals had choice and control over their support services, with individualised service plans prepared for and by clients. The NDIS was trialled in parts of South Australia, Tasmania and ACT from July 2013, and in March 2014 Western Australia became the last state or territory to sign up to the scheme. Western Australia had argued that its existing model was different to other states, with around 70% of government funding already delivered through not-for-profit agencies. The first trial of NDIS in Western Australia, in the Perth Hills region, began on 1 July 2014, running in parallel with two trials of the 'My Way' scheme, which was introduced as a State initiative from 2012.<sup>1076</sup>

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<sup>1069</sup> Disability Services Australia, 'History of Disability', 2013

<sup>1070</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1071</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1072</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1073</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1074</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

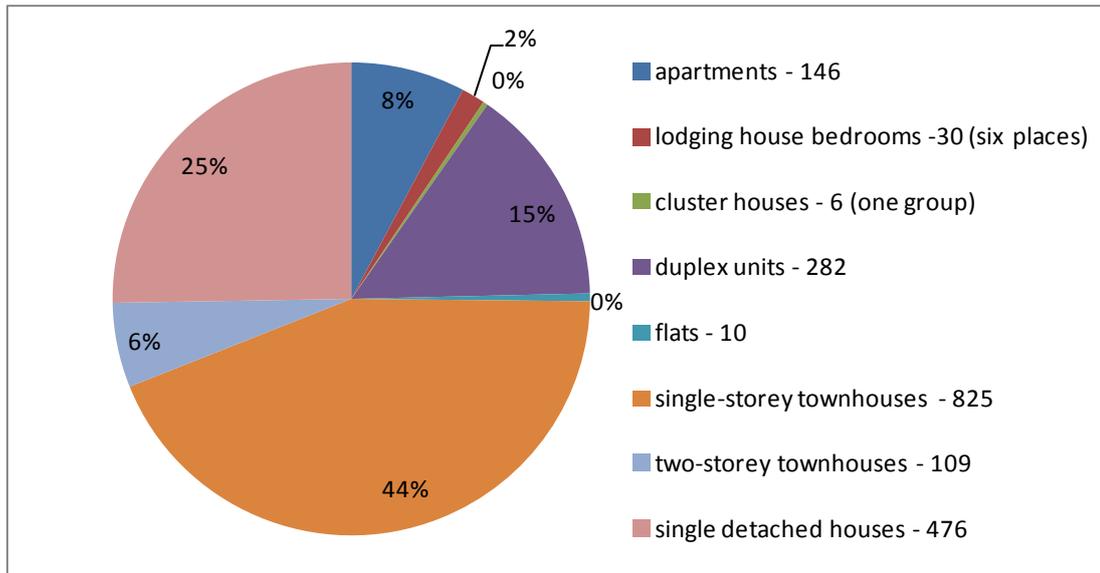
<sup>1075</sup> Beth Ferialdi, email to Clare Menck, 15 July 2014; DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>1076</sup> National Disability Insurance Scheme <http://www.ndis.gov.au> (quote from 'welcome' page); ABC News online 'Western Australia signs up to National Disability Insurance Scheme trial', 31 March 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-31/western-australia-signs-up-to-the-ndis-trials/5356978> ; DSC, 'WA NDIS My Way' <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/wa-ndis-my-way/wa-ndis-my-way/> ; all accessed 25 June 2014

The NDIS is scheduled to be implemented nationally from July 2016. While the exact nature of adjustments to government provision of disability housing are yet to be seen, it is clear that NDIS will bring substantial changes.

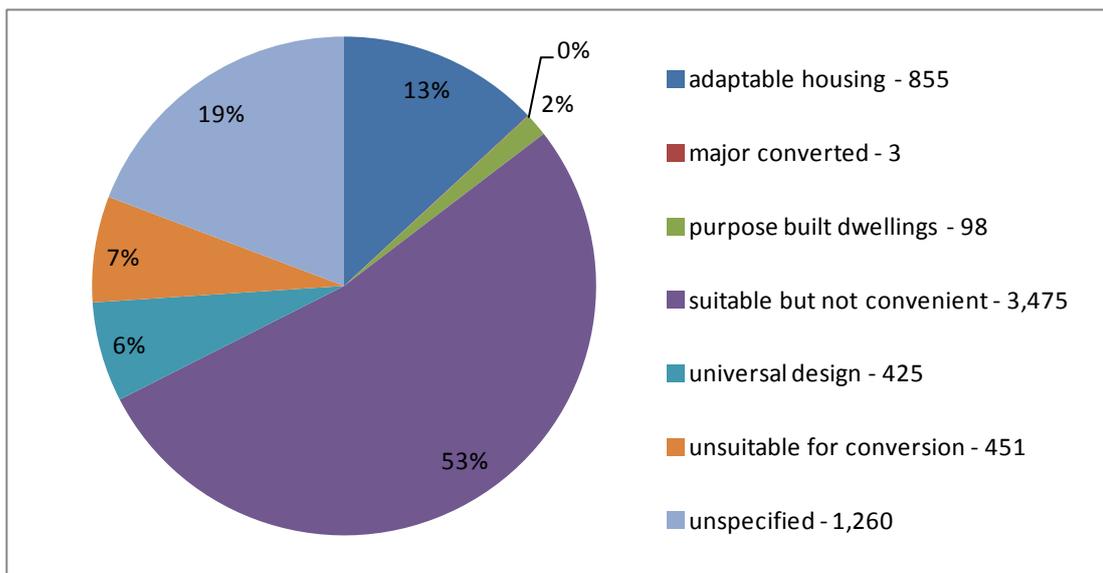
*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH notes 1,884 housing units as either 'CDHP Community Disability Program' or 'CDHP DSC – Comm Dis Services'. These divide as:

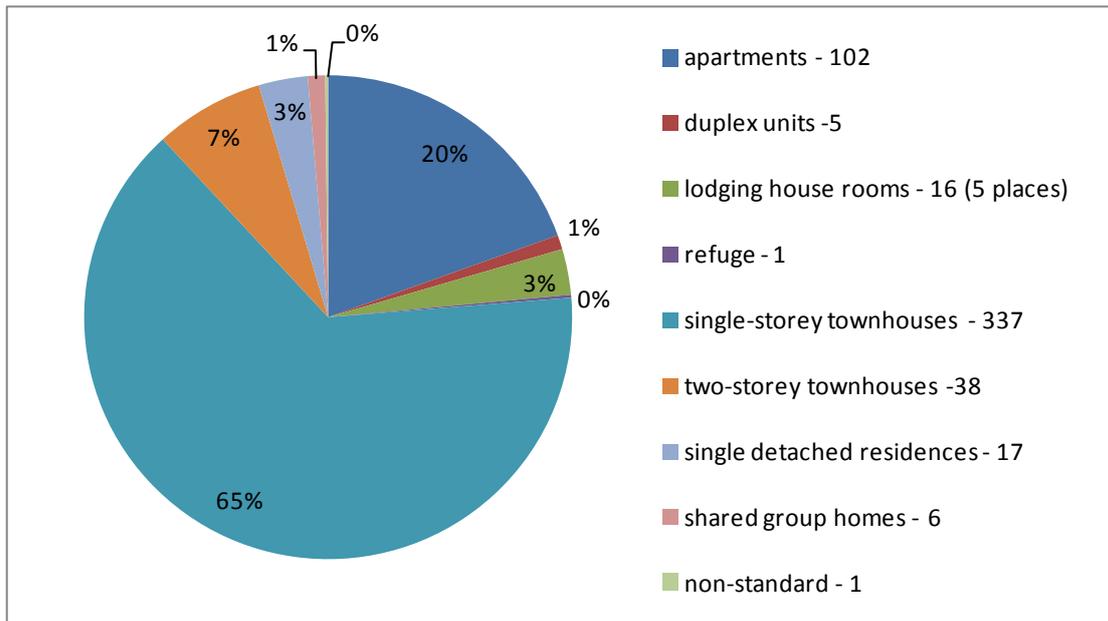


Of these, 87 are noted as 'shared group homes' (27 single-storey townhouses, 16 duplexes, 44 single detached houses). DOH also retains another five units noted as 'dwelling use: disability' with neither of the CDHP earmark codes (three duplexes, one apartment, one single detached house).

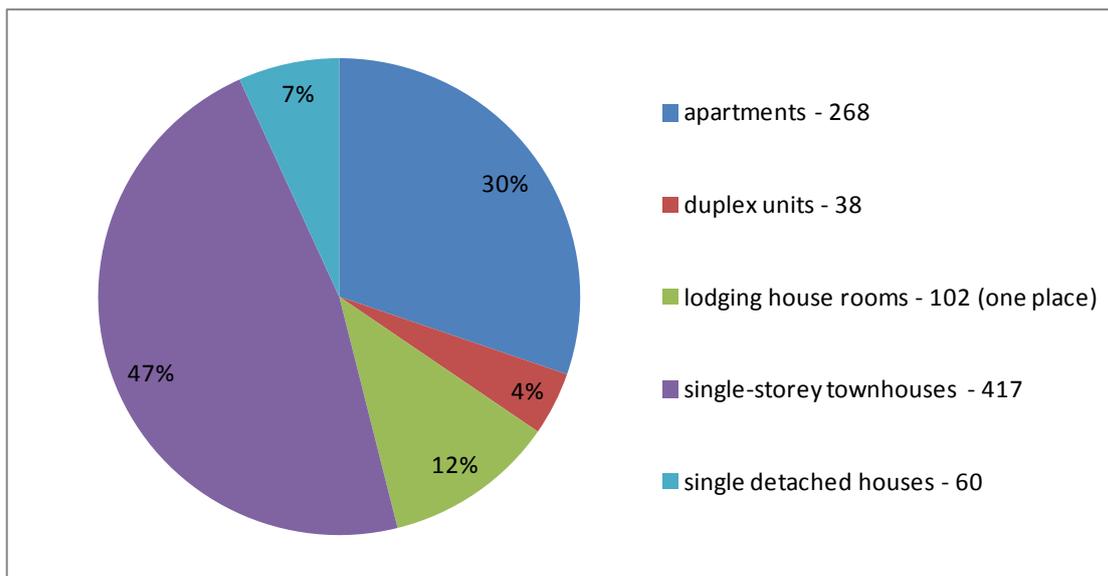
A further 16 housing units are identified in Community Housing stock as for disabled occupants, although many more are known to have occupants with disabilities. Most of the Community Housing stock has its suitability for disabled occupants noted, as follows:



The 523 purpose-built and universal design housing units divide as follows:



The 855 adaptable housing units divides as:



Places mentioned in the narrative:

Belmont townhouses	DOH records accessed do not identify which Belmont properties were award-winning disability design in 1993-94. However, 41 townhouses of the period are retained in Belmont, of which eighteen are single storey, including two groups of six, which may include the housing referred to in annual reports.
Respite	No properties in either DOH or Community Housing lists are noted as respite facilities. It is not possible to determine from property lists the location of the five 2009-2013 respite facilities at Broome, Rockingham, Gosnells, Clarkson and York.

## 16 HIDING HOMESWEST (1990S-2000S)

From the mid-1990s, Homeswest aggressively pursued policies to completely hide its housing by camouflaging it amongst private residential development. Greg Joyce, managing director of the agency from 1992 to 2006, summed up the philosophy of the era when he stated in 2001 that 'the strategy will be complete when the community perceives public housing no longer exists',<sup>1077</sup> an astonishing 'out of site – out of mind' attitude.

After around twenty-five years pursuing increases in housing density, Homeswest decided in 1992-93 that it would redevelop its estates without increasing densities, focussing on single rather than grouped houses. From 1993-94, estates suitable for such redevelopment were identified and the first of these redevelopment schemes was initiated in 1995 at Lockridge and Kwinana. Both redevelopments and new developments increasingly followed joint venture models, where the government partnered with commercial developers to deliver the new or renewed suburbs. See [Section 16.1](#).

The 1996-97 SHC annual report used the catch-phrase 'customer focussed housing' on its cover to identify the work of Homeswest.<sup>1078</sup> This was indicative of ongoing attempts to soften the agency's often negative public image.

By the 1990s, 83% of public rental tenants were in receipt of some form of welfare payment. In contrast to the operations of the SHC at its outset in the 1940s, few rentals were occupied by couples with children. Critics of 'welfare housing' suggested possibly less than ten per cent of Homeswest residences were occupied by 'traditional' nuclear families, as many family tenancies had only one resident parent. The 'stigma' of public housing frequently related to perception of government housing as welfare housing, not simply low-income housing. Both the perception and the reality of 'welfare' within public housing changed through the twentieth century. Prior to World War Two, the only government-funded 'welfare housing' was through the McNess Housing Trust. In the post-war years, rental houses were intended for young working families, although in practice many were occupied by welfare recipients. This proportion increased over the decades, particularly with the extension of housing services to the elderly, single-parent families, disabled clients, youth and the unemployed.<sup>1079</sup>

By 1994-95, a substantial majority of Homeswest's rental clients were women, with 44% of rental homes tenanted by single women, many of them single parents, and a significant portion of other properties having women as co-signatories on tenancy agreements. A Women's Plan implemented in 1994-95 identified increased security as important for female tenants, and a program to install security screen barrier doors at the front and rear of all homes was initiated. Priority was given to installing the doors on aged person units, accessible flats, properties against rights-of-way, for tenants with medical problems, high-risk tenants such as those experiencing family violence, and areas histories of high burglary rates. All new homes were to have barrier doors and all damaged fly screen doors were to be replaced with security screen doors.<sup>1080</sup> Residents had been requesting many of these improvements since at least the 1970s.<sup>1081</sup>

The following year, the percentage of women-headed Homeswest rental houses had increased to 51%,<sup>1082</sup> and by June 1997 it was as high as 55%.<sup>1083</sup> In 1998, it had reduced slightly to 52.3%.<sup>1084</sup>

<sup>1077</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2001, quote from p.8

<sup>1078</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1079</sup> Tapper, 'Homeswest: A Case Study of Welfare Failure', 1993, pp.3&8

<sup>1080</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995

<sup>1081</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1978; Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.86

<sup>1082</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1083</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

In addition to security screens, solid core doors became standard for all new Homeswest homes from around 1997. A program to install smoke alarms was launched in December 1997, with a plan to have all Homeswest houses fitted within five years. Improvements to locks, landscaping to avoid hiding places, housing design and layout, and security lighting for common areas and carparks were also implemented. All these measures emerged out of the Women's Plan (1996-98) in response to women's concerns for their safety at home.<sup>1085</sup> By 1999, these initiatives had been rebranded as 'safety initiatives' without reference to the Women's Plan.<sup>1086</sup>

By 1996, Homeswest was making headway into its rental waiting list. At June 1996, there were 11,799 applicants awaiting housing, compared with 13,337 the year before and 14,348 in June 1994. The median wait time for housing had also fallen below six months. This was partly due to a reduced number of new applications, with over 1,000 fewer new tenancies recorded during the year. New schemes to move low-income earners into home ownership may have accounted for some of the reduced demand for rentals. The newly implemented 'one valid offer' policy, where applicants refusing offer of a Homeswest house without proving a 'genuine reason to refuse' were removed from the waiting list, also improved the statistical record, although possibly not the real housing situation for applicants.<sup>1087</sup> 'Genuine' reasons did not include concerns about security (even for tenants with children or fleeing family violence), lack of heating (even for those with medical conditions), condition of the property, lack of maintenance, lack of disability access (even for those with a disability), lack of proximity to necessary medical treatment, cultural obligations, or pre-existing conflicts with neighbouring tenants.<sup>1088</sup>

The following year, although the number on the waiting list increased slightly, wait times again improved.<sup>1089</sup> In 1997-98, wait times rose again, but in 1998-99 reached record lows of under a year (average) and under four months (median). This was attributed to a targeted program to get long-term applicants off the waiting list and into homes. At the same time, the total number of people on the waiting list had increased back to 1994 levels.<sup>1090</sup> Notwithstanding annual fluctuations, the waiting list remained at this level or higher for at least the next five years.<sup>1091</sup> A 1998 commitment to ensure applicants waited no longer than three years remained in force into the 2000s, with average wait time stabilising at around 62 weeks and median wait time at around 31 weeks through 2000-2003.<sup>1092</sup>

At the same time, public housing waiting lists nationally were growing, as were levels of homelessness. The 1996 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, set to run until 1999, transferred much public housing funding to 'rent subsidies'. This continued and extended ideas from the 1970s of funding households rather than houses – perhaps not surprisingly, as newly elected Prime Minister John Howard had been treasurer in the Fraser government that first implemented this approach in the 1970s.<sup>1093</sup>

In 1997-98, Homeswest secured an agreement to build a group housing project over two lots in the East Perth Redevelopment Area, a significantly smaller portion of the redevelopment than was initially

<sup>1084</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1085</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1086</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1087</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1088</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.22

<sup>1089</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1090</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1091</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1999-2003

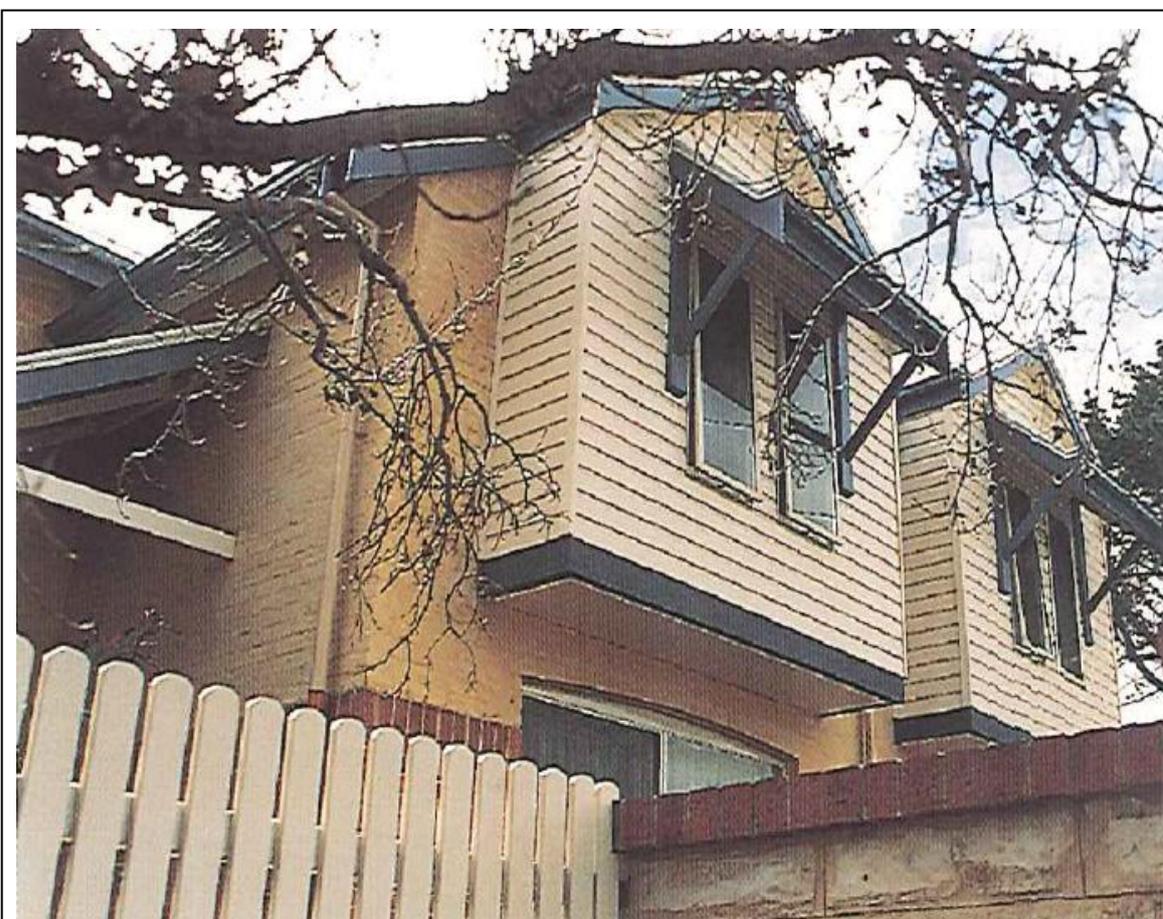
<sup>1092</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1093</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.225

flagged in plans of the 1980s.<sup>1094</sup> The 19-unit apartment complex of single and family homes was opened in 2000-01, and included an artist's studio.<sup>1095</sup>

By the mid-1990s, there was growing community concern at Homeswest's policies and practices of eviction. Each year around 100 tenants were forcibly removed, almost all on account of unpaid rents, although a few evictions were due to antisocial behaviour or property damage. Homeswest attempted to address the problem with support services, early interventions, education, policy reviews and regular inter-agency meetings, but evictions continued to be a problem, particularly amongst Aboriginal clients.<sup>1096</sup> In 1996-97, Homeswest implemented a rewards system to recognise good long-term tenants with letters of appreciation suitable for rental references, transfers to new homes or popular areas, and extras 'such as paint kits or screen doors'.<sup>1097</sup>

In 1995-96, Homeswest recognised that increasing its rents as tenants' income increased was providing a significant disincentive to clients moving into paid employment. A system of 'working allowance' was initiated to allow the first twelve months of paid income to be counted at a reduced proportion when assessing income for rental rates.<sup>1098</sup>



Group housing project, Mount Claremont, 1997

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1094</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>1095</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*. It is not known why an artists' studio was included in this development.

<sup>1096</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

<sup>1097</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*, quote from p.18

<sup>1098</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

It was standard practice by the mid-1990s to seek client feedback on housing designs and incorporate this feedback into future planning. Annual reports do not specify what changes client feedback recommended.<sup>1099</sup>

Homeswest also leased out properties through private agents to maximise income from assets awaiting demolition, redevelopment, improvement or sale. In 1996-97, 668 Homeswest properties were leased in this way through Perth Management Services. Additional properties at Karawara were leased through an agreement with Curtin University.<sup>1100</sup>

By 1998, Homeswest was constructing rental properties using private sector design, contract administration and building resources. In 1997-98, 45% of the housing units commenced were for aged persons, 43% for families, and 12% for singles.<sup>1101</sup> The following year, the percentage for families rose to 52%, with aged persons units down to 39% and singles down to 9%.<sup>1102</sup>

Homeswest offered a 'Safety Net' scheme from 1998 to prevent clients losing their homes when, due to changed circumstances such as relationship breakdown or unemployment, borrowers could no longer meet government mortgage repayments. Keystart loans could be repaid at a reduced rate for a set period of time or, if full repayment looked unlikely, Homeswest was able to buy out up to half the property value on terms similar to the GoodStart program. Within three years, 373 applicants had been assisted through the Safety Net.<sup>1103</sup> In 2002, a similar scheme was launched, 'Restart', to provide assistance to private borrowers at risk of losing their homes.<sup>1104</sup>

In 1998-99, Homeswest provided emergency accommodation in response to Cyclones Vance (Exmouth) and Elaine (Moora).<sup>1105</sup>

Homeswest began launching its information and services onto the internet, beginning with Keystart in 1998-99.<sup>1106</sup>

Homeswest continued to spot-purchase homes to aid 'clients who needed to live in areas where construction opportunities were limited'.<sup>1107</sup> In 1999-2000, 360 homes were spot-purchased compared with construction begun for 1,748 residences. Suburbs where houses had been purchased in the year included Wanneroo, Greenwood, Hamersley, Morley, Joondalup, Duncraig, Bullcreek, Kardinya and Halls Head.<sup>1108</sup>

The Ministry of Housing was launched on 16 June 1999. It was intended to bring together Homeswest, GEHA and the Country Housing Authority (CHA). New legislation was drawn to combine the relevant departments into one agency. The new agency was planned to have five branches: Homeswest, Keystart, Rural Housing (merging GEHA and CHA), Aboriginal Housing and Landstart. The latter was responsible for the development and sale of government land, including urban renewal projects and the Right-to-Buy scheme for tenants. Homeswest continued its responsibility for rental accommodation, community housing, bond assistance and housing procurement, working closely with Aboriginal Housing.<sup>1109</sup>

<sup>1099</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1100</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1101</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1102</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1103</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000

<sup>1104</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2002

<sup>1105</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1106</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1107</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000, p.56

<sup>1108</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000

<sup>1109</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999

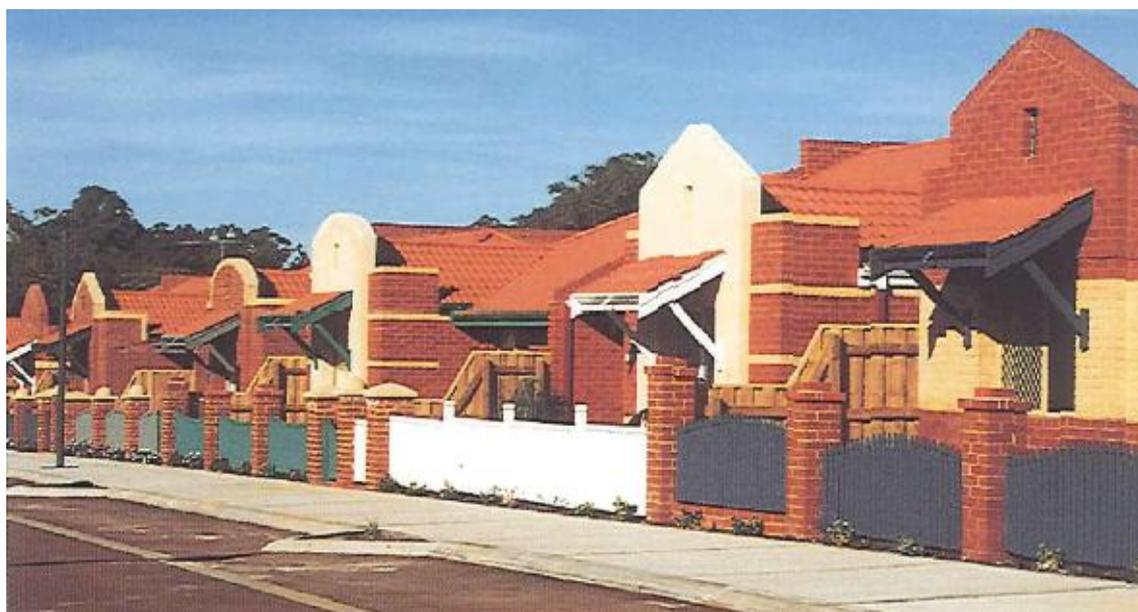
Legislation to include GEHA and CHA did not proceed, however, and instead the fifth branch of the new agency was the Office of Housing Policy.<sup>1110</sup> In June 2001, the Ministry of Housing wound up and was transferred into the Department of Housing and Works.<sup>1111</sup>

In 2000-01, Homeswest took on management of public housing on the Cocos and Christmas Islands.<sup>1112</sup> However, as in 2014 no properties owned by DOH or operated as Community Housing are listed on for the islands, it appears this management may at this stage apply in theory only.<sup>1113</sup>

The 2001 census showed that public housing stocks nationally had dropped again to only 4.5% of all housing units. More than half of public housing was in flats, semi-detached complexes, row, terrace and townhouses, compared with only 22% of Australian housing overall, indicating that public housing tenants were on average living in higher density accommodation than the general population.<sup>1114</sup> In 2014, 61% of DOH rental housing units are grouped residences rather than single detached houses.<sup>1115</sup>

From 1 July 2001, the provision of government housing was again administratively rearranged, with the State Housing Commission, Country Housing Authority and GEHA all brought under the umbrella of the new Department of Housing and Works, but continuing to operate under their original enabling Acts. Homeswest continued to be the trading name of the SHC's rental division, including community housing, bond assistance and housing procurement, linked with Aboriginal Housing.<sup>1116</sup>

A review of housing in 2000 by Shelter WA led to recommendations around appeals mechanisms being largely implemented.<sup>1117</sup> By 2002, allegations of discrimination by Homeswest were 37% of the Commission's complaints workload, leading to an Equal Opportunity Commission investigation. The



Homeswest rental properties, mid-1990s  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1110</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1111</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*, quote from p.8

<sup>1112</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1113</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>1114</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.231

<sup>1115</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>1116</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1117</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

resulting 2004 report accused Homeswest of institutionally racist behaviour, especially against Aboriginal tenants.<sup>1118</sup> For more detail see [Section 21.5](#).

A study in 2002-03 found that nearly half a million Australians were paying over 50% of their gross income in rent, of whom over 90% were low income households. In fact, almost half of all lower income households paid over 50% of their income in rent, while 15.8% of all households paid over 30% of their income to meet housing costs. Sixty years earlier, when there was a wide public perception of a national housing crisis, spending over 20% of annual income on housing was considered a benchmark at which households required housing assistance. By 2003, housing stress had reached levels that led some commentators to suggest a crisis on par with the post-war era was developing.<sup>1119</sup>

By 2003, demographics of SHC clients were changing, with a steady decline in the percentage of families seeking assistance as more and more singles, seniors and small families applied.<sup>1120</sup>

In 2002-03, the SHC assessed the heritage values of its housing stock in Hilton, following a heritage assessment for Hilton commissioned in 2001. This was the first time annual reports had noted heritage as a consideration in redevelopment.<sup>1121</sup> However, in 2001 and 2002 both Brownlie Towers and Maniana Precinct were considered for entry into the Register as part of redevelopment proposals and determined not to meet the threshold for registration. Wandana and Graham Flats had both been added to the State Heritage Register in 2000.<sup>1122</sup>

The Government Heritage Property Disposal Process (GHPDP), implemented from 1994, required government agencies considering demolition of heritage assets to refer them to the Heritage Council of WA (HCWA, supported administratively by the State Heritage Office). It was nearly fifteen years before this policy began generating many referrals from DHW, however, presumably because properties being disposed of were neither over 60 years old nor on an existing heritage list, the two main referral triggers in the policy, but possibly also due to a lack of agency awareness of GHPDP requirements. The vast majority of urban renewal projects were undertaken without consideration of heritage values. Maniana, Brownlie Towers and Hilton were exceptions. In 2014, consideration continues towards recognising the heritage values of a portion of Hilton, most likely Rennie Crescent.<sup>1123</sup>

Despite an annual building and procurement program, the total number of rental properties available grew very slowly, as new buildings only just outpaced losses to the rental stock through sales to tenants, demolition of older homes, and sales to private buyers, especially of refurbished homes in redevelopment areas. By June 2004, the SHC managed 39,366 residences, an increase of only 810 in four years, despite having built or purchased 4,618 residences in the same period.<sup>1124</sup> This was part of a trend across Australia to reduce public housing stocks.<sup>1125</sup> The following year, despite procuring 1,047 new properties, the total number of SHC housing units had actually declined, to 39,200. The demolition of 130 homes at Maniana in the year contributed to the decline. However the rental waiting list, although slightly up on the previous year, was still over 2,000 persons less than in June 2001 (13,125 compared with 15,456).<sup>1126</sup>

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<sup>1118</sup> Laurie, V & Taylor, P, "Racist" officers favour white tenants', in *The Australian*, 16 December 2004, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/news/aust16deco4.html> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1119</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.231

<sup>1120</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1121</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1122</sup> <http://www.stateheritage.wa.gov.au> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1123</sup> Various preliminary reviews, referrals and heritage assessments for government properties, supplied by the SHO, 2014; <http://www.stateheritage.wa.gov.au> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1124</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1999-2004

<sup>1125</sup> Morris, 'Contentment and suffering', 2009

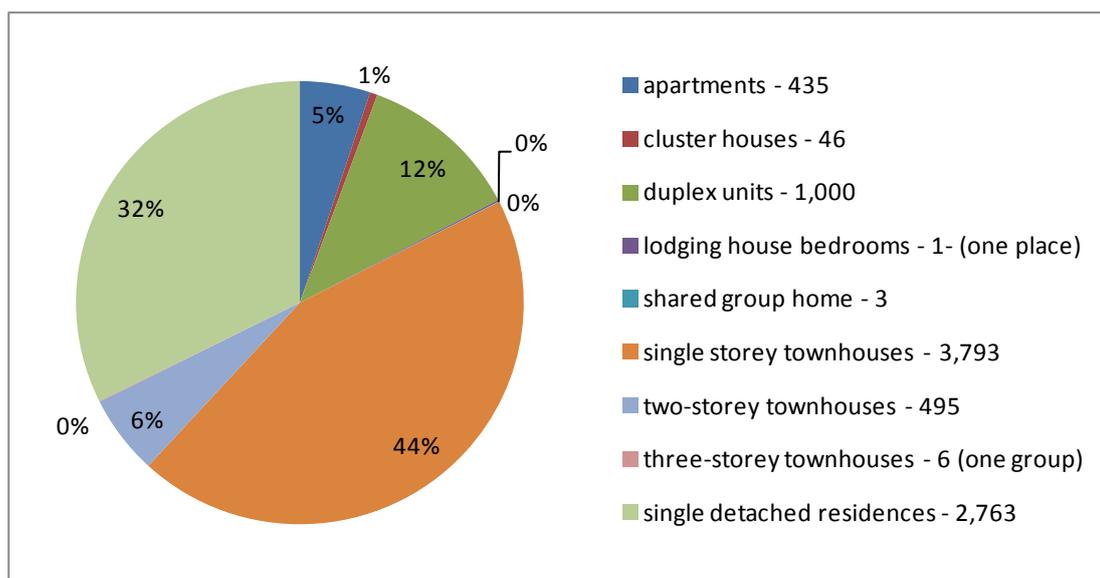
<sup>1126</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2005

A policy shift in 2003-04 moved SHC away from selling off well-located properties towards obtaining sites with redevelopment potential. By 2004, the rationale for spot purchase was noted as to obtain homes in areas where there was a shortage of available land; to distribute SHC properties 'more evenly through the community'; to acquire individual units in inner-city apartment complexes, especially for disability housing; to meet immediate crisis housing needs; and, to acquire properties with potential for later redevelopment in areas anticipated as having future high demand for housing.<sup>1127</sup>

By the early twenty-first century, the average size of Australian homes was more than double that in the post-war building boom. The size of houses particularly grew after 1985, when capital gains tax was introduced on property except for owner-occupied housing. Building the biggest house possible became a commonly accepted means of investment for property owners. Social expectations also grew, along with the overall standard of living, with assumptions of multiple differentiated living spaces, separate bedrooms for all family members, and additional bathrooms.<sup>1128</sup> While public housing design responded to some of these social expectations, it did not increase in size at the same rate as private housing. As a result, the size difference between public and private housing was much greater than in the post-war years.

*Places that remain in 2014:*

In 2014, DOH retains 8,551 housing units dated 1996 to 2005, with another 1,448 units in Community Housing stock. The DOH units divide as:

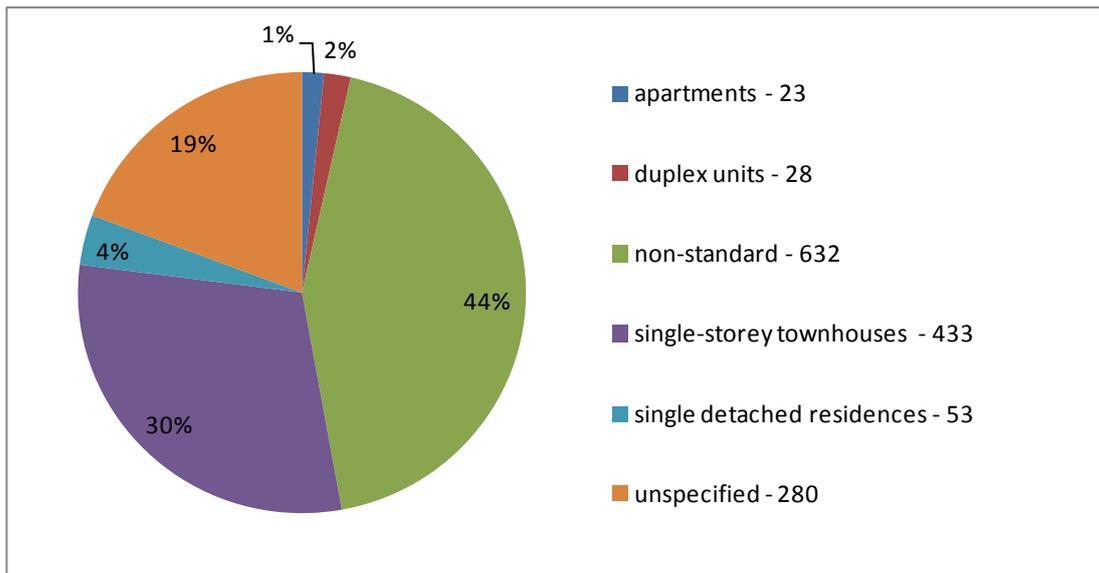


Combined townhouses and cluster houses comprise 51%. Another 1,587 DOH units are noted as acquired between 1996 and 2005 that were constructed anywhere from five to over a hundred years earlier, suggesting they were spot purchase homes.

The Community Housing units divide as:

<sup>1127</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2004*

<sup>1128</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.196&243-45



#### East Perth Redevelopment Area:

In 2014, DOH retains a complex of 15 one- and two-storey townhouses in Street East Perth, dated 2000.

#### Groups of over 100 units from 1996 to 2005 remain at:

Over 250: Albany (284), Bentley-Wilson-Saint James (129-57-109 [total 295]), Broome (333), Doubleview-Scarborough-Innaloo (240-63-235 [total 538]), Kalgoorlie (289),

Over 100: Busselton (172), Bunbury (118), Carey Park (155), Dianella (106), Ellenbrook (116), Fremantle (104), greater Geraldton (189), Hamilton Hill (167), Karratha (234), Kununurra (102), Nollamara (110), Quinns Rocks (120, inc Butler, Clarkson & Merriwa), South Hedland (108)

This are only half as many places retaining over 100 housing units as for the previous period (1986-1995), demonstrating the increasing diffusion of more recent DOH developments. However, this change is almost entirely in the Metropolitan area, as only one less non-Metropolitan centre retains over 100 DOH units than in the previous period.

## 16.1 JOINT VENTURES AND 'NEW LIVING' REDEVELOPMENT (1993-2014)

A decision was made in 1992-93 to redevelop predominantly Homeswest suburbs without increasing density levels, shifting focus from grouped to single housing and allowing tenants to purchase their homes if they were able.<sup>1129</sup> This was a break from the emphasis on increasing density that had characterised Homeswest's activities since the late 1960s and particularly its urban renewal schemes from the 1970s on.

Despite government support for medium and high density residential development for a quarter century, the general public continued to demonstrate a preference for detached family housing. Australians were willing to compromise housing size, style and location if they could obtain their own house.<sup>1130</sup>

In many parts of the world, high rise housing became the urban social norm from at least the 1970s (eg South America, South East Asia) and Soviet housing pursued high rise into the 1990s. In Western countries, however, the construction of high rise dropped away dramatically in the late 1970s. A wide range of problems became identified with high density estates: poor quality of materials, either originally or through deterioration; poor design; poor services and locations; antisocial behaviour; creation of low-income ghettos, with associated social exclusion; concentration of social problems associated with poverty; low demand for high rise accommodation; high ongoing management costs and general stigma.<sup>1131</sup> While many of these issues were not as extreme in Western Australia as in places that had aggressively pursued high density development, these international trends were reflected in local medium-density housing estates.

A strategy launched in 1993-94 to identify ageing housing estates suitable for redevelopment selected Lockridge and Kwinana as the first two to be addressed. Along with South Girrawheen, Langford, Karawara, South Hedland, Adeline (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) and Withers (Bunbury), these areas were described as having 'poor planning and design' resulting in them being 'plagued with high vacancy and turnover rates, lack of privacy and vandalism'. Expressions of interest were sought from private consultancies to project manage the redevelopments.<sup>1132</sup>

Ongoing renewal projects for Homeswest areas continued into the mid-1990s at Kwinana, Withers (Bunbury), Lockridge, Hilton and Hamilton Hill, with Karawara, Langford, Coolbellup, South Hedland, Rangeway (Geraldton), Adeline (Kalgoorlie), Carey Park (Bunbury), Albany, Armadale, Collie, Carnarvon, Esperance and Balga/Koondoola/Girrawheen added to the redevelopment program.<sup>1133</sup> Although renewal projects had been taking place since the 1970s, earlier redevelopments largely retained, renovated, or demolished and replaced public housing stock, initially with the intention of increasing housing densities. From the mid-1990s, renewal projects aimed to reduce public housing concentrations, often also reducing overall housing densities by the demolition of flats.

Planning began in the early 1990s for a large new residential estate at Ellenbrook. Homeswest undertook the development as a joint venture with Sanwa Vines Pty Ltd. Thirteen thousand lots were planned, with the aim of the first residents moving into the area in 1995.<sup>1134</sup> It was intended that the suburb would eventually comprise 'seven unique villages, surrounding a town centre', each with its own architectural

<sup>1129</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>1130</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.219

<sup>1131</sup> Wassenberg, *Large Housing Estates*, 2013, pp.33-34

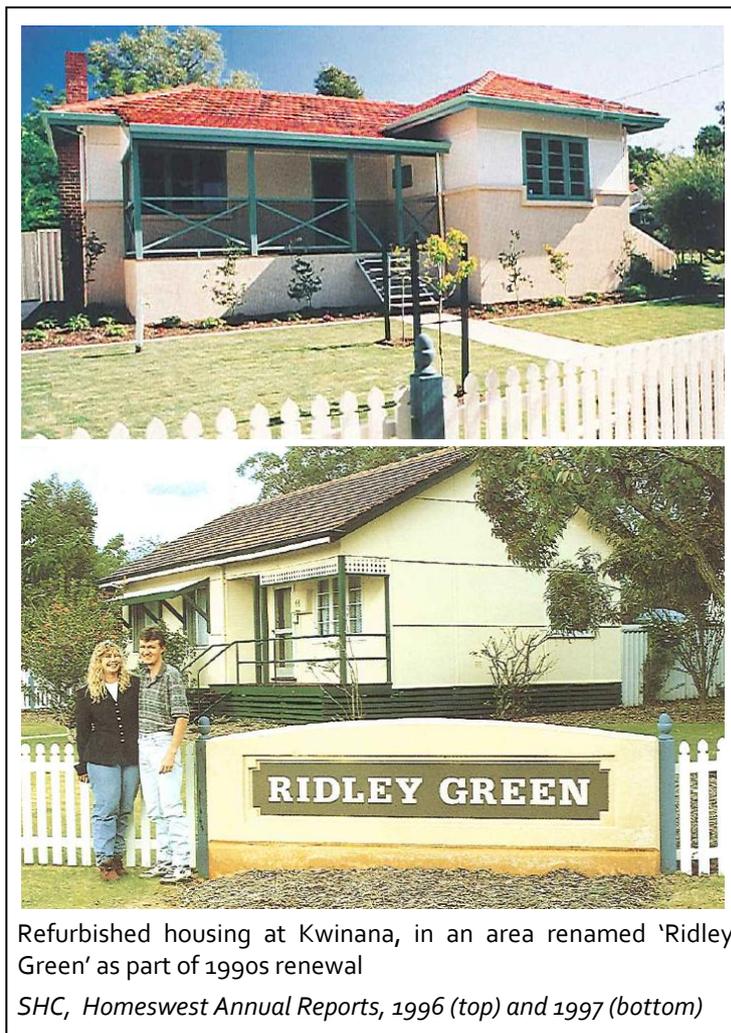
<sup>1132</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994, quotes from p.23

<sup>1133</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995, 1996, 1997

<sup>1134</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994

style.<sup>1135</sup> Construction of Homeswest rental properties at Ellenbrook began in 1995-96.<sup>1136</sup> 'Coolamon', the third stage of development at Ellenbrook, was released for sale at the end of the 1990s. It was designed with 'an Australiana theme' and included 'innovative technology features designed to encourage residents who want to work from home'.<sup>1137</sup>

Master planning for residential developments became the norm from the 1990s. Master planned communities offer a 'packaged environment', sometimes criticised for its exclusivity. In 2001, Ellenbrook won the Urban Development Institute of Australia's award for best master-planned development.<sup>1138</sup> The joint venture development at Ellenbrook was considered a success, and negotiations for more joint venture subdivisions were undertaken for Dalyellup (Bunbury) and Wandina (Geraldton) in the late 1990s.<sup>1139</sup>



Refurbished housing at Kwinana, in an area renamed 'Ridley Green' as part of 1990s renewal

SHC, *Homeswest Annual Reports*, 1996 (top) and 1997 (bottom)

The redevelopment projects undertaken from 1995 also followed a joint venture model.<sup>1140</sup> Homeswest's stated objective in redeveloping these areas was 'to redevelop older public housing estates to create more attractive living environments, to reduce Homeswest's rental presence and to encourage home ownership'.<sup>1141</sup> Although the language was about making overall improvements to estates, in other places it seems the aim of redevelopment was simply to get Homeswest out of these areas as much as possible.<sup>1142</sup> Once some of the largest redevelopments were completed, and perhaps with a sense of distance from the worst problem periods, the agency admitted that its 1960s and 1970s estates had 'suffered from high vacancy levels, crime, vandalism, restricted capital growth and social stigma', having been designed with higher densities 'to satisfy a specific need at the time'.<sup>1143</sup>

<sup>1135</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2004

<sup>1136</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1137</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000, quote from p.32

<sup>1138</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.203-04

<sup>1139</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1140</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2001

<sup>1141</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997, quote from p.33

<sup>1142</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2001, eg p.58 describes New Living as aimed 'to reduce rental presence' with property and area improvements a secondary issue, potentially even just the means to enable Homeswest's exit strategy.

<sup>1143</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2002, quotes from p.56



Refurbished townhouses Kwinana, promoted as 'condominiums'

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

Kwinana was identified in 1997 as 'the largest residential redevelopment in Australia' and a 'blueprint for similar projects' around the country. Work began in 1995, and in 1996-97 over 100 homes were refurbished and 92 sold. Two blocks with a total of 72 flats were refurbished and 53 sold. More than \$4million was spent improving 'the image and appeal of the area including major roads and parks', and house prices in the area rose 11% in the same period.<sup>1144</sup> It was intended that the project would refurbish 1,300 homes and create 3,600 new residential lots.<sup>1145</sup>

Redevelopment of Lockridge also began in 1995, with 163 housing units demolished in 1995-96. The cleared area was subdivided to create 77 small lots, which were then refurbished and sold to the public. Lockridge was seen as having 'an unacceptably high presence of public housing'.<sup>1146</sup> By June 1997 all Homeswest's three-storey apartment blocks in the suburb had been demolished, with the land earmarked for community facilities, subdivision or sale as single residential lots. In the first two years of the redevelopment, 186 rental homes had been refurbished, of which half were retained as rentals and the remainder sold.<sup>1147</sup> Redevelopment was intended to be complete in 2000, reducing Homeswest rentals from 53% to 16% of Lockridge housing. The total number of Homeswest rentals in the area was to drop from 823 to 225. Between the project starting in May 1995 and June 1998, Lockridge house prices increased 10%.<sup>1148</sup> A 'display village' for the redevelopment of Lockridge, completed in 1995-96, was later renamed 'Pepperwood Estate'.<sup>1149</sup> Locals did not adopt the renaming, however, and 'Pepperwood'

<sup>1144</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*, quotes from p.33

<sup>1145</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>1146</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*, quotes from p.26

<sup>1147</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1148</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>1149</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

quickly disappeared.<sup>1150</sup> Redevelopment of Lockridge was completed in June 2000. The five-year project was reported by the then Ministry of Housing as having 'turned a suburb once dominated by poor quality public housing flats and an excessive crime rate into a much sought after residential area with significantly reduced crime and a delightful sense of community', with only 16% of homes owned by Homeswest. Crime rates were recorded as dropping by 38% through the redevelopment years.<sup>1151</sup>



Demolition of residences at Lockridge, mid-1990s  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1996 p.26*

In an attempt to reduce antisocial behaviour, Homeswest in 1995-96 hired a security firm to make regular patrols through Lockridge.<sup>1152</sup> Presumably, as the agency was at the same time selling redeveloped land in the area, it was also hoped that hiring a security firm might improve property values. Other social measures to improve housing estates were community festivals and a 'unique' playground at Withers Bunbury incorporating Aboriginal artwork.<sup>1153</sup>

Homeswest's Executive Director Greg Joyce in 1996 stated categorically that 'for Homeswest to become a truly great organisation it must dismantle the public housing estates it has and the stigma that goes with those estates'. He believed 'large inroads' were being made towards this end and 'increasingly, the disposition of the organisation is to fix these estates'.<sup>1154</sup> Two years later he reiterated this sentiment, noting that significant work had been done to 'modernise stock and dismantle [Homeswest's] public housing estates' and that the agency's aim was 'to become self-effacing and to merge with the general

<sup>1150</sup> Erica McKinnon, Lockridge resident from 1990s to present, email to Clare Menck, 3 May 2014

<sup>1151</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*, quote from p.9

<sup>1152</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*

<sup>1153</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*, quote from p.26

<sup>1154</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1996*, quotes from p.6

community'.<sup>1155</sup> Redeveloping the old estates was identified as the largest reform the agency had ever undertaken.<sup>1156</sup>

Renewal of public housing estates was a global trend in the 1990s. In Australia, economics was the largest driver of 1990s estate renewal, as housing stock was perceived as 'obsolete', but addressing social problems of public housing estates was also a consideration. In other parts of the world, social problems in housing estates were a much greater influence on the need for and shape of renewal projects.<sup>1157</sup>

In 1995-96, a pilot scheme with the City of Stirling allowed the use of rear laneways as under-width public roads so that new homes could be developed in rear yards. Homeswest worked to subdivide its properties in North Doubleview as a result.<sup>1158</sup> Thirteen Homeswest lots were subdivided to produce a total of 30 housing units, and the first ten lots offered for sale were quickly sold.<sup>1159</sup> The following year all the lots were sold.<sup>1160</sup>

It was recognised by the 1990s that social infrastructure was essential to the success of new housing developments. Although Homeswest no longer built its own housing estates, it was still responsible in the mid-1990s for planning, servicing and releasing to the public new residential subdivisions, such as Neerabup, Forrestdale, Henley Brook, Mandurah, Leeming, Beeliar Heights, Quinns, Dianella and Glen Iris (Bunbury). Homeswest promoted the construction of community facilities and in some cases temporarily provided them itself.<sup>1161</sup>

From 1997, a 'schools in houses' project at Neerabup (Banksia Grove) provided six specially-designed residences for use as a primary school. The Education Department took a three-year lease on the properties and had 80 primary and 20 pre-primary students begin the school year on site. The site comprised four residences facing Brunswick Circuit and two facing the ends of Mist Place and Reseda Elbow. An aerial photograph in February 2000 showed the site with additional outbuildings added, probably to provide some storage and some playground shelter, and a seventh house (facing Reseda Elbow) also appears to have been part of the school site. It was intended that the buildings would revert to residential use once a primary school had been built to serve the area, and in January 2008 all seven residences were advertised for sale 'by ballot'.<sup>1162</sup>

Plans for redevelopment of Homeswest's housing in areas including Bassendean, Brentwood, Kensington, Mosman Park, Mount Hawthorn, Glendalough, Swanbourne, Bedford and Dianella began in 1997. Redevelopment aimed to garner the 'wide ranging benefits of improved rental accommodation, suburb improvement, increased community infrastructures and amenity and general property value increases'.<sup>1163</sup>

From 1997-98, Homeswest's redevelopment projects in public housing suburbs were referred to as the 'New Living Program'. The program aimed to reduce public housing to 10-20% of housing stock in most redeveloped areas. Most New Living redevelopments were undertaken in joint venture with private

<sup>1155</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998, quote from p.7

<sup>1156</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2001, quote from p.8

<sup>1157</sup> Spiller Gibbins Swan Pty Ltd for Australia Housing Research Fund, 'Public Housing Estate Renewal in Australia', November 2000, pp.6-18

<sup>1158</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1159</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

<sup>1160</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1161</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1162</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997; Google maps <https://www.google.com.au/maps> (undated aerial, streetview January 2008) and aerial photograph 24 February 2000, Landgate <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#>, accessed 9 July 2014

<sup>1163</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997, quote from p.32

developers.<sup>1164</sup> In 1999, the New Living program as a whole won the international World Habitat Award, a prestigious award judged by the UK-based Building and Social Housing Foundation.<sup>1165</sup>

'Redevelopment', 'renewal' and finally 'New Living' were in many ways rebranding of what had traditionally been referred to as 'slum clearance'. 'Slums' up to the mid-twentieth century generally referred to declining inner city areas or those that had developed either without planning controls, or with poorly conceived plans. Many were overcrowded and lacked open spaces, with high rental populations. Slum clearance aimed to demolish substandard housing, especially the dreaded flats and tenements, rehouse the displaced occupants, and rebuild more aesthetically pleasing inner city areas.<sup>1166</sup> The government was at pains to ensure it never referred to its housing estates as 'slums', even when dismantling them. Certainly they were not inner-city areas and had been developed with a high level of planning. However, 'New Living' in many ways mirrored the aims and approaches of earlier 'slum clearance' programs in other cities.

By 1999, joint venture agreements were signed with private development partners to complete urban renewal at 'the remaining large public housing estates': Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola, Westminster, Langford, Coolbellup, Karawara and Armadale, building on the model of renewal implemented at Lockridge and Kwinana. Community infrastructure was improved, including streets and parks, townhouse complexes were encouraged, and the safety and security of residents was emphasised. Other 'New Living' renewal projects were already underway at Westfield, Midland/Midvale and regionally at Bunbury (both Carey Park and Withers), Kalgoorlie, Albany, Esperance, Geraldton and South Hedland. When completed, this suite of renewal projects 'will have dismantled all public housing estates'.<sup>1167</sup> The following year, New Living projects were also noted as underway at Collie and South Carnarvon.<sup>1168</sup>

Renewal of the combined areas of Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola and Westminster was branded 'New North' and began in June 1998. It aimed to refurbish 2,686 properties, of which 1,134 were earmarked to be retained as Homeswest rentals. A further 376 apartments and townhouses were to be demolished.<sup>1169</sup> As part of the 'New North' development, four blocks of flats were demolished in 1999-2000: Narang, Hunt Place, Brine Place and Edale/Salmar Way.<sup>1170</sup>

However, at Coolbellup the former 'Yaralla' flats, which had been considered 'essentially a blight of the suburb', were refurbished, renamed 'Juliet Court', and sold to the public as 'a quality landmark' of 48 apartments. At Karawara, where large blocks of flats comprising 288 units were demolished the previous year, three apartment complexes were refurbished in 2000 for use as Homeswest rentals: 'Nentoura' (20 single-bed units) and two groups at 36 and 38 Walanna Drive (28 single-bed



Juliet Court, formerly Yaralla flats, Coolbellup, 2000  
*Ministry of Housing, Annual Report, 2000 p.39*

<sup>1164</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>1165</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1166</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians, 2012, pp.40-42, 90&100*

<sup>1167</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999, quotes from p.9*

<sup>1168</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1169</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1170</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000, quote from p.39*

units and 16 three-bedroom villas). At Armadale, the former 'Nyanora' flats (24 two-bed units) were renamed 'Glendale' and refurbished and the 'Berkdale' apartment complex was retained, with its adjacent park upgraded.<sup>1171</sup> Juliet Court won a Royal Australian Planning Institute award for urban design in 2000.<sup>1172</sup>

As part of 'New Living' redevelopments, many of the Aboriginal names given to housing complexes in the 1960s and 1970s were replaced with more European names. Aboriginal names used by the SHC in earlier periods were often not of Nyungar origin, but had used words from Aboriginal languages groups in the eastern States (eg Girrawheen, Yaralla, Nentoura).

'Eastern Horizons' was the name given to redevelopment of Midland, Midvale, Koongamia and part of Swan View. The masterplan for renewal, drawn in 1999, included demolition of Hynam Court apartments in Midland,<sup>1173</sup> which was completed in December 1999.<sup>1174</sup>

Smaller projects were at Armadale (215 homes), Westfield (70 homes) and Langford (529 homes). At Langford, Homeswest's percentage of the suburb was slated to reduce from 29% to 12%. Karawara was to be perhaps the largest proportional reduction in Homeswest presence, with a proposed drop from 66% to 20% of the suburb over five years, beginning June 1998. Homeswest demolished 276 apartments in 1998-99.<sup>1175</sup> As the redevelopment largely replaced higher density apartment complexes with lower density single detached residences, considerably reducing the total number of housing units, the actual reduction in the department's presence in Karawara was even greater than percentages suggest.

By the end of the 1990s, Homeswest turned its redevelopment eye to the well-serviced suburbs of the 1940s and 1950s, now relatively centrally located and considered prime redevelopment sites. Scarborough, Doubleview, Innaloo, East Victoria Park, Bentley, Saint James, Redcliffe, Bedford, Como, Glendalough and Manning were all areas where rezoning allowed for infill, largely through demolition and subdivision of earlier properties.<sup>1176</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, Homeswest was implementing a continuing program to replace rental housing over 40 years old.<sup>1177</sup> From the late 1990s into the 2000s, a program to convert bedsitter accommodation into one- and two-bedroom units was also enacted.<sup>1178</sup>

By 2000, more than a quarter of Homeswest's residences across the State were part of New Living redevelopments.<sup>1179</sup> The SHC was retaining for rental properties not more than one in nine residential lots in its new subdivisions.<sup>1180</sup> In New Living renewal areas, land prices increased dramatically. In Karawara, property values increased 21.9% through 2001-02 alone.<sup>1181</sup> The Karawara 'New Living' renewal was completed in 2002-03.<sup>1182</sup> The estate was rebranded as 'Collier Gardens' but, despite retaining entry boards with this name to the present, continues to be known locally as Karawara.

<sup>1171</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*, quote from p.39

<sup>1172</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1173</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1174</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1175</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1176</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1177</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1178</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1179</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*, quote from p.9

<sup>1180</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1181</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1182</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*



Single-storey townhouses built 2004 as infill behind refurbished 1950s duplexes, Carlisle  
*Clare Menck, August 2014*

While these old areas were being redeveloped, Landstart was developing new subdivisions as joint ventures at Dalyellup (Bunbury), Seacrest/Wandina (Geraldton), Woodrise (Albany), Palm Beach (Rockingham), Beeliar (south metropolitan), Butler and Clarkson (north metropolitan). Joint ventures, which had begun on a trial basis at Alinjarra, Marangaroo and Mirrabooka in 1988-89 before launching on a large scale at Ellenbrook from 1993, were by this time considered the normal approach to land development for the Ministry of Housing. However, some broadacre subdivisions for affordable housing lots continued to be developed by the Ministry on its own, including the 'first homebuyer areas' at Banksia Grove and Quinns.<sup>1183</sup>

By 2003, creation of new clear-site residential lots in New Living renewal areas was no longer emphasised, with the focus instead being on refurbishment for both retention and sale, along with enhancement of infrastructure, amenities and aesthetics in the area. In some areas, however, new lots were still carved out as part of redevelopment, with 171 such lots across the State sold to the public in 2002-03.<sup>1184</sup>

Although an economic success for DHW, the New Living program was also criticised for breaking up communities and moving existing residents away to poorly serviced areas. Overall reduction in rental stocks caused by the years of redevelopment, with rebuilding apparently slower than demolition and sales, was criticised as increasing waiting times. Some tenants in houses earmarked for redevelopment reported Homeswest refusing to maintain their homes in the interim. The emphasis on home-ownership in redevelopments was also perceived to increase social divisions between renters and owners, further stigmatising Homeswest tenants within redeveloped areas despite, ironically, the New Living policy specifically aiming to reduce the stigma surrounding public housing.<sup>1185</sup>

A national study of renewal projects in 2000 found that most were very successful in improving housing standards and neighbourhood amenity while 'adequately managing' social impacts of tenant dislocation,

<sup>1183</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*, quote from p.35

<sup>1184</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*

<sup>1185</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.233-34

but raised the concerns that problems of dislocated tenants were as yet hidden and reducing overall housing stock was creating further housing pressure.<sup>1186</sup>

In Fremantle, concerns were raised that redevelopment of the former SHC suburb of Hilton was destroying an important heritage precinct. As early as 1994, the City of Fremantle adopted guidelines to preserve the character of the Hilton area. Heritage assessments to consider a portion of Hilton for entry into the State Register of Heritage Places were undertaken in the early 2000s, with subsequent discussions continuing to the present (2014).<sup>1187</sup> See [Section 16](#).

Brownlie Towers was earmarked for refurbishment in 2003-04. At the time, it provided homes for 300 tenants. In Mosman Park, a 1969 complex of 12 one-bedroom, 41 two-bedroom and 16 three-bedroom apartments at the corner of Stirling Highway and Wellington Streets, named 'Harler Place', was also to be refurbished.<sup>1188</sup> In the first year of refurbishment, 50 units at Brownlie Towers were renovated. The complex was to be kept for public rental housing. Surrounding areas, however, were to be 'renewed' by a mix of refurbishment and demolition to create new lots. The resultant subdivision was intended to increase the number of housing units from 240 (of which 170 were SHC-owned) to 320, with works scheduled to begin in 2005.<sup>1189</sup> Internal refurbishment of Brownlie Towers was completed in September 2006, including new kitchens, wet areas, floor coverings, painting and window treatments. External upgrades included installing four new lifts, new roofs, removal of asbestos from verandahs and 'an external facelift'.<sup>1190</sup> The works were completed in December 2009.<sup>1191</sup>



Brownlie Towers, Bentley, after mid-2000s refurbishment

Clare Menck, September 2014

<sup>1186</sup> Spiller Gibbins Swan, 'Public Housing Estate Renewal in Australia', 2000, pp.i-ii

<sup>1187</sup> HCWA preliminary review, P03578 *Rennie Crescent Precinct Hilton*, undated

<sup>1188</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1189</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2004

<sup>1190</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007, quote from p.23

<sup>1191</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

New plans for 'revitalisation' of Maniana precinct, Queens Park were also underway.<sup>1192</sup> 'Revitalisation' turned out to mean demolishing the whole of the 300 residences making up Maniana, which had been built together in seven months in 1954-55 and substantially reconstructed in 1978-80. The land was subdivided and sold to the public.<sup>1193</sup> At the time of demolition, 293 housing units remained, comprising 59 single houses, 97 duplexes and 10 quadruplex blocks of units.<sup>1194</sup>

South Hedland had been under redevelopment for some time, but in 2005-06 the South Hedland New Living project was given a \$50million boost as part of Government plans to 'revitalise' the area.<sup>1195</sup> It was planned to refurbish 480 homes, of which 293 were to be retained and 187 sold. Extensive new lots were also to be provided, which was seen as vital at a time when a Pilbara mining boom was creating an acute land shortage across the Pilbara, and particularly in Hedland.<sup>1196</sup>

By the mid-2000s, New Living projects began to be completed. In 2006-07, redevelopment finished at Willagee and the Eastern Horizons New Living project (begun in 1999).<sup>1197</sup>

From 2007-08, the name 'New Living' was abandoned and ongoing redevelopment of older housing estates was referred to as the 'Urban Renewal Program'. In five years between July 2003 and June 2008, 2,067 homes were refurbished for continued use as social housing, with a further 1,284 refurbished dwellings and 681 vacant lots sold.<sup>1198</sup> By 2014, however, 'New Living' was again in use.<sup>1199</sup>

In 2008-09, Harrisdale became the Housing Authority's thirteenth house-and-land joint venture development. Of the 549 home sites surveyed, one in nine was planned to be retained for social housing.<sup>1200</sup>

Urban renewal works at Hamilton Hill (Phoenix Rise) were completed in June 2012. Renewal projects continued at New North (Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola, Westminster), Queens Park and South Hedland.<sup>1201</sup> The New North project was expanded from 2012 to include other suburbs such as Nollamara, Innaloo, Bedford and Doubleview. The Queens Park project was entering its final stage, with the construction of 86 units on the Whitlock Road site.<sup>1202</sup>

Planning was underway by mid-2013 for a major regeneration project in Bentley, focussed on 25 hectares surrounding Brownlie Towers. At least 1,500 new homes were planned, along with new civic and community facilities. Community consultation began in 2013, and the project was undertaken in conjunction with the City of Canning.<sup>1203</sup> From around 2008, residences in the area had been gradually removed, but considerable numbers remained up to 2012. In 2013, all remaining dwellings besides the multi-storey apartment blocks were demolished.<sup>1204</sup>

<sup>1192</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1193</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2004; Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1194</sup> Bodycoat, 'Maniana Housing Estate: Archival Record', 2002, p.6

<sup>1195</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2006, quote from p.10

<sup>1196</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

<sup>1197</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

<sup>1198</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1199</sup> DOH website, <http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au> accessed 27 June 2014

<sup>1200</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1201</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1202</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1203</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1204</sup> Historic aerial photographs <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#> accessed 25 June 2014

In 2013, DOH still retained more than the target 11% of housing stock in up to eighty towns and suburbs. However, many of these were small settlements, often supporting dispersed rural communities, where the percentage of homes was pushed up by the need to provide sufficient GROH accommodation for essential government staff in town (eg. Lake King, Pingrup, Hyden). Another group with higher-than-target DOH concentrations were towns, particularly in the Northwest, where large Aboriginal populations have a significant dependence on social housing (eg. Halls Creek, Wiluna, Roebourne). Suburban areas continued to have higher-than-target DOH concentrations at Broome (including Bilingurr, Cable Beach & Djungun); Beaconsfield; Geraldton suburbs Rangeway, Beachlands, Karloo and Spalding; Bunbury, including Withers and Carey Park; Rivervale-Belmont-Redcliffe; Saint James-Bentley; Manning-Karawara; Kwinana-Calista; Coodanup (Mandurah); Willagee-Hilton-Fremantle; Koongamia-Midvale and the 'New North' area. However, of 32 suburbs listed by DOH as having higher-than-target social housing, only one retained more than 23% social housing, and 26 retained 20% or less, indicating significant reductions from their peak as government housing 'estates'.<sup>1205</sup>

New Living projects at South Hedland and New North were approaching completion in June 2014. Other areas including Broome and Beaconsfield were being considered for renewal.<sup>1206</sup>

Greg Joyce's hope that the general public might perceive government housing to no longer exist has not been realised, despite nearly twenty years of New Living projects. However, reducing public housing densities and designing to blend in has gone some way towards masking government housing where tenants maintain their property exterior and antisocial behaviour is not observed. A broad public perception remains that public housing equals trouble. Private buyers are often concerned that they may inadvertently purchase near to public housing and end up with difficult neighbours and reduced property values. The wealth of online tools available, such as Google Streetview and easy access to a range of housing-related information, along with tips and advice from online forums and social media, allow determined home buyers to identify even well-hidden government housing.<sup>1207</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

##### 'New Living' redevelopment areas

As new construction was generally the last stage of redevelopment projects, following demolition and re-subdivision of much of the properties, new buildings mostly date from some time after a project began. DOH residences in areas subject to 'New Living' redevelopment, which appear to have been constructed as part of the renewal program, are as follows:

Lockridge (redeveloped 1995-2000)	203 units in total, of which 33 are dated from 1996 to 2000
Kwinana (Orelia, Parmelia, Calista, Medina; 1995-?)	Of 436 units in these older areas of Kwinana, only two date from 1995 to 1999. Twenty-two date from 2000 to 2002 and another 45 from 2008 to 2014. DOH also retains 100 units in the newer Kwinana suburbs of Leda, Wellard and Bertram, dated 1989 to 2014.

<sup>1205</sup> DOH Presence Report, April 2013, supplied by Julian Munrowd-Harris, A/Manager Development, Land & Housing Construction, DOH, email to Beth Ferialdi, 25 June 2014, forwarded to Clare Menck, 26 June 2014; ABS, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008*, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0> accessed 27 June 2014; EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.82; EOC, 'Finding a Place: Final Report', 2011, pp.18&38

<sup>1206</sup> Julian Munrowd-Harris, email to Beth Ferialdi, 25 June 2014

<sup>1207</sup> See for example online forums at: <http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/177867> , <http://www.essentialbaby.com.au/forums/index.php?topic/954548-would-you-buy-a-house-near-a-homeswest-block-of-flats/> , <http://www.homely.com.au/butler-wanneroo-perth-greater-western-australia/questions/where-are-the-homeswest-homes> all accessed 5 May 2014

Bassendean (1997-?)	274 units, 67 dated later than 1997, including 45 from 1999 to 2002
Brentwood (1997-?)	148 units, of which 36 date after 1997 (up to 2011)
Kensington/Como (1997-?)	377 units, of which 69 date from 1998 to 2002
Mosman Park (1997-?)	245 units, only five dated later than 1997
Mount Hawthorn (1997-?)	117 units, of which 42 date from 1999 to 2004
Glendalough (1997-?)	166 units, 66 dated from 1997 to 2006 (none later)
Swanbourne (1997-?)	three units, dated 1948 (1) and 1954 (2)
Bedford (1997-?)	165 units, 65 dated 1997 to 2001, another 25 from 2003 to 2011
Dianella (1997-?)	262 units, of which 85 date from 1996 to 1998, 21 from 2001 and 2002, and 11 from 2007 to 2013
Karawara (1998 to 2003):	164 units, of which 150 date from 1973 to 1983 and 14 from 2002 to 2006
'New North' (Balga, Girrawheen, Koondoola, Westminster; 1998-?)	1,159 units, most of which 1,012 date from 1961 to 1989, with 134 from 2000 to 2012
Bunbury (inc Carey Park & Withers, c.1998-?)	901 units, of which 208 date from 1998 to 2003. However, there is a steady spread of dates, suggesting DOH's building program in the area has not been particularly limited to a specific redevelopment period.
Kalgoorlie-Boulder (c.1998-?)	1,148 units, of which 237 date from 1998 to 2003 and 378 date from 2004 to 2014
Albany (c.1998-?)	843 units, of which 308 date from 1998 to 2010
Esperance (c.1998-?)	361 units, of which 205 are dated 1998 to 2013
Geraldton (c.1998-?)	1,240 units in 18 suburbs, of which 429 date from 2000 to 2014
South Hedland (c.1998-?)	1,124 units, including five suburbs, with no particular period of construction showing a redevelopment 'peak'. An influx of more recent housing (2010-14) has more to do with funding for new regional housing in response to the mining boom than redevelopment of earlier housing.
Westfield (Camillo) (c.1998-?)	Westfield, the northwest portion of Kelmscott, was renamed Camillo in 2008. DOH retains 61 units in Camillo, of which 19 date from 2007 to 2011.
Langford (1999-?)	181 units, of which 16 date from 2001 to 2005
Coolbellup (1999-?)	284 units, mostly from 1963 to 1972. It appears redevelopment in this suburb focussed more on refurbishment of existing properties than building new housing units, and/or that new units were sold rather than retained as public housing.

Armadale (1999-?)	622 units, including Brookdale and Seville Grove, of which 87 date from 2000 to 2005 and another 82 from 2006 to 2014.
'Eastern Horizons' (Midland, Midvale, Koongamia, Swan View, also Bellevue and Greenmount; 1999-2007)	629 units, of which 11 are from 2000 and 2001 and 92 from 2004 to 2014
Collie (1999-?)	252 units, of which nine date from 1999 to 2003 and 47 from 2006 to 2014
South Carnarvon (1999-?)	DOH lists all Carnarvon suburbs as 'Carnarvon', so it is not easy to identify which units are in South Carnarvon. In Carnarvon as a whole, DOH retains 513 units, of which 44 date from 2000 to 2003 and 84 from 2004 to 2013.
Scarborough/Doubleview/Innaloo (1999-?)	1,029 units, of which 16 date from 1999 (all Innaloo) and 626 from 2000 to 2014, spread fairly evenly across this period
East Victoria Park/Saint James/Bentley (1999-?)	1,164 units, including 300 at Brownlie Towers. There are 196 units from 1999 to 2006, and 60 from 2007 to 2014.
Redcliffe (1999-?)	256 units, of which 62 date from 2000 to 2002
Manning (1999-?)	243 units, of which 63 date from 1999 to 2005
Queens Park (2005-2012)	95 units, of which 65 date from 2005 to 2012
<b>Earlier residences redeveloped under 'New Living'</b>	
It is not possible to identify from DOH property lists which may have had renovations undertaken, but it is likely that most residences of any era in New Living areas have had some improvement works completed as part of the redevelopment project. Flats/apartment complexes specifically mentioned above are:	
Coolbellup	Juliet Court (formerly Yaralla) remains extant, but appears to be entirely in private ownership
Karawara	Walanna Dv flats/townhouses: extant, entirely in DOH ownership.  'Nentoura': address uncertain, but appears to be extant and in DOH Ownership
Armadale	Nyanora/Glendale: appears to be extant (address uncertain), presumably in private ownership  Berkdale Flats: remains extant, presumably in private ownership
Mosman Park	'Harler Place': extant, entirely in DOH ownership

## Bedsit conversions

It is not known which DOH units were formerly bedsit flats. Eighty-one housing units are listed as having no bedrooms, indicating a bedsit, of which 77 are earmarked for aged persons. As many aged persons units prior to 1980 were constructed as bedsits, and 2,249 aged persons units dating earlier than 1980 are retained, this indicates a significant number have been converted. Complexes known to have had bedsits in their original plans include Westlea, Southlea, Talbot Lodge, Graham Flats and Brownlie Towers. Some of these bedsits remain (three at Graham Flats, one at Southlea, three at Talbot Lodge) but most have been converted.

## New joint-venture suburbs

DOH retains the following places in new suburbs developed as joint venture projects

Ellenbrook	288 units, dated 1995 to 2014
Alinjarra (Alexander Heights)	96 units, dated 1985 to 1999, with 75 from 1991 to 1995 and 15 from 1999. Alinjarra was renamed Alexander Heights around 1987 prior to DOH's subdivision of the area. It is immediately east of Marangaroo.
Marangaroo	149 units, dated 1984 to 2011 (one outlier from 1958 on Wanneroo Rd/Sturry Pl), of which 107 are dated 1988 to 1995
Mirrabooka	420 units, dated 1980 to 2012, of which 212 date from 1988 to 1992
Dalyellup (Bunbury)	146 units, dated 2002 to 2013
Wandina/Seacrest (Geraldton)	141 units, dated 1992 to 2014, of which 18 date from 1999 to 2005, and 94 from 2006 to 2010
Woodrise (Albany, within Spencer Park)	As DOH does not list Albany suburbs separately, it is not possible to tell how many of the 843 units listed as 'Albany' are in Spencer Park or related to the Woodrise Estate. DOH lists 172 units in Albany as a whole dated 2000 to 2005. Woodrise Estate is believed to be in the southwest of Spencer Park, but its exact location has not been identified.
Palm Beach (Rockingham)	DOH retains one house (2002).
Beeliar	129 units, of which 56 date from 1995 (mostly [47] single detached houses), four from 1997 to 2000, 25 from 2003 and 44 from 2006 to 2010
Butler/Clarkson	332 units  Clarkson retains 183 units, of which 73 date from 1990 to 1995 and 104 from 2005 to 2010. Butler retains 149 units, of which 147 date from 2002 to 2011.
Harrisdale	three units, all from 2012

## 16.2 ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN (LATE 1970S-2014)

Australian homes have historically been designed without particular consideration for environmental issues or the potential for good design to improve a home's energy efficiency and passive comfort levels. However, in the 1940s several books were produced to distribute information on designing in response to Australian climates and attempt to popularise such design approaches. Some of this work was a result of the Commonwealth Experimental Building Station, an agency set up to test the thermal performance of various building materials and styles. In 1945, W. Bunning's *Homes in the Sun* promoted climate-responsive design, as did J.W. Drysdale's 1947 *Designing Houses for Australian Climates* and R.O. Phillips 1948 *Sunshine and Shade in Australasia*. The latter was a technical manual for calculating sun penetration into buildings depending on latitude, time of day, season and building orientation. Professional architects from this period on were aware of these principles but it was a long time before they were a significant consideration in most house design, being reserved for more expensive and/or architect-designed residences. In fact, many house designs to the present pay little heed to energy efficient design.<sup>1208</sup>

The lightweight materials and lack of insulation for early SHC homes often resulted in residences with poor energy performance. Standard plans for SHC homes in 1951 recommended orientations for the homes to maximise winter sun but did not provide significant shading for north or west facing windows, therefore also maximising sun in summer.<sup>1209</sup> The 1943-44 Commonwealth Housing Commission had recommended, on health grounds, that all bedrooms and living areas should be planned and oriented to receive at least one hour of sunlight a day.<sup>1210</sup> These orientations would also reduce energy costs. Winter heating would have been a tenant expense that could be reduced by good northern aspect. However, as few if any SHC homes would have been air-conditioned, better passive cooling would have improved comfort but made no difference to costs.

Some examples of Commission plans from 1956-57 noted passive comfort design features, including deep eaves to maximise winter sun while providing summer shading, and natural ventilation.<sup>1211</sup> Design for Northwest houses in particular paid attention to climatic conditions. Initially this was mostly about withstanding cyclones, but by the 1960s, it was accepted that homes should face north or south, with no east or west windows, and walls should be insulated.<sup>1212</sup> However, despite this policy many government houses in the Northwest from the 1970s until the mid- to late-1980s were an imitation of suburban Perth brick homes without reference to northern climate.<sup>1213</sup> See [Section 20](#).

A 1959 booklet of standard plans for pre-cut homes notes that 'inclement weather, sunlight, prevailing breezes and view' are considerations in selecting designs, and that 'windows and doors facing from south-west to north-west' should be protected against both sun and prevailing wet weather direction by either wide eaves, screens or porches.<sup>1214</sup>

The global energy crisis of the 1970s saw the costs of domestic energy consumption rise dramatically. As a result, a wider audience became interested in the use of passive design features to reduce the need to

<sup>1208</sup> Holland, Graham, 'The Comfortable House: Responding to the Australian Environment', in Troy, A *History of European Housing in Australia*, 2000, pp.197-217; HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register documentation for P16781 *Round House, Mount Barker*, August 2009, p.6

<sup>1209</sup> SHC, *House Designs of the SHC*, 1951

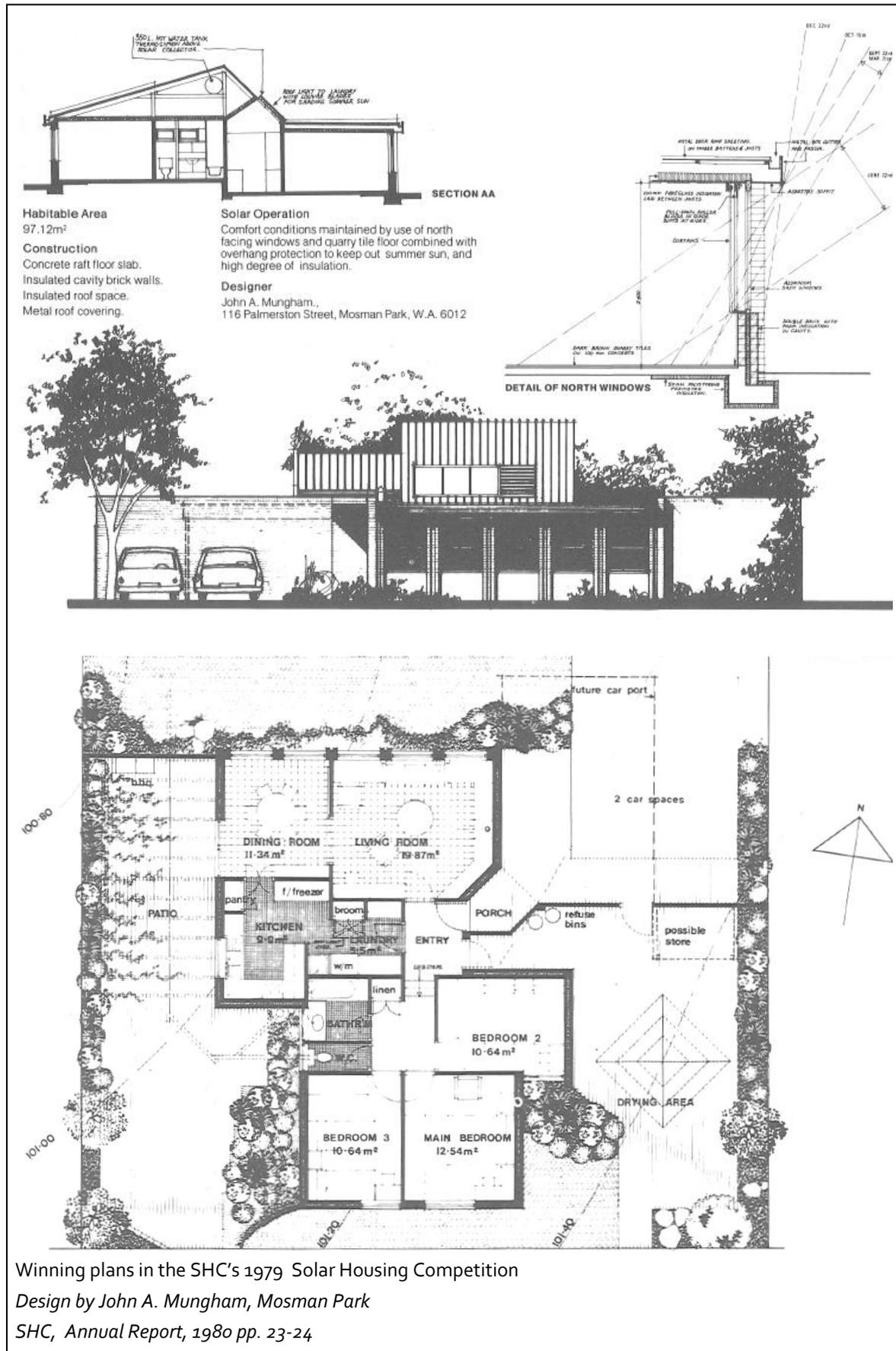
<sup>1210</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.89

<sup>1211</sup> SHC, *Annual Report 1957*, p.12

<sup>1212</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1962*

<sup>1213</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.43-45

<sup>1214</sup> WA State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes', 1959



actively heat or cool homes. Passive features include orientation, cross ventilation, thermal mass, insulation and shading. Active energy efficiency measures were also explored, such as improving the efficiency of heating and cooling devices and changing residents' patterns of energy use.<sup>1215</sup>

Little mention of energy efficient design is made in SHC annual reports until the late 1970s. From 1979, the SHC joined with the Solar Energy Research Institute of Western Australia to sponsor a nation-wide competition for the design of solar-passive housing. They also participated in research projects exploring thermal performance of Western Australian housing.<sup>1216</sup> The winning solar passive design was constructed in Mallow Way, Forrestfield, alongside a standard Commission home, to compare the design's effectiveness.<sup>1217</sup> Although the competition included designs for South Hedland and Kalgoorlie, which the Commission originally intended to build, it does not appear that these were ever constructed. In subsequent years, an alternative solar-passive design home was constructed alongside the first in Forrestfield.<sup>1218</sup> Monitoring found that the competition-winning home was warmer all year round than the standard SHC home. The third home's somewhat better performance was attributed predominantly to use of ceiling fans.<sup>1219</sup>

By the 1990s, environmental design was a major trend in planning and building design. However, the ideals of architects and planners remained largely unrealised in most housing developments, remaining an upmarket choice rather than an affordable living feature.<sup>1220</sup>

In 1989-90, Homeswest noted it had completed a privately-designed 10-unit complex of 'distinctive architectural lines' at Charles Street North Perth that featured 'the latest innovations in passive solar design', including roof-mounted solar louvers.<sup>1221</sup>



Competition-winning solar passive house, Forrestfield, constructed 1980  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1982*

<sup>1215</sup> Holland, 'The Comfortable House', in Troy, *A History of European Housing in Australia*, 2000, pp.208-09

<sup>1216</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>1217</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>1218</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1983*

<sup>1219</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*

<sup>1220</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.72-73

<sup>1221</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1990*, quote from p.11



Third 'solar house', Forrestfield, 1983  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1983*

In 1990-91, a 10-unit elderly persons' complex in Victoria Park was noted as taking into account solar efficiency. In the same year, a six-unit development in Derby was constructed of steel framing and steel wall sheeting to suit local climate, capture breezes and fit in with Kimberley architecture.<sup>1222</sup>

An energy-efficient display home was designed in 1991 for construction at Stratton, in the hope that more new homes might be constructed along energy efficient lines.<sup>1223</sup> The Stratton home opened in May 1992. In the Northwest, homes were constructed using new designs and materials to allow for cross ventilation and quicker cooling. At Glen Iris, Bunbury, a trial was initiated offering incentives to home builders to build more energy efficient homes.<sup>1224</sup> The Glen Iris trial was considered successful, and subsequently people purchasing land in most Homeswest subdivisions were eligible for a grant of \$1,500 for installing approved energy-saving features. The Stratton display home was also popular, with an estimated 15,000 visitors passing through the house in 1992-93.<sup>1225</sup>

Homeswest continued to design and display environmentally planned homes. In 1995-96, demonstration houses featuring solar efficient planning, water saving devices and efficient land use were commenced at Broome, Karratha and Kununurra.<sup>1226</sup> Housing Procurement Director Graeme Jones noted in 2000 that long-term forecasts for higher temperatures and water shortages needed to influence Homeswest's designs across the State, with small or low-water gardens and passive cooling. As public housing tenants generally could not afford to run air-conditioning, homes needed to be designed to maximise natural heating and cooling.<sup>1227</sup>

The election of the Gallop Labor government (State) in 2001 brought an increasing government focus on sustainable development. Government agencies were expected to report on sustainability measures. A

<sup>1222</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>1223</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>1224</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>1225</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1993

<sup>1226</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1227</sup> 'Architects of Change', in *Builder*, April-May 2000, pp.12-13

State sustainability strategy was developed in several drafts and eventually released in September 2003.<sup>1228</sup>

From 2001-02, the SHC implemented a policy to install solar hot water on all new homes in the Murchison, Pilbara and Kimberley regions, and a design competition for sustainable northern housing was launched. Sustainability in housing became a reportable item in annual reports around this time and the SHC subsequently reported annually on measures to reduce energy use in its offices and housing developments.. The Commission reported its refurbishing of bedsits as measure of sustainable development, as this extended the life of existing buildings. A policy was implemented to where possible refurbish rather than demolish and rebuild, in order to 'recycle' houses, reduce landfill and allow tenants to stay in their existing homes. For example, a 'sustainable development plan' was drawn up for the Hillview site in East Victoria Park, an area of largely 1950s single detached residences. The third stage of Ellenbrook, Coolamon, paid attention to the solar orientation of lots to encourage solar passive design, offered free roof insulation to home buyers whose designs met energy saving criteria, and included an environmentally designed display home.<sup>1229</sup>

In 2002-03, the SHC participated in planning strategies around retention of urban bushland, provision of affordable housing near train stations, and development of an inter-agency 'sustainability scorecard'.<sup>1230</sup>

The SHC participated in the development of the State Government's State Sustainability Strategy, released in 2003. It partnered with the Housing Industry Association's 'GreenSmart' program to promote environmental technologies, design and practices, committed all its public housing to at least a four-star energy rating, worked to replace diesel generators in remote Aboriginal communities with wind or solar generators, developed sustainability guidelines for SHC practice, and planned for provision of solar water heating in all Murchison, Pilbara and Kimberley Homeswest and Aboriginal houses.<sup>1231</sup>

From 2003, building regulations in Western Australia required energy efficiency measures in all new residences. One way to meet these requirements was to achieve a four-star energy rating.<sup>1232</sup> The star rating system measured a building's overall thermal performance, that is, the amount of energy required to keep the temperature of the house within a comfortable range despite changing outside temperatures. A ten-star rating, the highest possible, was reserved for houses that required no energy to heat or cool, being entirely solar passive. The Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) was used to calculate star ratings, based on energy used per square metre. NatHERS ratings did not consider other aspects of sustainable living, such as efficiency of appliances (eg heaters or air-conditioners), use of solar panels or water saving measures.<sup>1233</sup>

Another aspect of the government's focus on sustainability in this period was to slow greenfield housing developments at the urban fringes and concentrate on infill development closer to existing services, especially public transport.<sup>1234</sup>

Further moves towards environmentally sustainable housing were made in 2003-04, with a design-competition-winning sustainable home (the 'Filter House') under construction at Broome, a sustainable

<sup>1228</sup> ALP Platform, November 2005, <http://walabor.org.au/download/new/platform.pdf> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1229</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1230</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*

<sup>1231</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*

<sup>1232</sup> Justin Ashley, Policy Officer, Public Utilities Office, email to Clare Menck, 20 August 2014

<sup>1233</sup> NatHERS, <http://www.nathers.gov.au> accessed 20 August 2014; Tyson Menck, Sustainability Consultant, conversation with Clare Menck, 20 August 2014

<sup>1234</sup> WA Housing Affordability Taskforce, 'Western Australia's Housing Affordability Crisis: Final Report', July 2007, p.18

settlement model being trialled at Forrestdale and the introduction of the first six reverse brick veneer homes in Innaloo (built from late 2004). Reverse brick veneer had emerged as a better insulating construction approach than double brick.<sup>1235</sup> The following year experiments began with precast concrete housing in Bicton, using solar passive principles to optimise energy efficiency, and work continued on the Harrisdale Eco-Village plans (formerly Forrestdale).<sup>1236</sup> The Harrisdale village planned to have 'site-responsive urban design', use renewable energy and comprehensively manage its water cycle. Sustainable low-cost display homes were also constructed at Ellenbrook from 2006.<sup>1237</sup>

A 2005 design competition garnered ideas for a mixed use medium density development of commercial space and sustainable housing in Northbridge, with plans to construct the winning design.<sup>1238</sup> A 71-unit apartment block in Campbell Street, West Perth, was designed by the Commission in 2005-06 with attention to orientation, screening, cross ventilation, solar hot water and water recycling.<sup>1239</sup> However, this does not appear to have been constructed.<sup>1240</sup>

Houses erected in remote communities following the 2002 Gordon Inquiry into abuse of children in Aboriginal communities (see *Section 21.5*) were designed with energy efficient features, including insulated walls and ceilings, concrete block construction to improve thermal mass, minimal east and west facing windows, extensive shading for walls and windows, and living areas oriented north. Seven of these homes were built at Warburton in the first phase of response to the Gordon Inquiry, in 2003-04.<sup>1241</sup>

By 2006, energy efficient design was emerging as an important factor in GROH planning, especially where it could reduce air-conditioning costs. As a result, homes designed for northern locations had an increasingly distinct 'northern' style.<sup>1242</sup>

From May 2006, government regulations increased the energy efficiency requirements for new houses to a mandatory five-star energy rating.<sup>1243</sup> Subsequently, public housing design was amended to meet five-star energy efficiency codes. In addition to factors measured by NatHERS, the Housing Authority also moved towards solar or gas hot water systems; water-efficient taps, showerheads and toilets; and, plumbing to allow for later connection to alternate water supply (eg grey water, rain water). Construction of sustainable display homes at Ellenbrook began with five sites in Dunrobin Drive, with further grouped houses at Larrawa Circle at planning stage. A Housing Authority rental home at Maddington was retrofit as a 'green house', opening in July 2006 as a display home for twelve months before being monitored with tenants to assess the benefits of the retrofit. A sustainable home project at 325 Wharf Road Quattro (Queens Park) was also opened in 2007.<sup>1244</sup> The following year, three 'innovative affordable' display homes were constructed at Banksia Grove, designed and built by three different private companies, featuring wall systems of hollow Styrofoam blocks filled with reinforced concrete and roofs of insulated polystyrene and Colorbond panels, for eventual private sale. Seven more similar homes were to be built at Kalgoorlie, for retention as public housing, and another sustainable retrofit was planned for Hilton, in

<sup>1235</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2004*

<sup>1236</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2005*

<sup>1237</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*, quote from p.13

<sup>1238</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1239</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1240</sup> Aerial photographs, <https://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/bmvf/app/mapviewer/#> accessed 11 July 2014

<sup>1241</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA, 2007*, p.56

<sup>1242</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA, 2007*, p.66

<sup>1243</sup> Justin Ashley, email to Clare Menck, 20 August 2014

<sup>1244</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

partnership with the City of Fremantle. Analysis of the 2005 Maddington and 2004 Broome homes showed significant energy use reductions, with the Broome trial showing reductions of over 50%.<sup>1245</sup>

Urban planning into the twenty-first century increasingly focussed on balancing the 'triple bottom line' of economic, social and environmental concerns. Sustainability was a consideration in planning and options for less car-dependent cities were being explored.<sup>1246</sup>

At the Housing Authority's new subdivision at Butler, an 'eco-friendly, innovative village' called 'The Green' was constructed from 2007, believed to be the first in Australia to use entirely non-potable water on household gardens and public open spaces. It had energy efficiency overlays in building standards and was designed for increased public transport and minimal car use within the village.<sup>1247</sup>

A joint venture to develop a portion of Harrisdale for sustainable living and affordable housing was signed in April 2008 and announced as an 'affordable eco-village'.<sup>1248</sup> Land at 'Harrisdale Green' became available from 2010. It continues to advocate its 'green' credentials, with all available lots sold by 2014.<sup>1249</sup>

In September 2008, the Labor government lost office. The Liberal-National coalition abandoned the State Sustainability Strategy immediately. The change of government also ended requirements for government agencies to plan and report on sustainability initiatives. From 2009, the Housing Authority's annual report no longer noted innovations in sustainable design. From being a key reporting criteria in the middle of the decade, with a purported departmental enthusiasm for the cause, sustainability received no mention at all in the 2009 report.<sup>1250</sup>

Seven houses were constructed in 2011-12 at Innaloo and Nollamara using 'structural insulated panels' instead of traditional roofing and wall materials. As sustainable housing was no longer being pursued in government policy, these homes were reported as 'housing innovation' with no mention of their sustainability qualities.<sup>1251</sup> The following year, however, the energy efficiency and thermal performance of the insulated homes were noted, as the homes had achieved seven-star energy efficiency ratings.<sup>1252</sup>

In 2011-12, the Housing Authority entered into joint venture projects with the Public Utilities Office (Department of Finance) to install solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on some government rental properties in the Metropolitan area, to replace inefficient hot water systems and install ceiling insulation in public rental homes identified as having the greatest need for these energy efficient features. The measures were promoted as ways to assist tenants to cut energy costs rather than on account of their sustainability values.<sup>1253</sup> Around 400 residences had solar PV installed, about 60 of which were homes to disabled clients, many of whom required specialised electrical equipment during the day.<sup>1254</sup>

Energy efficient requirements for new homes were tightened again in May 2012, when the mandatory star rating was raised from five to six stars for residential development.<sup>1255</sup> This was a significant increase

<sup>1245</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1246</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, pp.40-42

<sup>1247</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, for the period 2007

<sup>1248</sup> Michelle Roberts, media statement, 'Launch of Western Australia's affordable eco-village', 12 April 2008, <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1249</sup> <http://www.harrisdalegreen.com.au> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1250</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1251</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1252</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1253</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1254</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1255</sup> Justin Ashley, email to Clare Menck, 20 August 2014

that required more substantial design changes than those used to meet five-star standards, requiring a reduction of almost 25% in the energy calculated as necessary to heat and cool the house.<sup>1256</sup>

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

As information about either the intended or actual energy performance of DOH houses is not recorded in the database, it is not possible to identify places that may relate to this theme. As Northwest design paid more attention to climate responsiveness, it is likely more and earlier examples may be found in northern regions.

Places mentioned in the narrative:

Forrestfield	The competition-winning house in Forrestfield remains extant in private ownership. In 2009 it was advertised for sale as an 'energy efficient' home. DOH does not appear to retain the other two nearby houses built for comparison.
North Perth	DOH retains some 1989 units on Charles Street, but it is now known if this is the solar-passive complex referred to in annual reports.
Victoria Park	The aged care units from 1990-91 remain in DOH ownership.
Derby	Six steel-framed iron-clad cluster homes dated 1990 remain in DOH ownership.
West Perth	The units designed in 2005-06, which were not constructed at the time, may now be underway, as a large construction project is evident on the street at present.
Ellenbrook	None of the 'sustainable homes' in Dunrobin Dv have been retained by DOH. It is not known if three 2010 houses retained in Larrawa Dv are those mentioned in annual reports.
Innaloo	DOH retains only nine units in the suburb dated later than 2004 that are not full masonry construction, including six timber-framed masonry veneer townhouses from 2006 that are most likely to be the reverse brick-veneer homes mentioned above.  DOH retains three 'panel system' two-storey townhouses from 2011.
Nollamara	DOH retains four single-storey 'panel system' homes.
Warburton	Seven residences dated 2005 are retained. These are the only DOH residences at Warburton built after the Gordon Report. For other places relating to the Gordon Report see <a href="#">Section 18</a> .
Banksia Grove	DOH retains 34 homes constructed 2007 or 2008, of which only one is noted as anything other than full masonry construction and none appear to be the Styrofoam, concrete, polystyrene and Colorbond house mentioned above.
Kalgoorlie	75 units are noted as built in 2008 or 2009, mostly of masonry veneer, and none obviously of Styrofoam etc.

<sup>1256</sup> Tyson Menck, conversation with Clare Menck, 20 August 2014

Stratton	DOH retains only one house dated between 1990 and 1992, which is unlikely this was the demonstration home mentioned in 1991-92.
Broome	DOH retains too many homes at Broome to identify the 2004 'filter house' or former 1995-96 display homes.
Derby	DOH retains too many homes from 1995-96 to identify the former demonstration homes.
Kununurra	DOH retains too many homes from 1995-96 to identify the former demonstration homes.
Queens Park	DOH no longer owns 325 Wharf Street or any nearby properties dated near to 2007.

#### Panel system construction

In addition to the Innaloo and Nollamara examples noted above, DOH retains 125 other 'panel system' homes, constructed from 2006 to 2014, with one at Northam from 1974.

## 17 A NEW HOUSING CRISIS? (2000S-2014)

By 2006, the State Housing Commission was providing housing support in four main areas: social housing, including increasing the availability and quality of social housing and addressing homelessness and housing affordability; Aboriginal housing; land development, including supplying new affordable land and redeveloping public housing estates; and, home ownership schemes. GEHA and CHA, although also under the banner of Department of Housing and Works, continued to operate as separate statutory authorities.<sup>1257</sup>

The need for ongoing government housing support programs continued, as many households had difficulties in obtaining 'suitable private accommodation, for reasons of cost, discrimination, availability, location and/or adequacy', or on account of special needs that the private market did not affordably provide for, such as disability access.<sup>1258</sup> By 2006, as Western Australia's economy boomed, house prices were dramatically increasing at the same time that the population was growing rapidly. Low-price private rentals began to disappear. The SHC's Director General, Bob Mitchell, described the period as 'chaotic economic and social times'.<sup>1259</sup> It was estimated that around 70,000 households (those earning under \$40,000pa) were struggling to afford housing at the time. The SHC in the same period managed 34,500 public rental properties, 568 less than four years earlier, along with another 4,584 rentals in special programs such as Aboriginal, disability or youth housing. It was estimated that the State's population would increase 32% in the next twenty years, with the proportion of elderly or disabled SHC clients also growing. To address these challenges, a draft 'Housing Strategy Western Australia' was released in September 2005. Internally, a 2006 'Statement of Strategic Intent and Priorities' stated three main focus areas for the agency through to the end of the decade: increasing the number of people housed, improving Aboriginal communities and improving buildings and infrastructure. A shift to focussing resources more directly on client services was articulated.<sup>1260</sup> By 2007, these three priorities had moved to frame all departmental activities and reporting.<sup>1261</sup>

Waiting lists for public housing steadily increased from a 'low' of 12,788 in 2003. The highest demand was from families (56% of the waiting list), around half of whom applied for a two-bedroom home. Around 17% of the waiting list was seniors, mostly singles, and the remaining 27% other 'one bedroom tenants'. However, of the 3,705 rental placements in the year, 52% were families, 23% seniors and 25% one bedroom tenants, indicating waiting times were longer for families than other applicants.<sup>1262</sup> By June 2007 there were 15,438 applicants on the public rental waiting list and, inevitably, the waiting time was also increasing, averaging 19 months in the same period, or a median time of 55 weeks. These averages were skewed by the high number of priority applicants who received assistance, with non-priority applicants often waiting significantly longer than the average.<sup>1263</sup> A year later the waiting list had swelled to 16,932 applicants, but average wait periods remained the same.<sup>1264</sup>

A new initiative in 2005-06 was construction of ten units at Cyril Jackson Senior Campus to house mature age students completing their secondary education.<sup>1265</sup>

<sup>1257</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1258</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*, p.3

<sup>1259</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*, p.6

<sup>1260</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1261</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1262</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1263</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1264</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2008*

<sup>1265</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

In July 2005, the SHC's 'Fletcher Mews' development in East Fremantle won a Fremantle Heritage award. The project redeveloped the former Fremantle Cold Storage Ltd site into 17 residential buildings totalling 101 mixed use housing units. The buildings were designed at a scale to fit into the streetscape and landscaping included plaques, sculptures and artworks related to the site's history.<sup>1266</sup>

In 2006, a 69-unit apartment complex in Goderich Street East Perth was completed, 'Joyce Apartments', and another 37-unit development 'Thomas Apartments' in Cheriton St, near the East Perth Rail Terminal, was completed the following year. Both projects catered for singles, seniors and small families, including offering some disability housing.<sup>1267</sup>



Thomas Apartments, East Perth

Google Streetview, © Google, February 2014

Following the *Machinery of Government (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2006*, GEHA was merged with the State Housing Commission. From 1 July 2006, the new combined agency began operation, branded the 'Housing Authority' under the umbrella of DHW. For the first time since 1945, there was no longer a body named the State Housing Commission operating in Western Australia. Governance also shifted from a Board of Commissioners to the Director General of the department.<sup>1268</sup> As part of the new Housing Authority, GEHA was rebranded as Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH).<sup>1269</sup> From February 2009, the Department of Housing and Works was disbanded, with the Works function being taken up by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Housing Authority remaining as a separate agency under the umbrella of the new Department of Housing.<sup>1270</sup> In practice, during almost eight years that the Department of Housing and Works operated, the SHC/Housing Authority had continued to function as a fairly autonomous agency throughout.

House prices across Australia had escalated from the mid-1980s, increasing 400% (five-fold) between 1985 and 2004, compared with a doubling in average incomes.<sup>1271</sup>

The Western Australian economy continued to boom, with record low levels of unemployment and a surging building industry expanding housing to meet the increasing demand for accommodation. However, the property market also boomed and demand well outstripped supply of building labour. As well as increasing housing costs for government, these trends priced increasing numbers of Western Australians out the bottom and placed increasing housing stress on both mortgage holders and private rental tenants.<sup>1272</sup> By 2009, Perth house prices and private rents had doubled in four years.<sup>1273</sup>

<sup>1266</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1267</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1268</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1269</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1270</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2009*

<sup>1271</sup> Morris, 'Contentment and suffering', 2009

<sup>1272</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

In response to the housing pressures of the State's boom, the Housing Authority had a 'renewed focus' on growing its rental stock. It made a commitment to increase public rental stock by 1,000 homes over four years, planning to commence work on over 900 homes per year to meet this target (allowing for continued demolition and sales). A greater proportion of refurbished rental properties were retained. Revenue from the State Community Housing Investment Program also allowed for increased housing procurement, 'thereby increasing the viability of social housing'.<sup>1274</sup> Expanding the community housing sector was also planned as a key to increasing overall housing stock and reducing homelessness. During 2006-07, the total Housing Authority residential stock increased by 567 homes to 39,651. The rate of selling off public rental homes also dropped, reducing from 669 homes sold in 2001-02 to 305 in 2006-07, less than half previous year's number.<sup>1275</sup> However, by June 2008, the total number of rental homes had again dropped, to 39,100 units.<sup>1276</sup>

The Government expressed a commitment to including social housing in major urban redevelopment, such as the completion in 2006-07 of 20 units at the corner of Tighe and Hay Streets, Subiaco, as part of the major Subiaco redevelopment area, and construction of new units at East Perth and Midland.<sup>1277</sup>

A program began late in 2006 to develop innovative designs for affordable housing. Aiming to provide a showcase for products and techniques to reduce construction costs, reduce maintenance and management costs, improve energy efficiency and reduce construction times, the first of up to fifty display houses under the program were completed in 2007. Homes under the program were to use pre-fabricated materials and modular building components.<sup>1278</sup>

At least 200 'affordable homes' were to be constructed for 'First Start' clients from 2007, for purchase 'off the plan', in Ellenbrook, Brighton, Banksia Grove, Brookdale (Chiltern), Bertram, Westfield (Armadale), McKail (Albany) and Glen Iris (Bunbury). They were to be developed in groups for economies of scale and 'to provide coordinated and attractive streetscapes', and all designs were to be architecturally reviewed for energy efficiency.<sup>1279</sup> By June 2008, the project had been expanded to have house-and-land packages for under \$375,000 sold exclusively to clients with First Start loans at Beeliar, Seacrest, Dalyellup, Oyster Harbour, Wellard and Somerly (Clarkson) (all joint ventures) as well as the joint ventures (Ellenbrook & Banksia Grove) and in-house developments noted the previous year.<sup>1280</sup>

In 2006, the Peel Region Affordable Housing Steering Group was formed to plan for affordable housing, particularly in response to the new southern suburban rail extension and the upgraded Perth-Bunbury highway. Peel was the fastest growing region in the State at the time, increasing its population by 4.6% between 2001 and 2006, at a time when the State population as a whole grew by 1.5%. The rapid growth made it difficult for low-income earners to obtain affordable housing.<sup>1281</sup>

A 2006-07 inquiry into the State's 'Housing Affordability Crisis' critiqued government housing policy as exacerbating housing unaffordability in the State. Although the report was politically motivated, the issues it identified no doubt were at least contributing factors in the crisis, including failure to respond to or prioritise housing affordability, slowing the release of land despite warnings of a land shortage, using assets to maximise profits rather than moderate inflation, and reducing public housing stock despite

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<sup>1273</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2009*

<sup>1274</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*, p.22

<sup>1275</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 20-07*

<sup>1276</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2008*

<sup>1277</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1278</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1279</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1280</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2008*

<sup>1281</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

housing crisis conditions. By 2007, Treasury figures suggested Western Australia had the least affordable homes for first-home buyers in Australia.<sup>1282</sup> Despite the report's assertions of Labor Party ineptitude, many of the policies identified as problematic had been initiated by the earlier Court Liberal government and were continued by the Barnett Liberal government after 2008. Housing unaffordability continuing to be a significant problem in the State in 2014,<sup>1283</sup> after nearly six years of Liberal government, suggesting problems were not tied to either major party.

In 2007-08, the Housing Authority launched the 'Alternative Home Construction initiative' to test the viability of transportable homes for GROH homes and remote Aboriginal communities.<sup>1284</sup> Transportable homes had continued to be used in some situations over many decades.<sup>1285</sup> It is not clear how the new initiative was to differ from this ongoing transportable program.

By 2008, the Housing Authority managed 5,218 community housing units. The largest proportion of these (1,953 units) had been constructed through the Joint Venture Housing Program for various low-income groups. Another large portion of the community housing stock was 1,247 disability units. The Authority had entered into an agreement with the Department of Health to provide accommodation for mental health clients, with 35 housing units completed by June 2008. Within the community housing stock were 132 rooms in lodging houses and 520 beds in crisis accommodation such as women's refuges, night shelters and emergency youth accommodation. As the public housing waiting list grew, applicants began to be offered community housing places, with 34% of those on the waiting list in 2008 expressing interest in being placed into community housing.<sup>1286</sup>

In addition to this Community Housing stock, the Housing Authority accommodated over 68,475 people in public rental accommodation.<sup>1287</sup>

In 2008, a Senate Inquiry into Housing Affordability in Australia reported with recommendations that, in addition to supporting home ownership, affirmed the development of community housing and urged an increase in public housing stocks to 10% by 2020. The report also recommended reviewing the tax breaks favouring owners of housing.<sup>1288</sup> The Australian tax system favours both owner-occupants and investment owners over renters, the former through capital gains and land tax exemptions and the latter through negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts.<sup>1289</sup>

Planning began for the 2003-08 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* to be followed with a more comprehensive arrangement including a range of affordable housing initiatives<sup>1290</sup> When the 2003 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* lapsed at the end of 2008 it was replaced by the *National Affordable Housing Agreement 2009*. The new Agreement was different in form and some saw it as an end to public housing in the fullest sense. A major tenet of the Agreement was the National Rental

<sup>1282</sup> WA Housing Affordability Taskforce, 'Western Australia's Housing Affordability Crisis: Final Report', July 2007, pp.1-2, 6

<sup>1283</sup> Shelter WA 'Shelter WA Policy Priorities Synopsis 2013-2015' <http://www.shelterwa.org.au/policy-priorities/> accessed 23 May 2014

<sup>1284</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1285</sup> HCWA (Clare Menck), Heritage assessment for P17420 Eucla Police Complex & Residences, February 2014

<sup>1286</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1287</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1288</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, p.233

<sup>1289</sup> Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, *A good house is hard to find: Housing affordability in Australia*, Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House Canberra, June 2008, pp.1-2, 91

<sup>1290</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

Affordability Scheme, aiming to supply affordable rental housing through the private and community sectors.<sup>1291</sup>

By 2008, the State population was continuing to grow but construction rates for new housing were falling. Private rental rates continued to rise and pressure for housing increased. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007-08 resulted in many commercial lenders tightening eligibility criteria, therefore increasing demand for the government's Keystart loans.<sup>1292</sup> The development and sale of land by the Housing Authority/SHC in some periods had been seen as in itself a means of providing housing assistance, by making affordable land available. However, by 2009 it was being described as primarily a means to fund the Housing Authority's social housing program.<sup>1293</sup>

As demand for housing assistance increased, the Housing Authority increased its partnerships with community organisations, restructured for more accountability in 2007-08. By June 2009, there were 233 Community Housing Organisations partnering with the Authority to provide 5,652 housing units, an increase of 1,152 homes since June 2006.<sup>1294</sup> By June 2010, this had increased to 6,222 community housing units.<sup>1295</sup>

By June 2009, the Housing Authority managed 39,627 houses, of which 35,800 were public rentals and the remainder community housing. The 5,164 GROH residences (2,917 owned, 2,247 leased) were in addition to these social housing numbers.<sup>1296</sup>

In response to the Global Financial Crisis and resultant national economic slow-down, the Federal government implemented a range of stimulus measures, including a Social Housing Stimulus Package, announced early in 2009. The Package offered \$608.12million to Western Australia to construct additional social housing, and another \$40.45million to refurbish existing housing stock, provided 75% of the works were completed by December 2010. At the same time, the State government committed \$146million to procure 735 units of social housing within two years, also as a stimulus measure. The



Group of six single-storey townhouses, Carlisle, constructed 2007  
Clare Menck, August 2014

<sup>1291</sup> Troy, *Accommodating Australians*, 2012, pp.233-35

<sup>1292</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1293</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1294</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1295</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1296</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

packages aimed to stimulate the building and construction industry while at the same time addressing homelessness and increasing the supply of social housing. A new division was appointed within the Housing Authority to manage to stimulus funds, and the large scale refurbishment program was underway by June 2009, with major building projects also approved.<sup>1297</sup>

The first 313 homes under the Federal stimulus package were completed in 2009-10, with over 100 more under construction at June 2010. An additional 1,372 refurbishments were also completed, including removing asbestos from 265 residences. Under the State package, several hundred more homes were commenced in 2009-10. The total number of homes commenced or purchased in 2009-10 was 2,570, more than three and a half times the 720 homes commenced the previous year. Almost all the increase was in the public housing sector (2,239 commencements, up from 310 the previous year).<sup>1298</sup>

At the Stage One deadline of Commonwealth stimulus funding (December 2010), 1,111 residences had been completed under the funding in Western Australia, 56 units over the target amount. Most of these met 'universal and adaptable design requirements' and were rated under the NatHERS sustainability rating system as six-star energy efficient.<sup>1299</sup>

Between January 2010 and June 2012, the Housing Authority constructed over 3,400 new units of social housing.<sup>1300</sup> It was planned to transfer about 75% of the stimulus-package homes to the community housing sector. By June 2011, community housing numbers had increased to 7,836 units of accommodation, with 1,477 units built in the preceding year.<sup>1301</sup> By June 2013, 8,796 housing units were being managed by the community housing sector.<sup>1302</sup>

In 2009, an 'Antisocial Behaviour Intervention Team' was set up, to work with tenants where problems were identified and attempt to 'change stereotypical (and often false) representations of public housing tenants', especially in the media, through managing behaviour change with tenants.<sup>1303</sup> The following year a 'disruptive behaviour management strategy' was implemented to respond to 'disruptive behaviour caused by public housing tenants' so that 'the community no longer has to tolerate tenants disturbing the peace or comfort of their neighbours'. Commonly known as the 'three strikes rule', it implemented a policy of strong action against tenants, including eviction, where they were reported for antisocial behaviour three times in six months. Behaviour that caused damage or threatened the health or safety or neighbours could result in immediate action, even eviction.<sup>1304</sup> In May 2011, the strategy was tightened in response to a series of media embarrassments, including the explosion of an illicit drug laboratory in a public housing complex in Carlisle that involved the Police Commissioner's son.<sup>1305</sup> Funding was received in May 2012 to expand the Disruptive Behaviour Management Unit in response to thousands of complaints being received about public housing tenants.<sup>1306</sup> The harsh policy proved very popular with the general public, and thousands of complaints against public housing tenants have been received since 2011. Evicted tenants believed little consideration was given to the circumstances of behaviour that caused complaints, such as family violence, chronic illness or antisocial behaviour from visitors, even

<sup>1297</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1298</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1299</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1300</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1301</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1302</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1303</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1304</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010, quotes from pp.22&30

<sup>1305</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011; O'Connor, A, 'Public housing evictions are on the rise and families face homelessness with three strikes policy', ABC news online, 26 December 2013 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-26/wa-evictions-feature/5170316> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1306</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

those not permitted access. Critics of the three-strikes policy claim it forced people into homelessness, especially Aboriginal families, and had made hundreds or even thousands of children homeless in less than three years to December 2013.<sup>1307</sup>

The vision statements of the Housing Authority changed in 2010 from the long standing slogan 'responding to the hopes of all Western Australians for their housing and construction needs', with its four-pronged attention to communities, economy, regional development and natural environment. The three key goals instituted by then-Director Bob Mitchell in 2006 (more people in housing, improving Aboriginal communities and improving buildings and infrastructure) also appear to have been superseded. The new vision was simply 'opening doors', with a supporting mission statement of 'working in partnership to build economic and social prosperity by enabling Western Australians to have a place to call home'. The new vision was instituted by new Director General Grahame Searle, appointed 2008, and aimed to focus on 'forging new and innovative ways to meet the increasing demand'.<sup>1308</sup>

The public housing waiting list continued to increase, reaching new records year by year. By June 2010, there were 24,136 applicants on the waiting list, up from 21,728 the previous year. Waiting times had also increased to an average 93 weeks (22 months) with a median wait of 72 weeks (17 months).<sup>1309</sup> However, the stimulus funding to expand the public housing stock appears to have had some impact, as the waiting list had decreased to 22,871 by June 2012. Fewer options for moving beyond public housing, however, meant fewer tenants were vacating their public rental homes. Average wait times passed two years around 2010 and median wait times also stretched past two years by 2012. Substantial numbers of applicants must have removed themselves from the waiting list to achieve these figures, as between 2007 and 2012 only between 3,125 and 3,317 new tenancies were entered into each financial year.<sup>1310</sup> Although official figures state that waiting periods are a little over two years, the public perception and the experience of social support agencies is that applicants are more likely to wait at least five and at times over ten years, with even 'priority' applicants waiting over two years.<sup>1311</sup>

Concerns mounted at the increasing unaffordability of Western Australian housing for low- to moderate-income households. The rapidly increasing public housing waiting list was only one face of this problem. In 2009-10 the Housing Authority established the Affordable Housing Strategy Unit to develop policy and facilitate initiatives to improve the availability of affordable housing. A strategy aiming to create 20,000 more affordable homes by 2020 was put forward. Much energy was also channelled towards trying to develop a viable non-government affordable housing market.<sup>1312</sup>

A particularly fierce storm struck Perth in March 2010, most notable for its large hail stones that damaged cars and properties across the Metropolitan area. As a result of the storm, the Housing Authority spent \$853,459 on repairs to 2,136 public housing properties across the city.<sup>1313</sup>

From 2009-10, the Housing Authority began outsourcing major housing projects.<sup>1314</sup>

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<sup>1307</sup> O'Connor, 'Public housing evictions are on the rise and families face homelessness with three strikes policy', 2013

<sup>1308</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010, quotes from pp.9&11, and introductions to previous four years of annual reports

<sup>1309</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1310</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1311</sup> Yvonne Cooper, Coordinator Humanitarian Settlement Services, Communicare Inc., email to Clare Menck, 16 May 2014; Peter Stewart, Director, Christian Centre for Social Action, East Victoria Park, conversation with Clare Menck, 4 September 2014; DOH tenants, Bishopsgate Street Carlisle, informal neighbour conversations with Clare Menck, 2014

<sup>1312</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1313</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

A strategy of selling off high-value properties, which were valued well above median house prices, was initiated in 2009-10 to fund expansion of the social housing stock. In the first year of the policy, seventeen houses were sold for a total of \$16.2million, an average of \$955,500 per property.<sup>1315</sup> The Department in 2011 reviewed all its housing stock in higher-value suburbs to identify properties for sale under this strategy. Many properties, particularly in older, more central suburbs, have subsequently been disposed of in the last five years.<sup>1316</sup>

The State Government's 'Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing', released in May 2011, aimed to make 20,000 additional affordable homes available in the decade. This included rental properties and homes financed under government loan schemes, especially Keystart. By this time, 'low-to-moderate income households' were identified by the Authority as those with annual incomes between \$35,000 and \$90,000.<sup>1317</sup> At the time, \$35,000 was several thousand dollars more per year than the highest rate of government income support payment available and also around \$3,000 above the minimum wage.<sup>1318</sup> The key strategy of the policy was to develop greater partnerships with private and community organisations to supply affordable housing. The 'Opening Doors' strategy was a whole-of-government policy based on the Social Housing Taskforce's 2009 report 'More than a roof and four walls', which brought together input from government, community and private housing sectors.<sup>1319</sup>

As part of the 'Opening Doors' strategy, the Housing Authority transferred over 1,000 housing units to the community sector in 2010-11. This was intended to provide community organisations with leverage to increase their borrowing for the provision of new accommodation.<sup>1320</sup> By June 2013, the 'Opening Doors' strategy was credited by DOH as achieving over 10,000 'affordable housing outcomes' since January 2010. However, less than half of these were actually new social housing units (3,864). The greatest portion was 4,655 homes purchased with Keystart loans. Under the National Rental Affordability Scheme, 1,427 new homes had been constructed as subsidised private rentals, which along with 1,618 existing public rental properties 'freed up and reallocated to waitlist applicants' were also included in the 'over 10,000' homes.<sup>1321</sup>

The 'Opening Doors' policy emphasised moving clients through stages of accommodation, rather than providing long-term public rental housing. It asserted that 'housing for life for all tenants' was economically unsustainable and unfair to those on waiting lists.<sup>1322</sup> This attitude fundamentally rejected the notion that waiting lists might be reduced by significantly increasing public housing stock, aiming instead to reduce total public housing clients (those housed and those waiting). An 'Affordable Housing Continuum' graphic, repeatedly printed in annual reports, showed clients moving from public housing to community housing, then into 'affordable private rentals' before reaching 'affordable home ownership', and suggested that an existing system had all Housing Authority clients trapped in an over-subscribed

<sup>1314</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1315</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1316</sup> HCWA, various GHPDP preliminary reviews for DOH properties, 2010-2014

<sup>1317</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

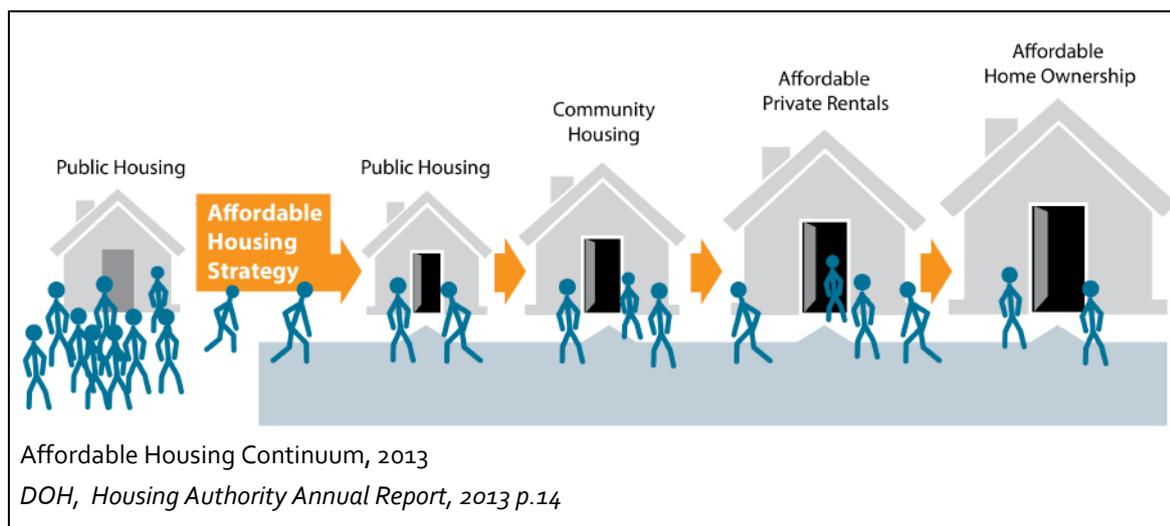
<sup>1318</sup> Department of Human Services <http://www.humanservices.gov.au> accessed 10 April 2014; Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman <http://www.fairwork.gov.au> accessed 25 June 2014

<sup>1319</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1320</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1321</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013, quotes from p.15

<sup>1322</sup> Prout, S, Green, C & Anwar McHenry, J, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton: the Historical and Political Context', February 2012, p.22, quoting DOH <http://www.cucrh.uwa.edu.au/images%5Cpdfs%5CMAOA%20Housing%20Report%201%20Final.pdf>



public housing pool.<sup>1323</sup> In fact, the existing system had for over sixty years provided a mix of rental and home purchase schemes, yet many clients had not moved on through the supposed 'continuum'.

In recent years, an increasing number of DOH properties met the criteria for GHPDP and were referred to the HCWA. Many of these properties have been houses in poor condition, which along with lack of comparative data appears to have been taken as a consideration in allowing most of them to be disposed of. Evidence presented to the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC in 2002-04 indicated the Department at that time often failed to maintain properties that were earmarked for disposal, despite tenants living in those properties sometimes for many years, and it is likely that practice has continued to the present.<sup>1324</sup> As a result, poor condition would be expected as a characteristic of DOH properties referred under GHPDP.

The ongoing mining boom created enormous pressure on housing in the Pilbara, and from 2010 additional government funding was targeted in this region in an attempt to address the regional housing crisis. A special program from 2012 established housing for workers in South Hedland, Onslow, Newman and Karratha, provided to support local small businesses that were struggling to retain staff. Funding was also supplied to house employees in non-government organisations.<sup>1325</sup> See [Section 20](#).

By 2011, the Housing Authority was working on delivering homes under several Federally funded packages, such as the *National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing* (NPASH), the East Kimberley Development Package, and the Stimulus Plan funding. Under the NPASH, 172 residences for social housing were completed by July 2011, while the target 100 homes for social and transitional housing under the East Kimberley funding package were well underway and due for completion in 2012.<sup>1326</sup>

From around 2010, the Housing Authority again began constructing moderate size apartment complexes. From September 2009 to March 2011, the Housing Authority partnered with Goodland Properties in the 'Stella Orion' project to construct 130 one- and two-bedroom units in four two- and three-storey buildings at Success, using Federal stimulus money. The units were part of a larger Stella Apartments development aiming to build 900 units. Another joint venture project at Signal Terrace, Cockburn Central, also

<sup>1323</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, for the periods 2010-13

<sup>1324</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004; GHDPD preliminary reviews for DOH properties, provided by SHO, April-May 2014

<sup>1325</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, for the periods 2010-13; Department of Housing, 'Service Workers Accommodation', <http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/investorsandpartners/swa/Pages/default.aspx> accessed 25 June 2014

<sup>1326</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011



Signal Terrace apartments, Cockburn Central, constructed 2013

*Google Streetview, © Google, August 2014*

constructed 130 units, this time in one-, two- and three-bed configurations in five multistorey buildings centred around a courtyard. Both projects were sited close to the shopping and public transport hub at Cockburn Central. Other apartment developments in the period were at Beach Street Fremantle (58 one-bed units with a heritage façade from the Fort Knox building), Highcliffe Circle Lakelands (86 one-, two- and three-bed units, mostly for seniors), Bellerive Pass Meadow Springs (65 one-, two- and three-bed villas, mostly for seniors), MacLaggan Turn Coodanup (96 apartments for seniors) and Kambany Approach Dalyellup (104 apartments for seniors), with the latter two both community housing ventures.<sup>1327</sup> Unlike apartment developments of the 1960s and 1970s, SHC sold significant portions of the developments into private ownership, avoiding whole complexes of government housing. For example, in 2014 DOH retains 22 of the original 58 units at 23-41 Beach Street Fremantle (including three three-storey townhouses), around 50 town-houses at Meadow Springs and 26 apartments at 30, 31, 34 & 35 Malata Cr Success. The community housing apartments at Coodanup and Dalyellup, however, remain wholly in DOH ownership.<sup>1328</sup>

As part of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, the Housing Authority committed to fund 6,000 new homes over ten years, to be used as discounted private rental properties. Tenants were to receive a 20% discount on rental rates. By June 2012, 554 homes had been completed under the scheme and another 1,000 were under construction.<sup>1329</sup> Although the Housing Authority demonstrated confidence in the scheme, private landlords expressed doubts, with the Private Owners Association advising members not to join the program. The Real Estate Institute of WA and WA Council of Social Service both welcomed the plan, although WACOSS also stated that funding for public housing would need to remain core to

<sup>1327</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1328</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>1329</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

housing policy.<sup>1330</sup> The 2014-15 Federal Budget proposed to discontinue this scheme before the final round of funding.<sup>1331</sup>

The Western Australian housing market had peaked in 2006-07, but both home prices and particularly rental rates continued to slowly increase. Securing affordable housing remained challenging for low and moderate income households. By June 2012, average weekly rents in the private market were over \$400 (over \$20,000 pa), pricing most recipients of government income support payments out of the private market entirely and causing housing stress for many lower income households. In response, the Government provided \$130million to construct another 433 public housing homes between 2012 and 2014.<sup>1332</sup>

From November 2012, a joint venture apartment development in Northbridge, 'One on Aberdeen', began construction of 161 inner city units in a thirteen storey complex. In a new approach, the Housing Authority used its assets to assist the private sector to finance the project. As with other high density projects of the period, the complex was planned as a mix of public housing, affordable private rentals, traditional rentals, private home ownership and shared equity home ownership, with ground level commercial space also included.<sup>1333</sup>

In the 2010s, the Housing Authority used a 'call for submissions' approach for procuring affordable housing, creating 'a flexible market-orientated procurement process', which the Authority believed was improving relationships with the building industry.<sup>1334</sup>

Nationally, public housing comprised less than 5% of all housing by 2013, despite the 2008 Senate Inquiry's recommendations to increase to 10%, and public housing tenants were around 4% of the national population. However, public housing continued to be stigmatised, viewed by many including policymakers as 'a failed system that compounds social and economic disadvantage'. Federal funding for public housing had been reducing since the late 1980s, with Commonwealth policy focussed on private and community housing meeting demand for affordable rental housing.<sup>1335</sup> The 2014 State and Federal budgets propose to reduce funding for affordable housing initiatives, while proposed various budget measures would increase living costs for low income earners and increase housing stress.<sup>1336</sup>

By 2013, the Housing Authority provided housing support through government rental properties (both general public housing and targeted community housing), funding private rental schemes such as bond assistance and constructing subsidised private rental properties, assisting home ownership by providing low deposit and shared equity home loans, developing new affordable residential land, providing rental accommodation for regional government workers and some target groups of regional workers in private

<sup>1330</sup> Trenwith, Courtney 'Perth landlords shy away from government's state housing solution', at Fairfax Media online news <http://news.domain.com.au/domain/home-investor-centre/perth-landlords-shy-away-from-governments-state-housing-solution-20110512-1ejzh.html> accessed 8 May 2014

<sup>1331</sup> ProBono Australia, 'Federal Budget Ends 'Days of Borrow and Spend' – Treasurer', <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/05/federal-budget-ends-%E2%80%99days-borrow-and-spend%E2%80%99-treasurer#> 14 May 2014, accessed 16 May 2014

<sup>1332</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1333</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

<sup>1334</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013, quote from p.12

<sup>1335</sup> Jacobs, K & Flanagan, K, 'Public housing and the politics of stigma' in *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 22 March 2013 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Public+housing+and+the+politics+of+stigma-+a0353517585> accessed 8 May 2014

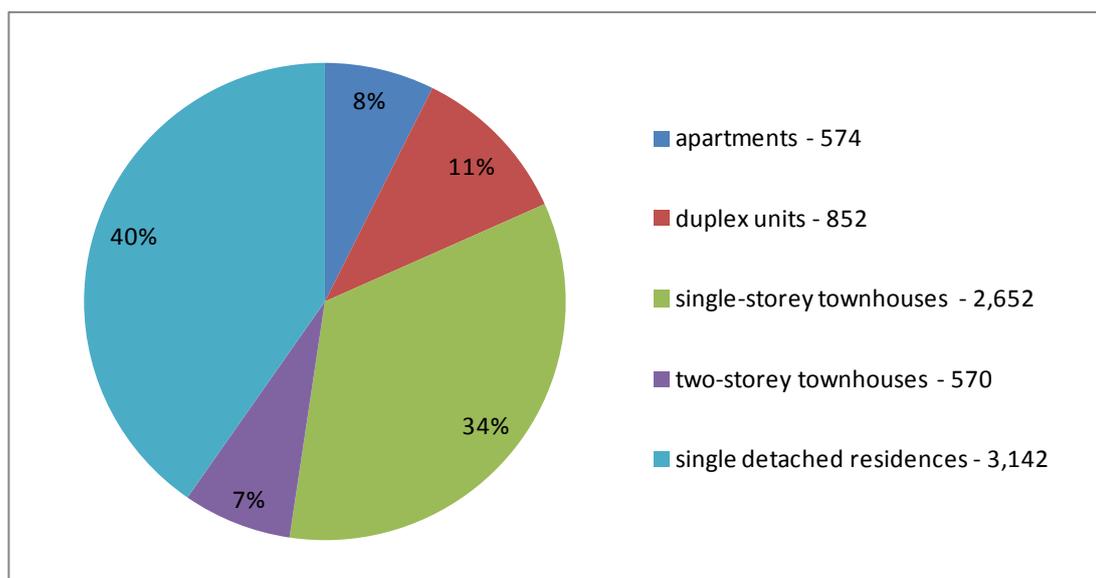
<sup>1336</sup> Shelter WA media releases, May 2014 <http://www.shelterwa.org.au/news/affordable-housing-abandoned-in-first-hockey-budget-national-shelter-media-release/> ; <http://www.shelterwa.org.au/news/shelter-was-media-statement-on-the-wa-state-budget/> accessed 23 May 2014

industry, and managing housing and infrastructure needs for remote Aboriginal communities. The 'Opening Doors' strategy guiding the agency through the decade aimed to transition clients through these various levels of support where possible, from subsidised public rental housing to eventual home ownership, although it was recognised that many clients would never be financially able to move beyond public housing.<sup>1337</sup>

Given the pattern of policy changes over the century of public housing in Western Australian, increasing public housing waiting list, decreasing affordability of all forms of private accommodation in the State, and the apparent new Commonwealth attitude to service provision revealed in the Abbott Liberal government's proposed 2014-15 budget, it is likely that a shift in government housing policy is growing near. Neither the *National Affordable Housing Agreement* nor the State 'Opening Doors' policy appear to be making significant inroads into improving access to housing for lower income Western Australians. However, it is unlikely that either the current State or Federal Coalition governments will move away from policies emphasising private home ownership, as this has been the overall focus of Liberal-National Party housing policy since World War Two.

#### *Places that remain in 2014*

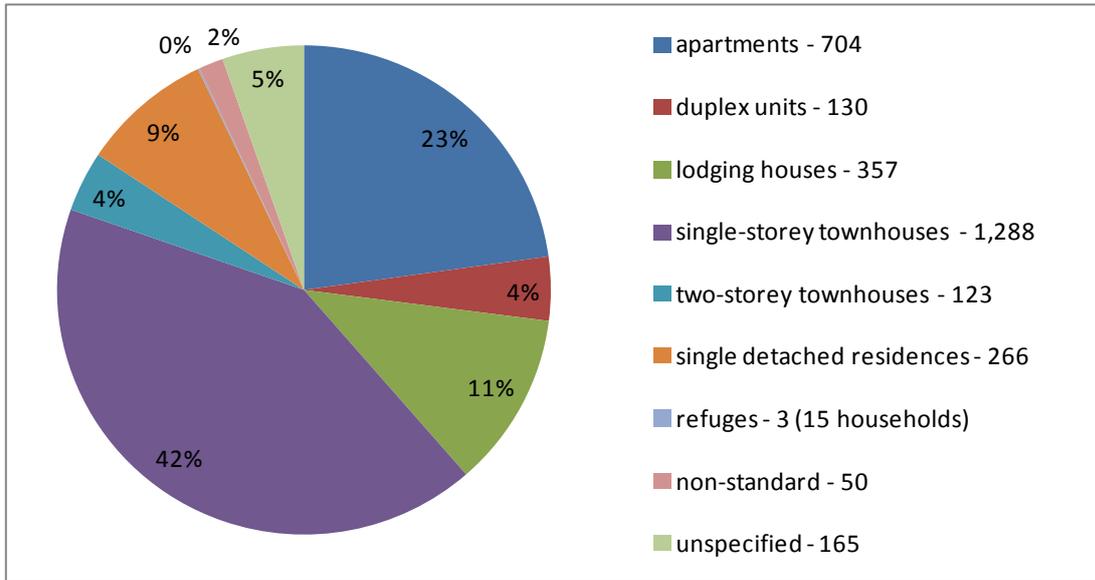
DOH retains 7,790 housing units dated 2006 to 2014, with another 3,086 in Community Housing stock. The DOH units divide as follows:



Another 609 DOH units are noted as acquired in the period but constructed five or more years earlier, suggesting they were spot purchase homes.

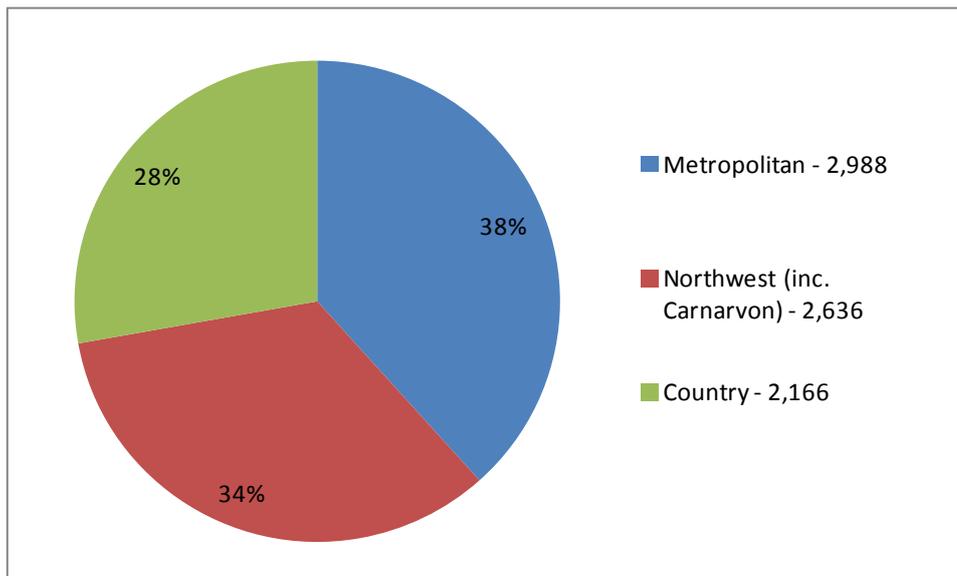
<sup>1337</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2013

The Community Housing stock divides as:



Townhouses make up 45.5% of Community Housing and 41.5% of DOH housing from the period.

DOH housing from 2006 to 2014 divides by region as:



This is, a much lower percentage Metropolitan than from any other earlier period. Community Housing from this period, however, remains weighted towards the Metropolitan area (78.5%).

DOH housing in non-DOH redevelopment areas

- Subiaco DOH retains 27 units that appear to be those mentioned in the 2007 annual report.
- Midland It is not known where DOH built residences in the redevelopments, as DOH retains no Midland properties dated between 2004 and 2008, but two groups of nine from 2009 and 2010 may relate to the redevelopment period.

East Perth

DOH retains 69 units in one complex, dated 2006, that appear to be those referred to in annual reports.

Groups of DOH housing dated 2006 to 2014

Over 250: Broome (358), Kalgoorlie (291), Karratha (443), South Hedland (386)

Over 100: Albany (113), Busselton (123), Clarkson-Butler (226), Dalyellup (110), Derby (230), Ellenbrook (169), *Esperance* (99), Halls Creek (133, plus 18 at Mardiwah Loop), Innaloo (117), Kununurra (217), Nollamara (141), Wandina (Geraldton) (117, plus 207 scattered across other Geraldton suburbs)

Twelve of these 16 groups are in country centres, with six in the Northwest, demonstrating the focus of DOH building in these areas in recent years. There are also relatively large concentrations (but less than 100) at many proportionally small towns, such as 40 units at Mount Barker and 41 at Moora, towns with 2011 populations of 1,795 and 1,650 respectively.

**18 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE HOUSING (19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – 2014)**

Public works in the first decades of the Swan River Colony focused largely on infrastructure, with buildings to support law and order, revenue collection, communications and education. In the 1850s and 1860s, many public works were constructed by convicts. The first railways were constructed from the 1870s. As government revenue increased, the extent of government building expanded, including increasing provision for government employees.<sup>1338</sup>

When convicts arrived in 1850, government-provided accommodation was a condition of warders' employment. However, lodging options in Fremantle were scarce and rents were high, so houses were erected for the warders as a matter of urgency. The first warders' terrace houses were erected in 1851, each providing for two families.<sup>1339</sup>

In the early years of European settlement in Western Australia, government employees such as police officers were generally required to find their own accommodation. However, from around the mid-nineteenth century government housing was increasingly included in government appointments, especially outside the city. The quality of government housing was extremely variable, ranging from shared barracks accommodation (eg. for prison guards) to substantial family residences for officers of high standing (eg. for magistrates). Homes and workplaces were often entwined, either through employees being given rooms within a government facility or by government offices being located within an employee's home. Post offices and police stations are examples of government workplaces that frequently included quarters within the building. Police continued this practice until the 1920s, when separate on-site quarters began to be provided.<sup>1340</sup>

One group of government workers provided accommodation relatively early were port and harbour workers, such as pilots, pilot crews, coxswains, wharfingers and harbour masters. Pilot stations, including quarters, were constructed at Rottnest from 1846 and Albany from 1854.<sup>1341</sup> Lighthouse keepers were also provided on-site housing, as maritime safety required constant staffing of the light. The first three lighthouses in the State were at Rottnest (completed 1851), Breaksea Island Albany (1858) and Point Moore Geraldton (1878). Lighthouse quarters were often constructed of stone, possibly on account of their exposed locations, but also because they were constructed as part of contracts to build stone lighthouses. At Cape Inscription (Dirk Hartog Island, constructed 1910), both the lighthouse and quarters were concrete.<sup>1342</sup>

Some of the most remote government employee houses of the nineteenth century were the quarters provided at repeater stations along the East-West Telegraph Line, constructed from 1875 to 1877 and

<sup>1338</sup> Le Page, J.S.H. *Building a State: the Story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1829-1985*, Water Authority of Western Australia, Leederville, 1986

<sup>1339</sup> HCWA (Robin Chinnery) Register Documentation for P00877 *Warders' Cottages (fmr)*, 7-41 Henderson Street, November 2011

<sup>1340</sup> Edmonds, L, Gill, A & Gregory, J, *Western Australia Police Service Thematic History*, prepared for the Department of Contract Management Services on behalf of the Western Australian Police Service by the Centre for Western Australian History, University of Western Australia, 1998, pp.14-24; Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, 'Conservation Plan for The Gulch', Curtin University, August 1999; Le Page, *Building a State*, 1986

<sup>1341</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register documentation for P00043 *Albany Pilot Station (fmr)*, September 2002

<sup>1342</sup> HCWA (Fiona Bush), Register documentation for P02914 *Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse & Quarters*, April 2003; HCWA Register documentation for P3261 *Cape Inscription Lighthouse & Quarters*, August 2001

operational until 1927. Several of these stations were located remote from any existing settlement in areas very sparsely populated by pastoralists.<sup>1343</sup>

The most substantial and impressive State government employee housing is Government House, constructed from 1864 and still in use as the official residence of the Governor.<sup>1344</sup> In Fremantle, the 1853 residence for the Comptroller General (The Knowle, later part of Fremantle Hospital) provides another example of a grand residence for the highest ranking officer in the settlement. The 'Residencies' of Magistrates in several regional centres were built as very comfortable homes to reflect the status of this position.<sup>1345</sup> However, the vast majority of government employees would never even set foot inside a residence of these standards. Salaried government officers were more likely to receive comfortable housing, but even they were often housed in small or poorly maintained properties. Mining wardens often received comfortable homes. Married employees were more likely to receive housing than single men. Waged workers in some departments were given small simple homes, housed in communal barracks, or not provided housing at all. For example, the Railways Department at Merredin was accused in 1913 of leaving rail workers in tents as it dragged its feet erecting housing and the Forests Department even into the post-war period expected some forest labourers to live in tent camps, at least during the working week, and sometimes permanently. Workers on specific projects, such as constructing new railways, dams, pipelines, bridges or irrigation channels, were generally housed in temporary tent camps.<sup>1346</sup>

By 1910, the government was providing housing for workers in many of its departments. Although it is



Magistrate's residence, Northam, constructed 1908

*Renovated c.1980 for continued use by the resident magistrate; entered in the State Register of Heritage Places (P01880)*

*SHC, Annual Report, 1980 p.22*

<sup>1343</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register documentation for P00767 *Norseman Post Office*, September 2003

<sup>1344</sup> HCWA Register documentation for P02095 *Government House and Grounds*, April 2011

<sup>1345</sup> HCWA Register documentation for P03226 *The Knowle*, February 2000, P03019 *York Hospital Heritage Precinct*, May 1996, P01880 *The Residency, Northam*, October 1997, and P00039 *Residency Museum, Albany*, November 1996

<sup>1346</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register Documentation for P15750 *Railway Housing Precinct, Merredin*, November 2004; HCWA Register Documentation for P00577 *House & Trees (fmr Warden Finnerty's House), Coolgardie*, June 1993; Menck, Clare, *Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement 1923-2011: A History of Community Life and Work*, prepared for the Water Corporation WA, October 2013; Le Page, *Building a State*, 1986

not clear from Post Office directories exactly how many of the government employees listed had housing provided, it seems the government may have been housing medical staff, teachers, military officers, police, quarantine and customs officials, prison officers, post & telegraph staff, port officials, fisheries officers, mining wardens, regional officials of the Goldfields Water Supply, caretakers at government facilities such as the Observatory, Nursery and Botanic Gardens, firemen at a small number of government fire stations, and possibly land agents of the Department of Lands and Surveys. The Harbour & Light Department made up a significant portion of these employees, with houses probably provided for pilots, wharfingers, lightkeepers, and harbour masters. The Mines Department also made up a relatively large portion of the government listings, as might be expected after twenty years of mining boom in the State.<sup>1347</sup> A handful of State farms (later agricultural research stations) were also established around this time, and increased in number in the interwar and post-war years.<sup>1348</sup> Some railways employees are also known to have been in government housing at this time. The Post Office directory listings appear to include only salaried government officers, not waged employees.

In the nineteenth century, government housing was generally not standardised even within departments, although residences were designed to reflect the relative rank of the occupant. In the twentieth century, provision of employee housing became standard for many government departments, especially police, schools, post office and railways. From around the turn of the century, the Public Works Department developed standard plans for all manner of government buildings, including residences. Two-, four- and five-bedroom standard plans for timber residences were developed in the 1920s, as well as single men's quarters. After the establishment of the Workers' Homes Board in 1912, much government employee housing was also provided by the Board, and standard WHB plans were used. From the 1920s to the 1950s, these were generally four-room cottages with front and rear verandahs, the rear containing an enclosed washroom, and were often variations on the Type 6 standard plan. Teachers' quarters were generally four-room cottages executed in the same materials as the school building. Police housing was similar. Houses for the Department of Agriculture's research stations, which were typical of those built for many departments, were designed with a central corridor, clad with timber in earlier years and increasingly with fibro towards the 1940s. They were superseded in the 1950s by standard plans similar to regular SHC houses of the time.<sup>1349</sup>

There was considerable variation in housing standards between government departments, as well as between ranks within departments. Generally, it appears that departments with less staff to house may have provided higher standard housing. Housing was often designed so that it could be relocated if labour needs changed, resulting in much government housing being timber-framed and either timber- or, later, fibro-clad.<sup>1350</sup> At many government establishments, the most senior officer was provided on-site

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<sup>1347</sup> *Wises Post Office Directories*, 1910,

[http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/guides/wa\\_history/post\\_office\\_directories/1910](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/guides/wa_history/post_office_directories/1910)

<sup>1348</sup> Bizzaca, Kris, with Kelsall Binet Architects, 'Thematic History and Preliminary Heritage Assessment of Agricultural Research Stations', June 2000

<sup>1349</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, 'Thematic History of Agricultural Research Stations', 2000, pp.5-8, 14-15; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation for P15867 *Kalgoorlie Railway Housing Group*, January 2004; Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, pp.41-42

<sup>1350</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.37-40; Menck, *Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement*, 2013, pp.91-103, 170; Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, p.20; Sauman & Gray, 'Merredin Railway Housing Precinct: Conservation Management Plan', 2009, pp.8-15

accommodation, while other officers, especially if they were unmarried, were either housed off-site or, quite often, not provided housing at all.<sup>1351</sup>

Prior to 1925, the Public Works Department supported both State and Federal agencies. After this time, facilities such as lighthouses, post offices and defence establishments, and associated housing, became Commonwealth responsibilities.<sup>1352</sup>

Although single men were often the last to receive government housing, it seems the government was less inclined to leave single women to fend for themselves or take up rooms in a hotel. Provision was generally made to accommodate nurses and teachers, most of whom were young single women, even teenagers.

Hospitals had developed as modern institutions in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Twentieth century construction of hospitals generally assumed provision of nurses' quarters as part of the contract. Earlier hospitals provided this accommodation within the hospital itself, but this practice gave way to separate on-site and later off-site housing. These quarters, generally occupied by groups of young girls in shared rooms and a matron with a private room, were so entwined with hospital operations that many, even through to the 1960s, did not have kitchens, as resident nurses ate food from the hospital kitchens. Sometimes domestic staff members were also accommodated in the nurses' quarters. In other instances they had their own quarters or lived off site. In the second half of the twentieth century, new nurses' quarters were designed to give every nurse a private room, but living and dining facilities remained communal. By the 1970s, fewer nurses were choosing to live in nurses' quarters, but new staff quarters continued to be built for country hospitals. By the end of the twentieth century, however, the practice of accommodating nurses full-time on site had ceased, although some nurses' quarters continued in use for visiting staff and students. Some hospitals also provided a doctor's house in earlier years (eg. Wiluna, Godfrey House at PMH), but many did not. Doctors often worked in private practice as well as serving a hospital, especially in smaller communities, while nurses were full-time shift-working hospital staff.



Pinjarra Nurses Quarters, 1951

*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection 008328D*

<sup>1351</sup> See for example: NAA Series K1184 Item 176/4 Barcode 1381266 'York Post Office – Staffing'; NAA Series K1209 Item YORK Barcode 1660630 'York Post Office – Correspondence etc'; SROWA Cons 3362 Item 3 North Perth Occurrence Books 1957; SROWA Cons 430 Item 1933/5605v2 Police Department file 'North Perth Police Station, Quarters: Repairs and Requirements'

<sup>1352</sup> Le Page, *Building a State*, 1986, p.458

Doctors' houses, when provided, were family residences rather than communal quarters.<sup>1353</sup>

From the earliest schools, associated housing for teachers was a consideration. Teachers who were not provided housing were given an accommodation allowance on top of their salary, but it was not always sufficient to cover their costs of living. Small communities were required in their application for a school to explain how the teacher would be accommodated. Teachers often took rooms at a hotel or boarding house or boarded with local residents, usually those with children at the school, both of which could be highly unsatisfactory arrangements. At times teachers were even accommodated in a room within the school building. The government was often loathe to erect teachers' quarters for very small schools, as student numbers in small communities fluctuated year to year and the viability of such schools was not secure. This balance of adequately housing existing staff while also ensuring resources were targeted for the greatest long-term benefit was a constant issue for all government agencies, but particularly the education department. Single teacher schools obviously required only one staff residence, which was generally a modest family home, although a standard-plan one-room cabin was also developed for unmarried teachers' quarters. At larger schools, a head teacher's residence was generally provided on site, with other staff either housed in town or drawn from the local population. Rare examples of multiple quarters on site are at Quairading, where the former primary school includes three staff houses and shared accommodation for four single teachers, and Jardee, which includes a single-teacher's cabin and married-teacher's house.<sup>1354</sup>

Fire fighting was mostly on an ad hoc volunteer basis in the nineteenth century, before being taken up by municipal bodies. State government fire stations were built from 1903, and included quarters, and a State-wide Fire Brigades Board was formed in 1909. Fire fighters were required to live at the station when on duty, while married men could have residences nearby. From the mid-1920s to the 1950s, the majority were designed by K.C. Duncan (later as part of Duncan Stephen & Mercer Architects). Permanent accommodation facilities were phased out from around the 1950s, although temporary sleeping quarters for shift workers were retained. From 1959, station officers were no longer required to live in departmental housing, and many of the quarters near to fire stations were resumed to provide amenities for shift-working employees. Standard plans developed in the early 1960s included provision of sleeping quarters for either four or eight employees within the fire station. Separate quarters were retained at country stations.<sup>1355</sup>

Housing was established as part of setting up State government industries from 1912. For example, the State Government sawmill at Pemberton, established 1913, was accompanied by the government

<sup>1353</sup> SROWA Cons 1847 Item 1967/7310 Yarloop Hospital – New Nurses Quarters; SROWA Cons 1003 Item 5022 Geraldton Hospital: Buildings [Med Dept]; Menck, Clare 'Sisters of Mercy in Australia: Responses to Health, Illness and Disease by a Women's Religious Order', 2008; HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register documentation for P02438 *King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women*, December 2002; HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register Documentation for P03635 Wiluna District Hospital Group (fmr), January 2010; HCWA Register documentation for P05568 Godfrey House, August 2003; HCWA Register documentation for P10120 Doctor's House (fmr), Norseman, September 2006; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register documentation for P12670 Lake Grace Hospital, August 2002; HCWA, GHPDP preliminary review for P17883 *Dalwallinu Staff Accommodation Block G*, July 2007; HCWA Referral form P16778 *Collie Health Service Complex*, c.2003

<sup>1354</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register documentation for P01556 Menzies School, August 2009; HCWA Register Documentation for P08802 Osborne Park Primary School, April 1998; HCWA Register Documentation for P04914 Quairading State School & Quarters, June 2010; SROWA Cons 1497 Item 1908/5286 Ed Dept file 'Brooklyn (Glentulloch) Buildings, Works Etc'; HCWA (Robin Chinnery) Register Documentation, P01506 Jardee School (fmr), December 2013

<sup>1355</sup> Palassis Architects, 'Heritage Inventory Review: Volume Two: Thematic history of fire brigades in Western Australia', for Fire & Emergency Services Authority, October 2011, pp.4-7, 26, 47 & 51; HCWA (Robin Chinnery) 'Below Threshold' documentation for P14517 *Harvey Fire Station*, May 2004

construction of workers' cottages and singlemen's quarters, and the government expanded the settlement in the 1940s-1950s, before State Sawmills was sold into private ownership in 1961.<sup>1356</sup> Singlemen's quarters and managers' or caretakers' quarters were also provided onsite at government industries such as the State Brickworks at Armadale and Government Quarries at Boya.<sup>1357</sup>

Government housing was often provided after a government employee had tried and failed to secure private accommodation. Some employees took up rooms at hotels when housing was not provided. Lack of available private accommodation was particularly a problem in the small settlements of the Northwest well into the twentieth century.<sup>1358</sup>

In other circumstances, living in the accommodation provided was a condition of government employment. Prison warders at Fremantle until 1941 were compelled to live in the warders' quarters.<sup>1359</sup> The Forests Department into the 1980s continued attempts to require its more senior forestry officers to live in departmental housing, despite much of the forestry workforce having moved off-site from around the 1960s, although these attempts were increasingly futile.<sup>1360</sup>

Housing for forestry employees began in the 1920s, and used standard Workers' Homes Board plans. The Forests Department continued to construct its own bush settlements, using a range of standard-plan timber housing, until policy changes in the late 1950s moved towards housing employees in established towns where possible. However, many forestry settlements were remote from towns and continued to provide employee housing through the 1970s. The relationship between Housing and Forestry



Forests Department cottages at Mundaring Weir, 1938

*These houses are typical of the four-room cottages provided across the State for forestry labourers in this period, and similar in plan to Group Settlement cottages and WHB Type 7 residences.*

*Forests Department, 'Fifty Years of Forestry in Western Australia', 1969 plate 21*

<sup>1356</sup> HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register Documentation for P11381 *Pemberton Timber Mill Workers' Cottages Precinct*, November 2003

<sup>1357</sup> HCWA (Kris Bizzaca), Register Documentation for P15829 *Armadale State Brickworks Dustroom & Machinery Shed*, April 2007, and HCWA (Kris Bizzaca & Fiona Bush), Register Documentation for P16788 *Government Quarries (fmr)*, September 2006

<sup>1358</sup> See for example HCWA (Cathy Clement) Register Documentation for P00691 *Wharfinger's House, Derby*, February 2000

<sup>1359</sup> HCWA (Robin Chinnery) Register Documentation for P00877 *Warders' Cottages (fmr), 7-41 Henderson Street*, November 2011

<sup>1360</sup> Menck, *Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement*, 2013, pp.166-69

Departments is not clear, as at times each appears to have managed building contracts for forestry employees' housing.<sup>1361</sup>

The first government housing for university staff was provided at UWA's Crawley campus from 1939. The small brick cottages were built to Workers' Homes Board standards to keep costs down. By the 1950s, at least 49 UWA staff houses had been built on campus at Crawley. Despite their austerity, they continued to house university lecturers until at least the 1960s, as well as visiting staff. By the 1990s, they were no longer used as residences, and in more recent years almost all have been demolished.<sup>1362</sup>

The shortage of houses in the State following World War Two led to some calls to establish country hostels for public servants, especially teachers.<sup>1363</sup> However, it does not appear these were built.

Accommodating employees at or near their place of work was common practice in both government and private industries until the second half of the twentieth century, as commuting to work from any distance required either good public transport or private motor vehicles. As private vehicle ownership became the norm and both transport and communications improved, employees were less likely to be accommodated within government workplaces, or even in separate premises on site. Where existing quarters were provided on site, these often remained in use for many years, but new housing moved off site. In the Metropolitan area, public transport and a choice of private housing options reduced the need for government employee housing through the twentieth century. In regional areas, however, employees often continued to require housing close to their place of work. This was particularly the case for shift workers, such as nurses, railway workers, police officers, fire fighters and prison guards, those engaged in work outside settled areas, such as forestry workers who had to be ready to respond to bushfires, or those in small communities with few accommodation options. Many agencies required employees to relocate every few years as part of professional development and career advancement, including railways and forests departments. These agencies provided post-war housing as they did not expect their workforce to be able to source appropriate private housing, often for a family, at every posting.<sup>1364</sup>

Government employees often requested improvements to the homes provided, as most were very modest residences. Budget constraints meant maintenance and improvements were generally slow in coming, often only being implemented after the employee who made the request had moved on. Improvements also caused rental increases. Employees in WAGR housing in the post-war period paid an extra sixpence a week if a power point or light point was installed, and one shilling a week for a bath heater.<sup>1365</sup>

From the post-war years, it was no longer standard practice to build teachers' quarters on site at schools, with houses provided elsewhere in town. Older schools with early residences often retained them, but it appears that by the 1970s few teachers lived on site at their schools. Many older schools had also reached beyond the capacities of their original sites and were rebuilt in new locations in the second half of the twentieth century, without onsite accommodation.<sup>1366</sup>

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<sup>1361</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, pp.15-17, 20-26; Menck, *Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement*, 2013, pp.166-67

<sup>1362</sup> HCWA, GHPDP preliminary review for P13702 *Staff Cottage (fmr)*, June 2006

<sup>1363</sup> *The West Australian*, Thurs 28 August 1947, p.15

<sup>1364</sup> Menck, *Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement*, 2013, pp.34, 37, 77, 92, 166-67; HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register Documentation for P12414 *Railway Barracks, Wongan Hills*, October 2003; Sauman & Gray, 'Merredin Railway Housing Precinct: Conservation Management Plan', 2009, p.13

<sup>1365</sup> Sauman & Gray, 'Merredin Railway Housing Precinct: Conservation Management Plan', 2009, pp.12

<sup>1366</sup> HCWA (Helen Burgess), Below Threshold Documentation for P16231 *Brunswick State School & Teacher's Quarters (fmr)*, March 2004; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register documentation for P01556 Menzies

The State Housing Commission at times set aside houses within its regular rental program to supply accommodation for government employees. For example, in 1951, twelve properties in Hilton (Harwood & Joslin Streets and Snook Crescent) were earmarked specifically for workers at the new South Fremantle Power Station.<sup>1367</sup> While some government agencies considered the provision of workers' housing to be the responsibility of the SHC, the extreme housing and building materials shortage of the post-war years meant the SHC could not meet demand and government agencies continued to provide their own accommodation to ensure their workers were housed.<sup>1368</sup>

In the early 1950s, standard plan housing for government employees continued to be used, with increasingly generous living areas. From the mid-1950s, plans moved away from the earlier four-room cottages. Roof pitches were lowered, verandahs were largely abandoned, and there were more but smaller rooms provided. Housing followed the styles of the private housing market, but in modest form.<sup>1369</sup>

From 1958-59, the PWD began to concentrate on 'institutional and large buildings'. As a result, the State Housing Commission became 'the principal agency for the construction of houses on account of other departments and Government undertakings', and took on constructing and managing government employees housing in rural areas.<sup>1370</sup> In 1959-60, 30 homes in 17 country towns were built and handed over to their respective government agencies.<sup>1371</sup>

Agricultural production remained a substantial proportion of the West Australian economy through the 1950s, but industry expanded through the decade, and mining began to increase also. As the State's population boomed, pressure for increased government services also grew, and provision of housing was essential in many areas for those services to be made available. From 1958, the Government Employees' Housing Scheme was set up under SHC in an attempt to meet the growing demand. However, demand far outstripped supply and the SHC's resources were targeted elsewhere. Government employ housing was provided in a fragmented and under-resourced manner. Departments unable to obtain housing through the SHC began approaching the PWD directly, using their loan fund allocations for erecting housing, or purchasing private residences themselves. The SHC lamented that this ad hoc approach resulted in wide variations in standards and wildly varied rents, while at the same time not directing available funds to the most needy cases. Reports were received in 1959 of a teacher at Derby living in a tent and another the following year spending a month sleeping in a cloakroom. Other country employees were forced to take up rooms at local hotels, pressing those with families to leave them behind, and costing a substantial portion of a modest government salary. It was clear that without improved housing standards many government agencies would not be able to attract officers to rural postings.<sup>1372</sup>

Housing for many regional government employees continued to be woeful into the 1960s. In 1964, the Minister for Education was reported as having seriously suggested that the best hope for young female teachers of finding decent accommodation in their country postings was to marry a local farmer. Remote areas struggled to retain staff, such as the situation of Wyndham having seven doctors come and go in only two years. Despite differing opinions around the standard and variety of housing, there was general consensus amongst government agencies, led strongly by the Education Department, that a centralised

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School, August 2009; HCWA Register Documentation for P08802 *Osborne Park Primary School*, April 1998; HCWA Register Documentation for P04914 *Quairading State School & Quarters*, June 2010

<sup>1367</sup> Bizzaca & Kelsall Binet Architects, '61 Houses South Hilton Heritage Assessment', 2001, pp.12-13

<sup>1368</sup> HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation for P15865 *Wittenoom Street Railway Houses*, March 2004

<sup>1369</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, p.42

<sup>1370</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1959

<sup>1371</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1960

<sup>1372</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.3-8

agency for government employee housing, and a significant boost in funding, was required.<sup>1373</sup> Teachers in many regional areas were joining the waiting list for SHC homes, as they could not obtain other reasonable accommodation, thereby competing for the limited affordable housing available to local residents. Government housing in the Northwest was a particular concern, especially as in the 1960s all public servants and school teachers had to expect a northern posting as part of their career, often as a prerequisite to any seniority.<sup>1374</sup>

In December 1964, the *Government Employees Housing Act* was passed. The agency it created, the Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA), came into operation in August the following year.<sup>1375</sup> It was to be responsible for 'the provision of adequate and suitable accommodation, together with the improvement of existing accommodation for Government Officers in country areas'. The SHC was to act as 'agent' for GEHA in building and management of houses, 'providing architectural, supervision, maintenance and accounting services'.<sup>1376</sup> Initially, GEHA was intended to provide housing for salaried public servants and teachers.<sup>1377</sup> Wage earners, such as the extensive forestry workforce and railway labourers, were excluded, although it was hoped that once the Authority was established its operations might expand to also house waged workers.<sup>1378</sup> That the new agency was specifically charged with providing homes for white-collar employees doubtless influenced the standard of homes provided.

By the 1960s, some government housing was old and dilapidated but had been retained for lack of alternative accommodation. In other instances, fine old heritage buildings remained in use as housing for the government departments that originally built or purchased them.<sup>1379</sup> GEHA was not obliged to take on all the residences belonging to its client agencies, as its enabling legislation controversially permitted it to not accept houses that could be a financial liability.<sup>1380</sup>



Magistrate's house, Broome, 1967  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1967, p.13*

<sup>1373</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.8-9

<sup>1374</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, Parliamentary Debates for the 24<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Third Session, 24 November 1964, reprinted in full in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.108-46 (pp.121&124)

<sup>1375</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.8

<sup>1376</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1965*, quotes from p.9

<sup>1377</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.112

<sup>1378</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.127-29

<sup>1379</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.37-40

<sup>1380</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.116

At its formation, GEHA took on around 700 existing houses, of which 290 were occupied by teachers.<sup>1381</sup> The inherited housing stock was of varying standards, and one of GEHA's initial programs was to improve and standardise the quality of accommodation provided across different departments. Many properties required substantial expense to bring them up to 'modern' standards. Western Australia was the first State to standardise government employee housing. The first new GEHA homes built were timber-framed fibro residences based on standard SHC plans.<sup>1382</sup>

While many government departments signed on to be part of GEHA from its inception, including large agencies such as the Education Department, or joined in the early years (eg Police, from 1968), other government agencies with significant regional housing needs, such as the Railways, Medical and Forests Departments, remained independent providers of housing for their employees.<sup>1383</sup> The Police Department initially stayed out of GEHA as it was satisfied with its housing provisions. Western Australian Government Railways (WAGR), by contrast, was considered to present too many complex housing problems for the young agency to cope with, particularly due to the very low standard of many of its railway workers' camps.<sup>1384</sup>

GEHA initially emphasised building homes over buying them, as a measure to assist the building industry.<sup>1385</sup> From 1964, new GEHA homes were to include as standard flyscreens, hot water systems and carports.<sup>1386</sup> At the time, carports and flyscreens were not standard issue for SHC homes, and hot water systems were only just becoming an SHC norm.

A serious issue of contention was standardisation of rents across government agencies, as prior to the creation of GEHA some government employees had been paying market rental rates while others had their rent capped at levels well below both market standard and the level necessary to ensure adequate maintenance. Over many years, issues such as these caused tensions both within the GEHA board and between GEHA, tenants, client agencies and unions. However, those who remembered the trials of having to find their own accommodation for rural postings remained appreciative of the service GEHA provided.<sup>1387</sup>

From the start, GEHA focussed its houses towards 'the married family man'. For over two decades after the agency's inception there was a strong assumption that single employees would share accommodation, generally with other employees not of their own choosing, which caused many problems. Family homes were provided a quarter acre block with private back yard, in line with social norms. Duplexes, used for shared singles accommodation until the mid-1970s, had no private outdoor living areas. Gardens frequently failed, and GEHA tenants often sought assistance from GEHA in establishing or maintaining gardens so that their houses could feel like homes. GEHA, however, provided little such support and it was not uncommon for tenants to find their assigned houses surrounded by 'barren wastelands'.<sup>1388</sup>

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<sup>1381</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.111

<sup>1382</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.9-13

<sup>1383</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.27, 156-67

<sup>1384</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.113

<sup>1385</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.13

<sup>1386</sup> Hansard for Government Employees Housing Bill, in Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.112

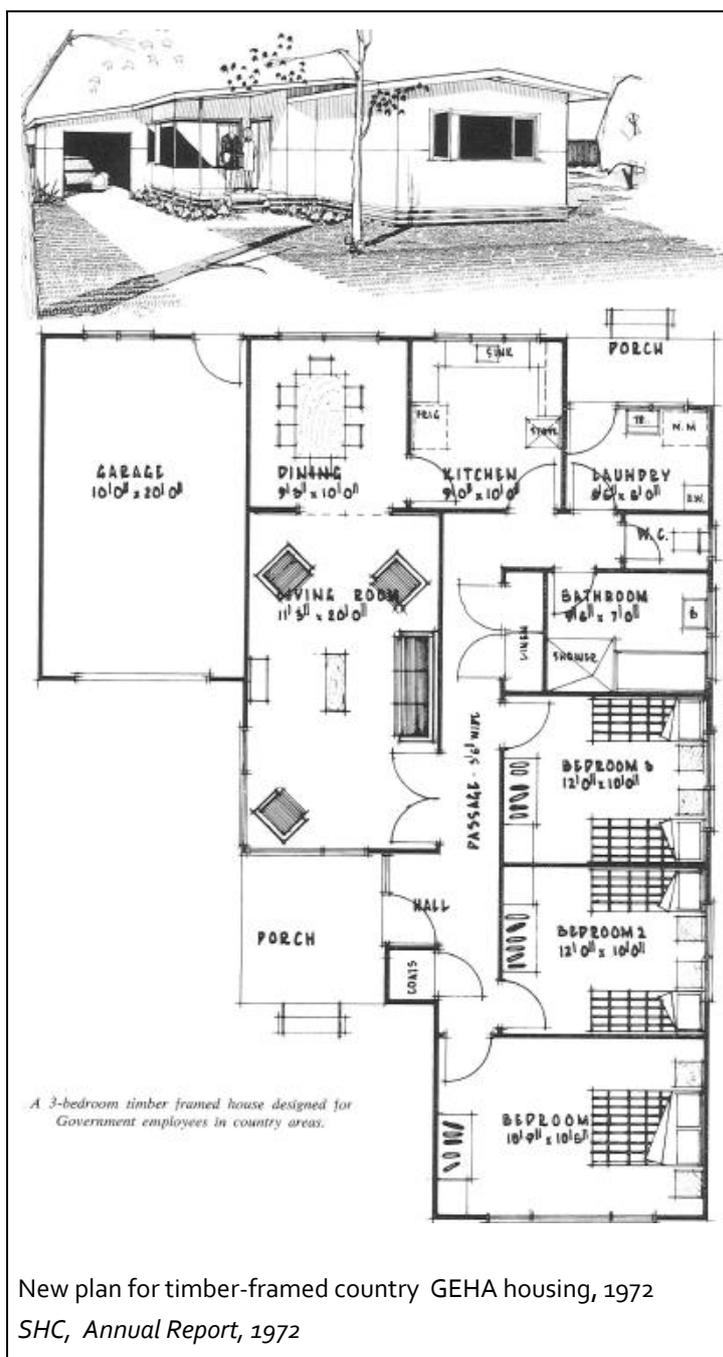
<sup>1387</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.28-29, 81

<sup>1388</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.49-53, 61-62, quote from p.62

Married women were not employed in the public service from 1934, when Depression-era measures outlawed the practice, until the marriage bar was lifted in 1967. Married government workers for whom housing was provided were therefore by definition men. Even after the 1967 policy change, GEHA did not issue housing to married women whose husbands were not government employees until well into the 1970s. In many smaller and/or more conservative communities, GEHA was reluctant to provide housing to unmarried couples, especially where one partner held a senior position in the town, and homosexual couples' needs were not even on the radar. As with housing more generally for most of the twentieth century, it was women who spent more time in GEHA houses, knew them more intimately and had their lives more closely shaped by them, especially the unpaid wives of government employees. At times wives were also expected to supplement their husbands' work by providing hospitality in their GEHA homes.<sup>1389</sup>

While GEHA operations shared many similarities with the provision of public housing, GEHA housing was not welfare. Government employees, for all their variety, were expected to be housed at a standard comparable with private housing at a level that reflected their social status. This placed considerable pressure on GEHA and, especially in the early years, these standards were often not met.<sup>1390</sup>

GEHA encouraged tenants to be self-sufficient problem solvers, and offered reimbursement for improvements made to GEHA homes. It was a cost-saving to GEHA, as they paid only for materials, with free labour from tenants. Many GEHA tenants responded to the emphasis on independent tenant



New plan for timber-framed country GEHA housing, 1972  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>1389</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.49-53

<sup>1390</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.34



Ranger's quarters at pipehead dam, North Dandalup, built by GEHA 1972

*SHC, Annual Report, 19773*

initiative with an ethos of self-sufficient pioneering spirit, from growing their own food in often difficult gardening conditions to installing their own air-conditioning with minimal tools.<sup>1391</sup>

From 1967-68, GEHA initiated a scheme whereby local government authorities could purchase GEHA homes and rent them back to GEHA, thus increasing the funds GEHA had available for rural construction and increasing the total number of government employee houses that could be provided. Within five years, 133 homes were available under this scheme.<sup>1392</sup>

GEHA began to develop its own standard plans from at least 1967, with higher standards than SHC housing at the time, including greater space. An extra bedroom (often a fully enclosed sleep-out) was added to ensure that children of different genders could be housed in separate rooms. The first standard plan GEHA housing was the '86 series'. From 1968, minimum bedroom size was increased to 10x12ft and even duplex accommodation was designed to have three bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen in each house. A second series of standard plans, the '110 series', was also based on SHC plans.<sup>1393</sup>

Amendments to the *Government Employees Housing Authority Act* in 1968-69 allowed the Superannuation Board of WA to purchase homes from GEHA and lease them back to the Authority. This increased funds available for building and led to an increase in the provision of government employee housing. In 1968-69, 52 homes were completed for GEHA, another twelve were purchased, and 86 were under construction at the end of the period.<sup>1394</sup>

In the Northwest, emergency accommodation for GEHA was provided at Derby, Carnarvon and Port Hedland in 1969-70. Concrete masonry nurses' quarters were also erected at Port Hedland and Roebourne.<sup>1395</sup> As the Medical Department was not a GEHA-listed agency at the time, this indicates that

<sup>1391</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.73-76

<sup>1392</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.14

<sup>1393</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.13&37-38

<sup>1394</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1969

<sup>1395</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

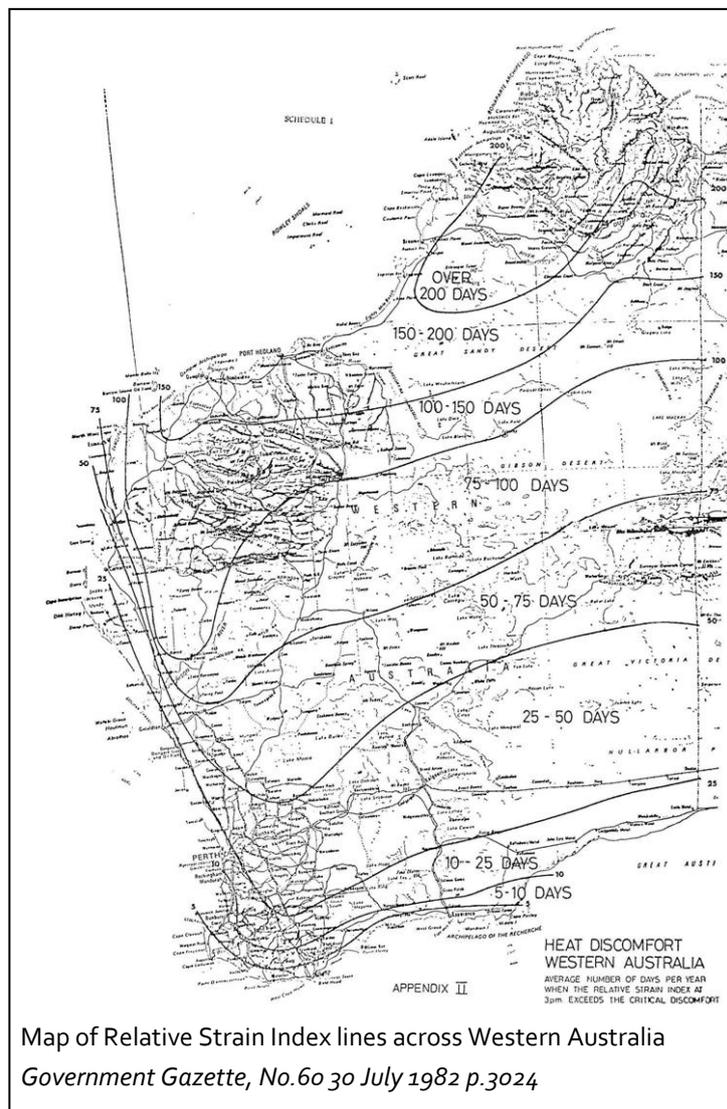
the SHC was continuing to provide some direct housing services to government agencies aside from GEHA's operations.

In 1973, the SHC reported that GEHA had taken on responsibility for all government employee housing outside the Metropolitan area, with the exception of the Medical, Forests and Main Roads Departments and State Electricity Commission.<sup>1396</sup> However, as Railways also remained outside of GEHA at the time and was overlooked in this claim, it is likely that other smaller agencies were also continuing to run their own housing programs.

Government employees through the twentieth century frequently found themselves posted to quarters with significant maintenance issues. It appears GEHA repairs were slow to be implemented and even basic works required months and often years of requests before action would be taken.<sup>1397</sup> It is possible, however, that many other employees were perfectly happy with their government homes, as a lack of complaints leaves no paper trail.

From 1973, GEHA changed its housing standards to build in brick veneer in southern areas, and to install air-conditioning as standard in Northwest homes. The use of brick veneer reduced maintenance costs, but also created an impression of a middle class home. This was part of GEHA's attempts to invent its own identity, separate to SHC, and in doing so to construct an image of government employees equivalent to the lauded Australian ideal of home owners, and somewhat above the welfare stigma increasingly associated with SHC accommodation.<sup>1398</sup>

Air-conditioning was initially supplied only for salaried officers, but from the late 1970s it was rolled out for all government employee housing north of the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel and the '50 RSI' line, a curved meteorological line based on climatic conditions that measured the 'relative strain index'. The '50 RSI line' estimated the point where the



<sup>1396</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

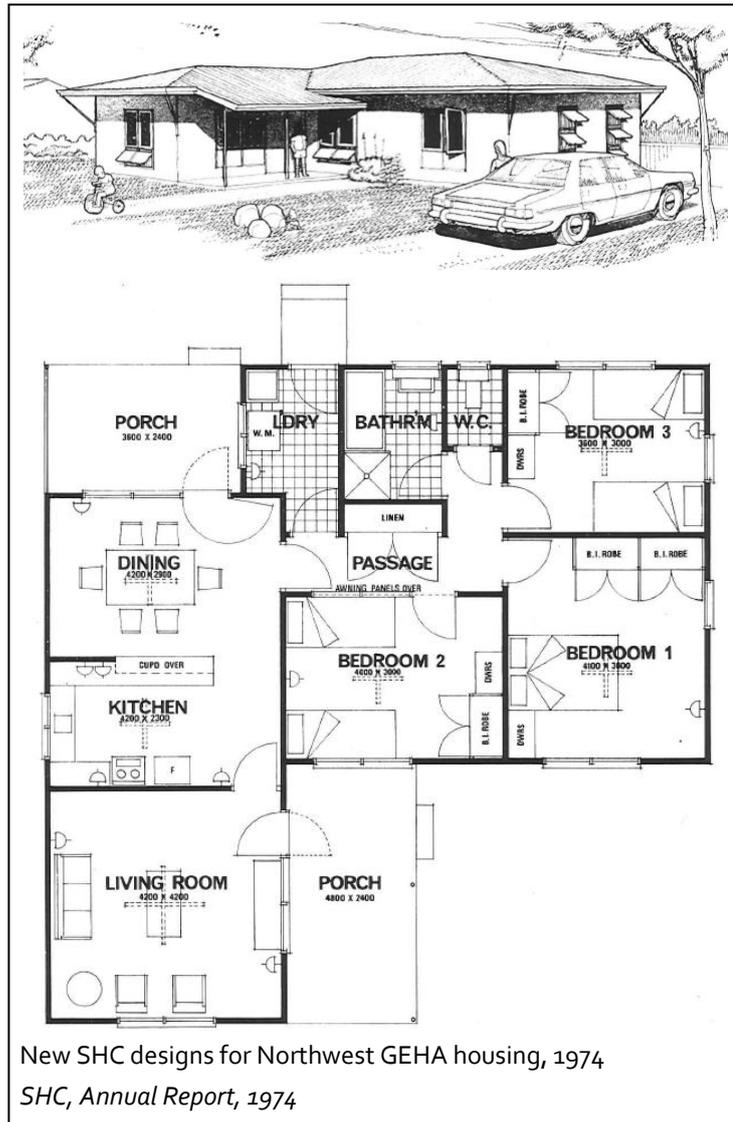
<sup>1397</sup> See for example: SROWA Cons 5931 Item 05/344-3 V1 Police Department file: Establishments/Localities – Yarloop Police – Buildings General; SROWA Cons 4771 Item R 7052 Yarloop – Departmental Houses (WAGR Secretary's Branch file); SROWA Cons 689 Item 1935/1063 (PWD file) Yarloop School & Quarters – Millars Timber Co's Building Lease; SROWA Cons 430 Item 1933/5605v2 Police Department file 'North Perth Police Station, Quarters: Repairs and Requirements'

<sup>1398</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.15&40

'average number of days when the relative heat index at 3pm exceeded the critical comfort level' was greater than fifty. About three quarters of the State was north of the line, which at the southern end of its curve was not much north of Merredin, while at its northern extreme, near the coast, was midway between Carnarvon and Exmouth.<sup>1399</sup>

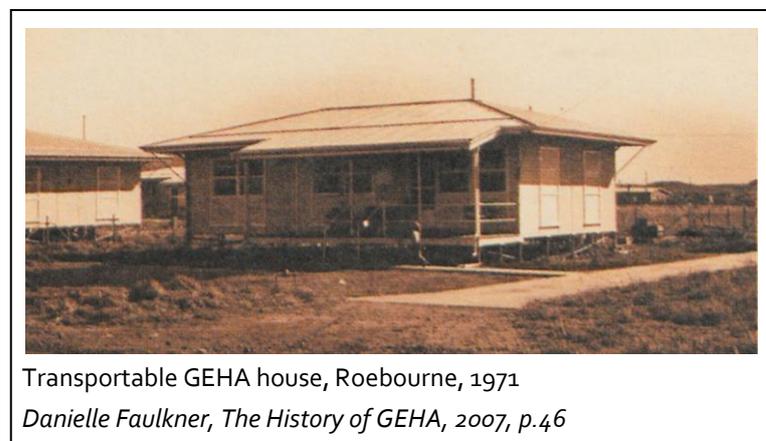
By June 1975, 42.5% of the 2,231 housing units provided by the SHC for government workers, through GEHA, other departments or the Shire Building Scheme, were in the Northwest.<sup>1400</sup> See *Section 20*.

Transportable homes are first noted as being in use by GEHA in the agency's 1974-75 annual reports, although photographs from at least 1971 show GEHA transportable homes. Transportables were used where an urgent need developed, saving both time and money. They were also used for particularly remote locations, such as to provide teachers' accommodation at remote Aboriginal communities. From 1979-



New SHC designs for Northwest GEHA housing, 1974  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1974*

80, four new designs for transportable homes were accepted. In 1981-82, two-bedroom transportable homes for single teachers were installed at four remote Aboriginal communities. From 1998-99, GEHA initiated contracts for the bulk supply of transportable homes, developed to the agency's specifications.



Transportable GEHA house, Roebourne, 1971  
*Danielle Faulkner, The History of GEHA, 2007, p.46*

Subsequently houses were ready-made for assignment to whichever location showed the greatest need.<sup>1401</sup>

Government housing for single persons in the 1970s in some areas included individuals sharing three-bedroom residences. In 1977-78, a decision was made that no more than two individuals would be housed in a shared single-persons' residence,

<sup>1399</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.15-16

<sup>1400</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>1401</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.46

even those with three bedrooms, on account of 'substantial evidence of conflict where three single persons occupy one property'.<sup>1402</sup>

Tenants of GEHA homes in mining areas were often keenly aware of the discrepancies between their modest government homes and the large houses provided to some mining employees. The standard of GEHA homes significantly influenced the social standing of government employees who lived in them, especially in small communities where the dominant industry had far greater funds for housing than GEHA could muster. However, there was also an internal hierarchy in the assignment of GEHA homes, although this was not always formally articulated. Some departments were perceived as receiving better housing, and more senior officers within any department received higher standard homes. While this had been accepted standard practice in earlier government employee housing, by the later twentieth century it appears it was no longer explicit and often not considered appropriate by lower-ranked employees.<sup>1403</sup>

State Housing Commission homes built for GEHA provided only for tenants to install air-conditioners themselves, but many of GEHA's client departments installed air-conditioning as a housing standard. Subsequently, the Commission attempted to provide better insulation for these homes, mostly polyurethane-filled asbestos-clad walls.<sup>1404</sup>

By the late 1970s, GEHA designs began to reflect wider social trends of informal living areas linked with kitchens, especially as televisions became a normal part of these areas. From the early 1980s, 'family rooms' linked to kitchens became a feature of many GEHA designs.<sup>1405</sup>

Although most of the SHC's work for GEHA involved constructing new residences, from time to time it undertook major refurbishments, such as renovation of the 1902 resident magistrate's residence in Northam in 1980.<sup>1406</sup>

From July 1980, GEHA rents were raised to be in line with SHC rents, an increase of approximately 14%. This was an unpopular move with GEHA tenants, especially as some government employees who continued to live in homes owned and managed by their departments without GEHA involvement paid less than even the pre-1980 GEHA rental rates. Subsequently the State government initiated a policy to

gradually move all government employees onto a standard rental scale, but this took some years and was applied inconsistently.<sup>1407</sup>



GEHA housing for the Water Board at Mundaring Weir, mid-1970s  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1975, p.31*

In August 1981, the State government approved a housing policy whereby all government housing, whoever the governing body, needed to meet new GEHA standards. Existing housing had to be upgraded to these standards as finances allowed.

<sup>1402</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*, quote from p.30

<sup>1403</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.79-81

<sup>1404</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>1405</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.52-53

<sup>1406</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>1407</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.30

Several government agencies with large housing stocks remained outside of GEHA, including Westrail and the Health and Forests Departments. The quality of many of these non-GEHA residences was well below GEHA standards. As houses were improved, rents increased accordingly, sometimes as much as trebling, which tenants often resented. In the case of the Forests Department, despite subsequently reducing its housing stock, the Department could not find funds to improve its remaining homes to GEHA requirements.<sup>1408</sup> Following an agreement reached in 1986, Conservation and Land Management (the former Forests Department) transferred its remaining 367 houses to GEHA.<sup>1409</sup> The houses were transferred in a few lots through 1989.<sup>1410</sup>

The Health Department signed on with GEHA in 1985. However, it did not transfer ownership of its extensive accommodation for nurses, and some doctors, and continued to manage housing for these two main employee groups. Rather, the Health Department used GEHA's services to provide housing for ancillary staff such as radiographers, pathologists and speech therapists. In 2002, Western Australian Country Health Services was formed as a branch of the Health Department and became the main health body using GEHA accommodation.<sup>1411</sup>

From 1981, exploitation began of gas reserves on the Northwest Shelf. Consequently, the demand for GEHA housing in the region escalated.<sup>1412</sup>

Standards for housing senior government employees in country areas were upgraded in the early 1980s and as a result SHC designed new homes for senior staff. These had fixtures, fittings and appearance comparable with 'middle range private homes'. Four designs were initially developed in 1983-84.<sup>1413</sup>

From 1968, GEHA had received much of its working funds through an arrangement where the Superannuation Board purchased homes from GEHA and then leased them back for government employee housing. From 1984-85, Treasury increased GEHA's borrowing limit and the arrangement with the Superannuation Board was no longer required.<sup>1414</sup>

Although cyclone screens were added to Northwest SHC homes from c.1980, GEHA tenants were informed as late as 1988 that cyclone screens were unnecessary, and could be substituted with masking tape in the event of a cyclone. GEHA offered reimbursement for used masking tape.<sup>1415</sup>

Although the SHC had designed houses specifically for the Northwest from at least the 1950s, with varying degrees of adaptation for climate, GEHA housing for the Northwest until well into the 1980s used the same standard plans as housing in southern areas, designed specifically to mirror Perth suburban homes. The first Northwest-specific GEHA design was in 1987, using verandahs and eaves to maximise shading, and by the 1990s southern-styled homes had largely been replaced or retrofitted for northern conditions.<sup>1416</sup>

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<sup>1408</sup> Conservation & Land Management, 'Accommodation and Services – Housing – Housing Policy – Vol.5 (FD1982/0414)', SROWA Cons 5806 Item 006462F1803

<sup>1409</sup> HCWA draft assessment documentation P08541 *Portagabra* (May 2010), prepared by SHO staff based on research by Fiona Bush (2009) and Jacqui Sherriff (2005), p.12

<sup>1410</sup> Heritage & Conservation Professionals, 'Thematic History of Forestry Cottages', 2004, p.29

<sup>1411</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.160&164-66

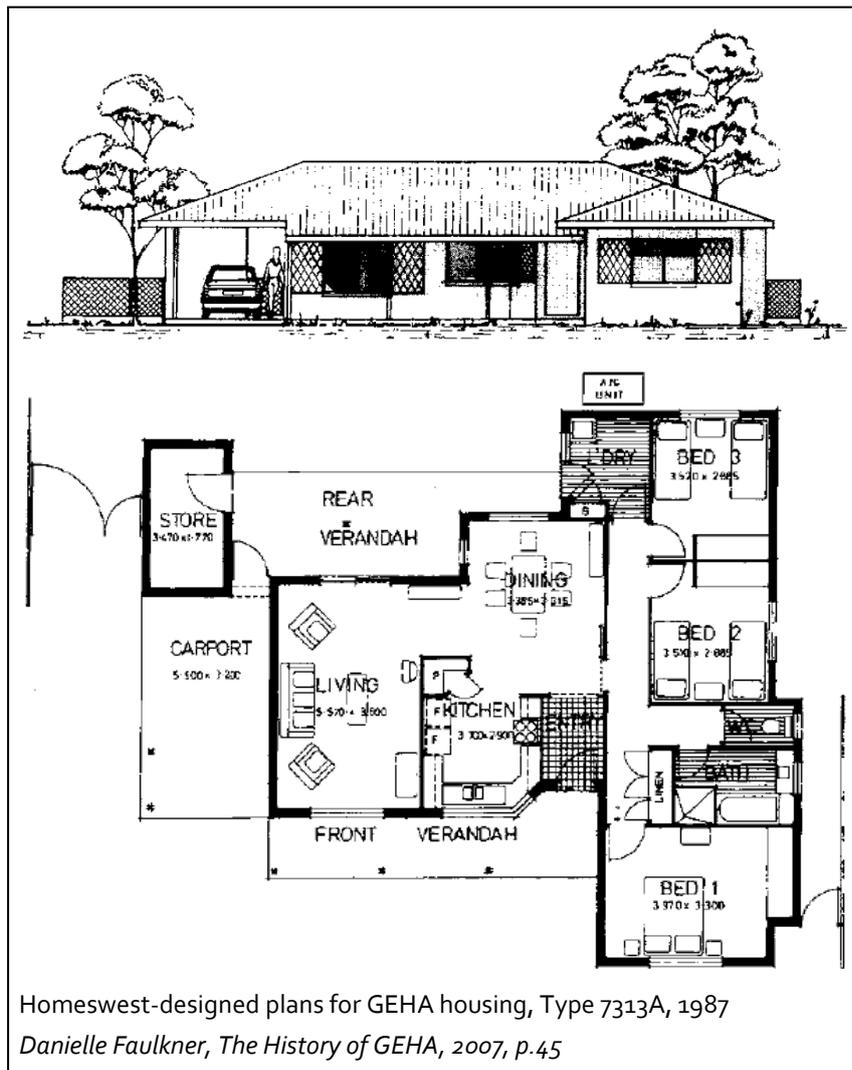
<sup>1412</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.17

<sup>1413</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 19-84*, quote from p.12

<sup>1414</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.15

<sup>1415</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.74

<sup>1416</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.43-45



Homeswest-designed plans for GEHA housing, Type 7313A, 1987  
*Danielle Faulkner, The History of GEHA, 2007, p.45*

By 1990, GEHA was only able to meet about 30% of departmental applications for housing. It had accumulated a substantial debt through the 1980s by borrowing to keep up with housing provision. In addition to new housing needs, GEHA's existing housing stock was ageing, some to a point of no longer being serviceable. Meanwhile, many departments were retaining vacant homes in regional areas, as they feared releasing them to other departments would mean they could not re-obtain housing if they needed it again. GEHA subsequently changed its policies from assigning houses to departments, who filled them as they saw fit, to retaining control of all

GEHA properties and assigning homes to individual employees across departments as required. The changes began with a pilot project in Kalgoorlie-Boulder in 1991-92, which was deemed successful and expanded to other areas as the Regional Housing Management Scheme.<sup>1417</sup>

GEHA continued to have serious financial difficulties. A review and report delivered in 1994 recommended significant changes in GEHA's operations, including reducing its housing stock and leasing privately owned homes to meet government employee housing needs. Subsequently GEHA was 'not in the primary business of supplying accommodation',<sup>1418</sup> which appears to have meant the agency saw itself as the managing body of a commercial service rather than as a discount service provider with an obligation to give houses to client agencies. Construction of new houses was restricted to areas where there were no viable private sector accommodation options. The move was a financial success. It also increased the standard of housing, allowed much of the older substandard GEHA housing to be disposed of, and provided support for regional building and real estate industries. From 1996-97, GEHA launched its 'Safe as Houses' campaign to encourage private investors to provide government housing through GEHA on long term leases. As with many government agencies in the mid-1990s, GEHA was removed

<sup>1417</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.18-19

<sup>1418</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.20, quoting Homeswest's 1994 Review of GEHA p.14

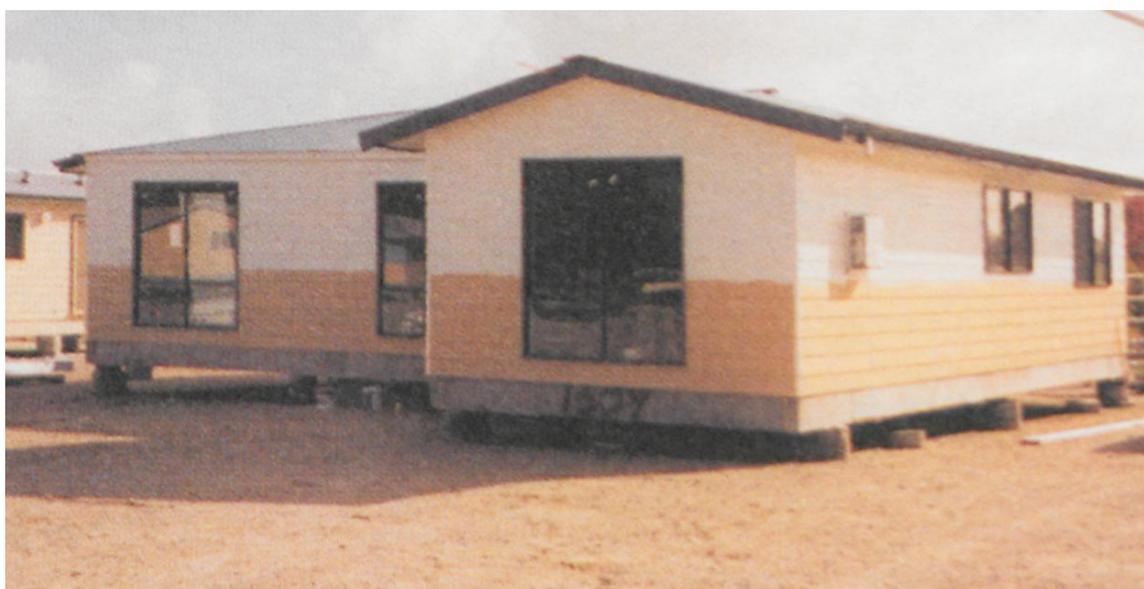
from Consolidated Revenue funding from 1996, after which time it operated as an accountable business unit.<sup>1419</sup>

In line with its new business model, GEHA began paying more attention to improving tenant experiences, moving away from the 1960s attitude that tenants should be grateful to receive any house at all to a more client-focussed approach.<sup>1420</sup>

In the late 1990s, GEHA encouraged its client agencies to 'return' sub-standard housing in exchange for newer accommodation. The older properties were generally sold, and in a short period of time GEHA had raised \$18million in this manner to fund a substantial capital works program. From 1998, over 600 new homes were built in three years.<sup>1421</sup>

From 2000, GEHA adopted a framework for setting rents based on Perth median rental rates, discounted 20%, with additional reductions for housing amenity and location. The framework was adopted by other government agencies also and received wide acceptance from unions, tenants and client agencies.<sup>1422</sup>

In response to the 2002 Gordon Inquiry into abuse of children in Aboriginal communities (see [Section 21.5](#)) the State government committed to building and staffing three multi-functional remote police facilities, employing additional child protection workers, expanding the Strong Families initiative to twelve locations, employing Aboriginal support workers, funding workers to promote violence prevention strategies, and boosting finances to several other intervention and support services. As many of the issues identified were in remote areas, these increases in government employee numbers brought with them a need for additional GEHA accommodation.<sup>1423</sup>



'Off the rack' transportable housing for GEHA, c.2000

*Danielle Faulkner, The History of GEHA, 2007, p.46*

<sup>1419</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.19-20

<sup>1420</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.76

<sup>1421</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.20-22

<sup>1422</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.32-33

<sup>1423</sup> Government of Western Australia, 'Putting People First: The Western Australian State Government's Action Plan for Addressing Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities', November 2002

From 2003-04, GEHA moved to a 'Cost Recovery Rent Scheme' that more accurately reflected the real costs of providing and maintaining housing. The resulting funds influx allowed for a nine-year program to upgrade GEHA homes across the State.<sup>1424</sup>

GEHA explored more flexible housing options to cater to an increase of single and two-person households. In 2004-05, a new design for shared accommodation was constructed at Kalumburu. The house was designed with separate wings, each containing a bedroom, living room and bathroom, with shared central kitchen and dining areas. It was intended that the home could be adapted for use either by two singles or couples sharing, or by a family using the entire building.<sup>1425</sup>

By this time, standard GEHA homes for the Northwest had higher ceilings than in southern areas (2,700 compared with 2,400mm (roughly nine and eight feet)).<sup>1426</sup>

In 2005, the fortieth year of GEHA's operations, the Authority provided housing for 60 government agencies in 250 locations throughout the State.<sup>1427</sup>

GEHA was merged with the State Housing Commission in 2006, and from 1 July was rebranded as Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), a branch of the new Housing Authority.<sup>1428</sup>

Over the forty years that GEHA operated, expectations of acceptable standards for housing changed enormously. In the 1960s, a three-bedroom asbestos house with wood stove, lino floors and open fireplace was more than many young couples could hope for in the private market, and many were very grateful to receive such housing from GEHA. Forty years on, such homes were considered completely unacceptable as government housing and GEHA knew its tenants would refuse to live in such a place if assigned to it. As the agency became GROH, it upheld its original aim to 'provide adequate and suitable housing', acknowledging it could not provide 'palaces' but aiming to offer the best standard it could within budgetary constraints.<sup>1429</sup>

A 2006 review of GROH operations recommended a more tenant-focussed approach. For the first time since GEHA was established in 1964, moves were made to provide garden maintenance, at least for three- and four-bedroom homes. As only about 20% of tenants had proved to be gardeners, tenants generally arrived at GROH homes to find dead or non-existent gardens.<sup>1430</sup> GEHA acknowledged as it wound up that housing was very important to residents' overall life satisfaction. Workers who were unhappy in their homes had great difficulty functioning in their jobs.<sup>1431</sup>

The Gordon Report continued to have impacts on provision of housing. Eight communities were selected in the initial phase for building works to allow increased police and child protection workers for targeted programs, with 29 residences planned. Thirteen homes were completed between 2003 and 2006, in Kalumburu, Balgo, and Warburton. In 2007, 13 additional homes were provided by GROH at Djarindjin, Bidadanga, Warakurna and Warmun. Three further homes at Jigalong were under construction mid-2007.<sup>1432</sup> The continuing outworking of recommendations from the Gordon Report saw 23 GROH homes

<sup>1424</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.24

<sup>1425</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.64

<sup>1426</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.47

<sup>1427</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.3

<sup>1428</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

<sup>1429</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.47&65-66, quote form p.66

<sup>1430</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.75,83,90

<sup>1431</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, p.91

<sup>1432</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

constructed in Halls Creek in 2008-09, part of the Better Life Project for the town. Ten public housing rental homes were also constructed.<sup>1433</sup> The Halls Creek project was a major initiative over several years.<sup>1434</sup>

Provision of additional GEHA, later GROH, accommodation for non-Aboriginal government employees raised issues of racism in the housing standards provided. GEHA/GROH houses were of a higher standard than the government homes provided to Aboriginal residents, with the Housing Authority accused of re-enforcing colonial attitudes, offending local residents



GROH housing, Kimberley, 2007

*Housing Authority, Annual Report, 2007 p.38*

and causing embarrassment for the government officers assigned to the higher standard homes. The ad hoc development of many remote communities, with housing styles and standards varying over many years, contributed to the gap between standards of existing Aboriginal homes and new GEHA/GROH homes. GEHA/GROH remained committed to providing equal standard housing for all government workers across the State and was not responsible for the standards of neighbouring Aboriginal housing, although the agency was very aware that even with community consultation before building any homes, new GEHA/GROH dwellings in remote communities could cause tensions.<sup>1435</sup>

With the end of GEHA, major stakeholders in government employee housing were no longer able to participate through membership on a Board. Instead, GROH management met regularly with major client agencies and the three main relevant unions to ensure stakeholders were still involved in planning for employee housing. GROH managed 4,560 housing units in its first year, of which 2,812 were owned and the remainder rented from private owners.<sup>1436</sup> Railways continued to remain outside GROH. Only one of the State's four public universities listed with GROH (Curtin), and then only for its Kalgoorlie campus.<sup>1437</sup>

As Pilbara mining boomed, GROH was called on to provide additional housing and to upgrade existing stocks. In 2006-07, \$3million of the \$4.8million spent by GROH on refurbishments was expended in the Pilbara. Other areas of strong regional growth were the Kimberley, Midwest and Esperance areas. The State government approved a \$60million loan to enable GROH to construct 161 homes over three years to meet demand in these areas, and 58 new homes were commenced in 2006-07, along with 25 purchased and 34 completed.<sup>1438</sup> Housing costs escalated so rapidly that another \$95.2 million was granted for regional housing the following year to keep up with the three-year plan.<sup>1439</sup>

The Property Asset Clearing House was established in 2006 to allow government departments to acquire properties that had become surplus to other department's requirements. In 2008-09, the Housing Authority acquired a former police station site in Newman, a triplex site in Kalbarri, a single residential site in Kalgoorlie and the former Manjimup primary school site. The Newman police station site was immediately redeveloped as 12 two-storey units for GROH.<sup>1440</sup>

<sup>1433</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2009*

<sup>1434</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2010*

<sup>1435</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA, 2007*, pp.55-59

<sup>1436</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1437</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA, 2007*, pp.156-67

<sup>1438</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1439</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2008*

<sup>1440</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2009*

By June 2010, 331 homes had been commenced and 144 completed under Royalties for Regions funding (see *Section 19*) for government employee housing. Around half the total homes were constructed in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions. In addition to the general need, a new West Kimberley Regional Prison at



GROH housing, Kimberley, 2007

*Housing Authority, Annual Report, 2007 p.39*

Derby was under construction and the Authority was planning additional GROH homes in response.<sup>1441</sup> By June 2013, 80 new homes had been built to house Derby workers, with another 66 leased, more than double the original anticipated need.<sup>1442</sup>

By June 2011, GROH managed 5,503 units of housing, of which it owned 57% and leased the remainder. Royalties for Regions funds were allowing for significant increases in GROH construction, to meet increasing demand as regional economies boomed. As

an initiative to attract and retain high level government employees to regional areas, GROH began investigating purchase of 'high amenity lifestyle' residences, beginning at Caprice Gardens Geraldton, Pelago West Karratha, and Captains by the Bay Broome.<sup>1443</sup>

The continuing pressure on housing in the north of the State as mining activity remained strong brought increased government funding to provide housing assistance. In addition to GROH's regular program, Royalties for Regions funds were released for housing at South Hedland (almost 400 homes) and Karratha (over 150 homes), with development planned to house a combination of GROH and private rental homes, and homes for purchase under shared equity schemes.<sup>1444</sup>

By mid-2013, over half of the Royalties for Regions-funded homes constructed by GROH had been built in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions.<sup>1445</sup>

In 2014, the 51 government agencies for which GROH provides housing are:<sup>1446</sup>

Agriculture WA	Forest Products Commission
C.Y. O'Connor Institute	Gascoyne Development Commission
Dental Health Services	Goldfields Esperance Development Commission
Department for Planning	Great Southern Mental Health Service
Department of Commerce (ex Worksafe)	Health Department: East Pilbara
Department of Commerce (Kalgoorlie)	Health Department: West Kimberley
Department of Environment Regulation	Health Department: West Pilbara
Department of Lands	Kimberley Development Commission

<sup>1441</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2010*

<sup>1442</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1443</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1444</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2012*

<sup>1445</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1446</sup> Brett Hockley, A/Manager Regional Coordination, Housing Programs, DOH, email to Clare Menck, 26 June 2014.

Note: This list is as provided by DOH. It does not reflect some departmental changes, such as the name change of Department of 'Indigenous' Affairs to 'Aboriginal' in 2013 and the split of Treasury and Finance into two separate departments in 2011.

Department of Sport and Recreation	Kimberley Mental Health and Drug
Department for Communities	Kimberley Population Health Unit
Department for Regional Development	Kimberley Training Institute
Department of Attorney General	Kununurra Health Service
Department for Child Protection and Family Support	Legal Aid Commission
Department of Corrective Services	Mid-West Development Commission
Department of Education	Museum Western Australia
Department of Fisheries	Pathwest
Department of Housing	Pilbara Development Commission
Department of Indigenous Affairs	Pilbara Institute
Department of Mines and Petroleum	Vocational Training & Education Centre WA
Department of Parks and Wildlife	WA Country Health
Department of Transport	WA Police
Department of Treasury & Finance	WA Country Health Service - Great Southern
Department of Water	WA Country Health Service -Midwest
Disabilities Services Commission	Water Corporation
Durack Institute of Technology	Wheatbelt Development Commission
Fire & Emergency Services Authority	

In 2014, the highest users of GROH accommodation are (in order) the Departments of Education, Police, Corrective Services and Child Protection.<sup>1447</sup>

The two main government agencies that continue to provide regional officer housing outside of GROH are Main Roads Western Australia and the Western Australian Country Health Services (WACHS). In 2014, WACHS provides around 1,000 housing units across the State, while Main Roads has a smaller portfolio of around 50 units. However, GROH housing for some health workers is provided through other health-related agencies. GROH also allows WACHS to use surplus GROH housing when they are able.<sup>1448</sup>

Housing is also provided for employees of 43 non-government organisations, as follows:<sup>1449</sup>

Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia	Ngarliyardu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation
Bloodwood Tree Association Inc	Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation
Broome C.i.r.c.l.e. Inc	Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Services
Burdekin Youth In Action	Pilbara and Kimberley Care inc
Clontarf Foundation	Pilbara Community Legal Service
Drug Arm (WA) inc	Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Co

<sup>1447</sup> Tony Mastrangelo, Client Agency Manager – Worker Housing, Housing Programs, DOH, email to Beth Ferialdi, DOH, 27 June 2014

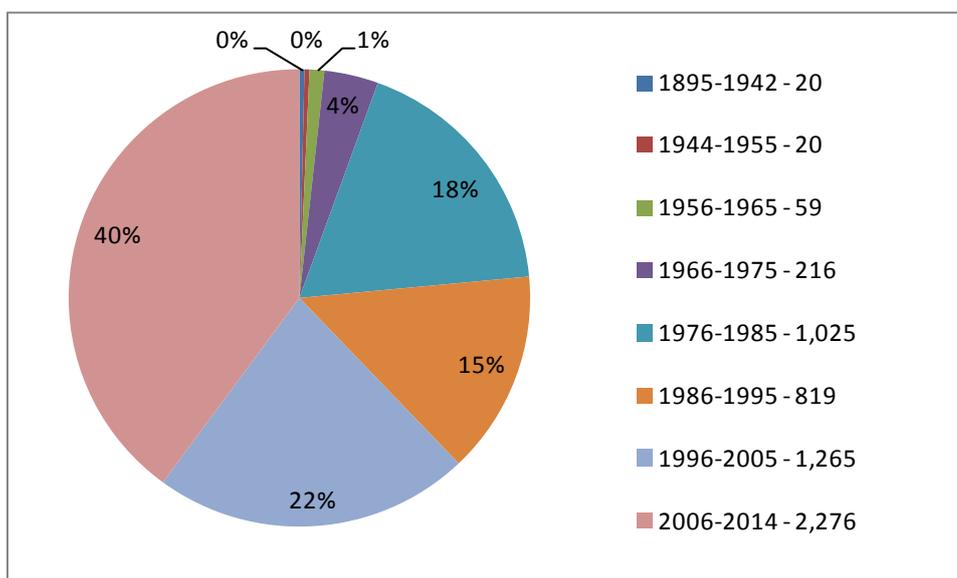
<sup>1448</sup> Brett Hockley, email to Clare Menck, 26 June 2014; Tony Mastrangelo, DOH, email to Beth Ferialdi, DOH, 26 June 2014

<sup>1449</sup> Brett Hockley, email to Clare Menck, 26 June 2014

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corp                | Relationship Australia WA Inc           |
| Empowering Peoples In The Community (EPIC) | Rose Nowers Early Learning Centre Inc   |
| Jungarni Jutiya Indigenous Corporation     | Shire Of Ashburton                      |
| Karratha Family Centre                     | Small Business Centre East Pilbara      |
| KI Group - KI Equipment Hire               | Southern Cross Care (WA) inc            |
| Kimberley Community Legal Service          | Swan Districts Football Club NG         |
| Kimberley Group Training                   | The Salvation Army (WA) Property Trust  |
| Kimberley Individual & Family Support      | Treloar Childcare Centre                |
| KinWay /Anglicare WA                       | Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language |
| Len Taplin Children Services               | Wirraka Maya Health Services Aboriginal |
| Life Without Barriers                      | Wunan Foundation                        |
| Lifestyle Solutions                        | Yaandina Family Centre                  |
| Marnja Jarndu Women’s Domestic Violence S  | Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation           |
| Mawarnkarra Health Service                 | Youth Involvement Council               |
| Mowanjum Artists Spirit Of The Wandjina    | Yura Yungi Aboriginal Medical Service   |
| Ngaringga Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation    |   |

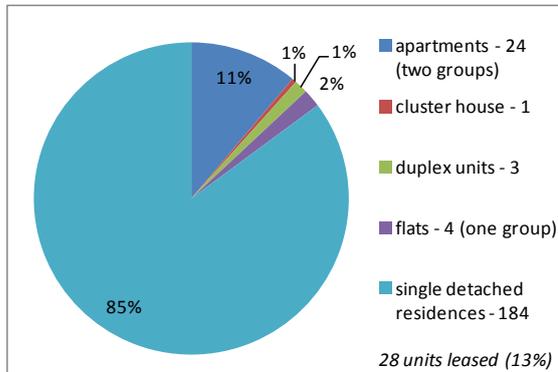
*Places that remain in 2014:*

In 2014, DOH lists 5,700 housing units as GROH properties. This includes 2,402 units (42%) that are leased from either individuals or organisations. The 5,700 units divide chronologically as follows:

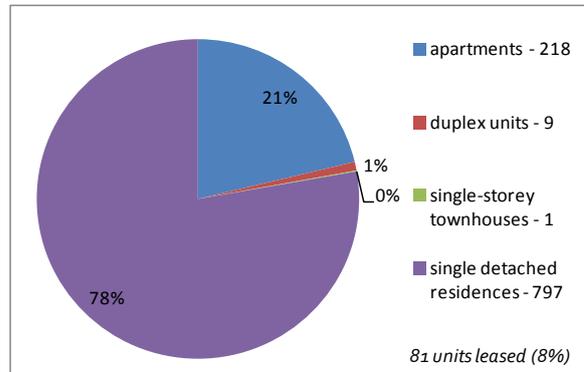


Of the houses dated prior to 1966, only four are leased and all are single detached residences except six cluster homes and two duplex units. Residences from later periods divide as follows:

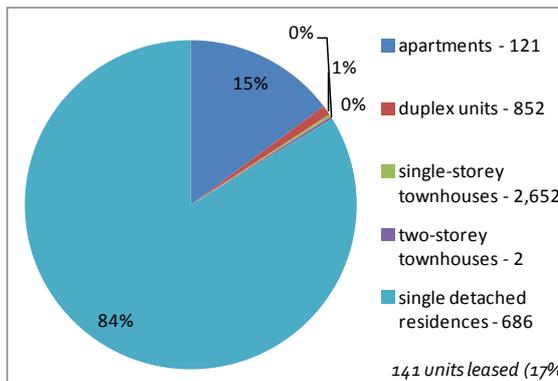
1966-1975



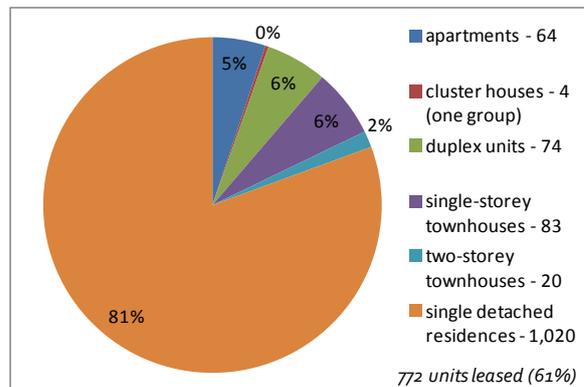
1976-1985



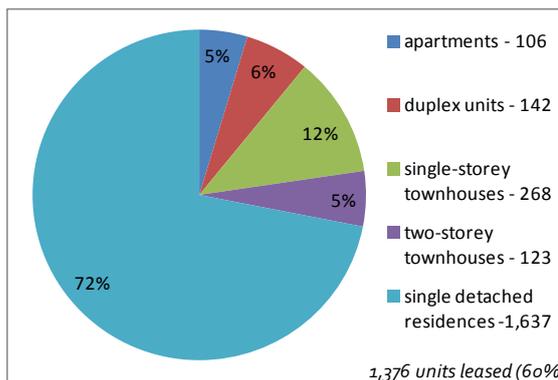
1986-1995



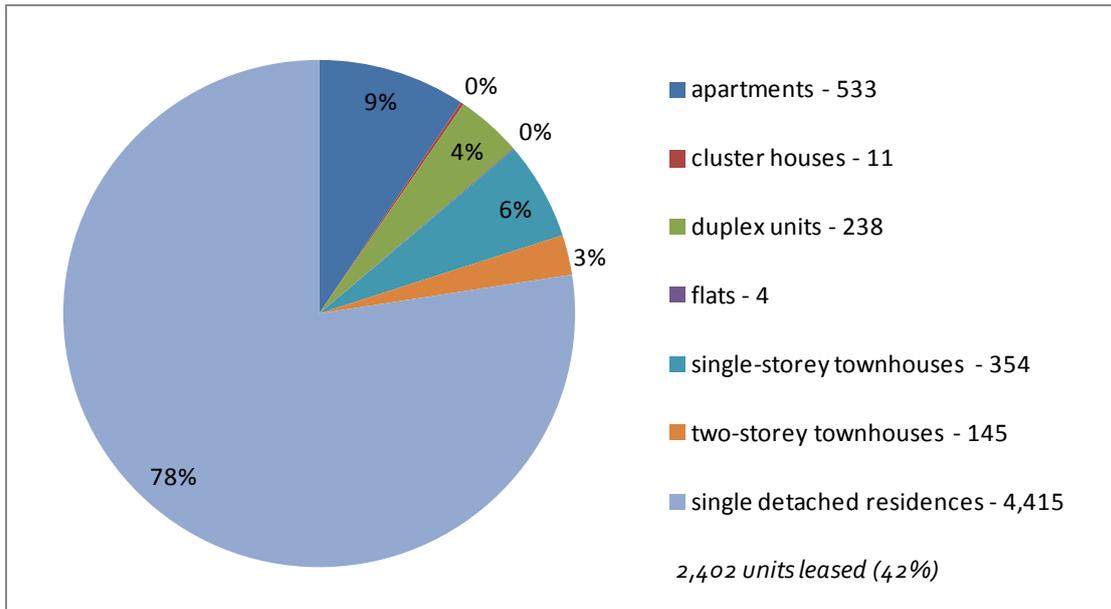
1996-2005



2006-2014

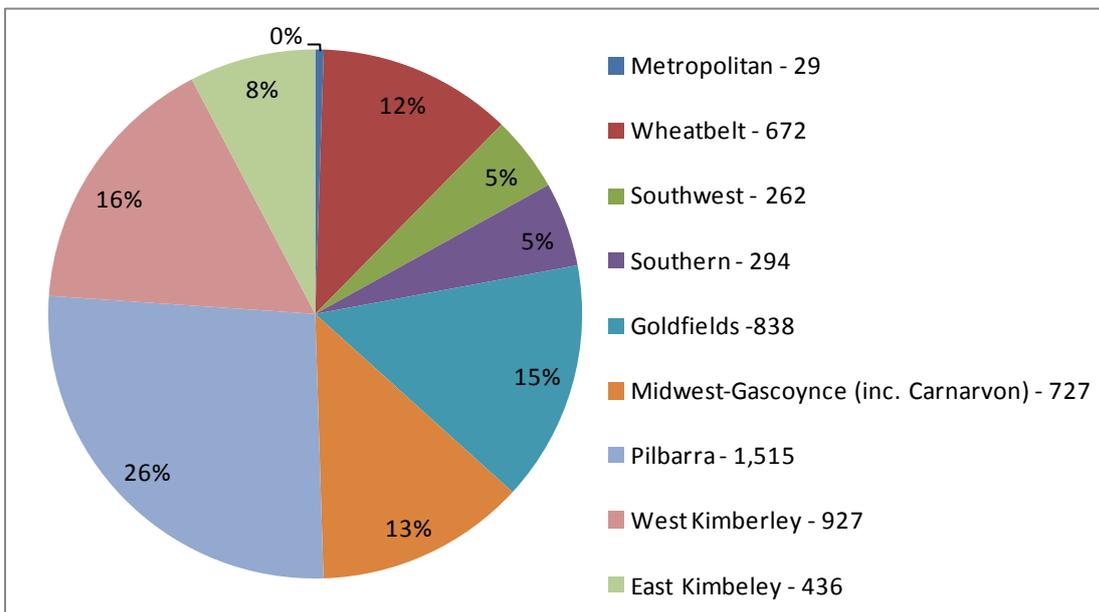


Overall, GROH housing divides as:



Of all GROH residences listed with DOH, 77.5% are single detached houses (compared with only 39% of DOH's total housing stock). 87% of leased residences are single detached houses; 47.5% of GROH single detached residences are leased.

GROH residences divide by region as:



The greatest concentration of GROH housing is in the Pilbara, which accounts for 26.5% of GROH residences. 'Northwest' housing more broadly, including Pilbara and Kimberley, as well as Carnarvon branch (234 units), accounts for 54.5% of GROH housing.

For GROH residences built in response to the Gordon Inquiry see [Section 21.5](#).

## 18.1 CASE STUDY: WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS (1880S-2000S)

Western Australian Government Railways Commission (WAGR) was one of the largest providers of government housing through the twentieth century. As railway housing is among the more documented government employee housing, a closer look at WAGR housing provides a case study reflecting trends in government housing across many agencies.<sup>1450</sup>

Plans to build new railway facilities, in both Metropolitan and country areas, generally included workers' accommodation. Housing was provided for the Station Master and also for waged workers, with the earliest station masters' housing of the 1880s being within the station building. Railway employees included the station staff, 'permanent way men' or 'trackmen' who maintained the track, 'trainmen' who operated the trains themselves, workers at depots and workshops, and administrative staff. All required housing, both temporary accommodation when working shifts away from home, and permanent housing at their home stations.

By 1900, the department had a total of 5,818 staff. By 1912, after a little more than 30 years of government railway operations, WAGR owned around 290 departmental houses, in addition to barracks accommodation, indicating a good portion of the railways workforce were required to find their own accommodation. By this stage, WAGR policy was for employees to find their own housing in the Metropolitan area and larger regional centres. By 1919, WAGR employed over 7,000 men and housing supply was a critical issue. In 1937, WAGR had on its books 159 station master's houses, 108 other Perth houses, 555 other country houses, 47 'bush huts' and numerous camps, cabins and barracks.

Senior officers were generally housed in individually designed comfortable homes, well into the twentieth century. For example, the District Superintendent's house in Kalgoorlie, constructed c.1898, was a spacious eight-room house with large wrap-around verandahs. A Station Master, the lowest ranked salaried officer, was provided a four or five room house while a standard platelayer's cottage comprised only two main rooms. A standard three-room bungalow design for waged workers was introduced in the 1920s, and standard 'mill house' plans were also used in the interwar years (generally four rooms). Houses for station masters and waged workers were often located in the rail reserve. Standard plan railway workers' barracks from around 1904 to the 1970s consisted of portable cabins under a large second roof, and were designed to be easily relocatable as labour needs varied. More substantial barracks were designed and built from the 1950s.

From the early 1920s, WAGR also lobbied the Workers' Homes Board to provide housing assistance for railway workers, contending that worker housing was a WHB rather than WAGR responsibility. (This was quite a claim, given that WHB provided only home purchase schemes, not suited to temporary or oft-relocated workers). The argument was put again in the post-war period, when the SHC began providing rental homes and a deficit of 4,000 WAGR houses was identified. Government funding was provided and

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<sup>1450</sup> Sauman & Gray, 'Merredin Railway Housing Precinct: Conservation Management Plan', 2009, pp.8-15; HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register Documentation for P15750 *Railway Housing Precinct, Merredin*, November 2004; HCWA (Irene Sauman), Below Threshold Documentation for P15862 *Station Master's House, Brunswick Junction*, December 2002; HCWA (Irene Sauman), Register Documentation for P12414 *Railway Barracks, Wongan Hills*, October 2003; HCWA (Robin Chinnery), Register Documentation for P00250 *Bridgetown Trainmen's Barracks*, January 2012; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation for P12462 *Railway Houses Ganzer Street*, January 2004; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation for P01280 *District Superintendent's House (fmr)*, February 2004; HCWA (Irene Sauman) Register Documentation for P15865 *Wittenoom Street Railway Houses*, March 2004

Note: this footnote relates to the entire WAGR housing section

a decade of concerted WAGR housing construction ensued. Woodworking facilities at Midland Railway Workshops were expanded to enable pre-fabrication of houses for railway employees. Two standard plans were used, for a four-room ('Banksiadale') and five-room ('Improved Mill Type') cottage, with some two-room cottages in remote areas erected as an emergency measure. Barracks were also expanded and improved. In the early 1950s, up to 500 pre-cut timber 'Simms-Cooke' three-room houses were imported from Britain, despite the Railway Officers Union assessing them as unsuitable, and another design was provided by the Henry Martin Company. Simms-Cooke homes were designed to be extendable.

Significant rail towns soon included a substantial rail housing presence. For example, at Merredin in the mid-1960s there were 102 railway houses and provision in barracks and singlemen's quarters for nearly another 100 men. Even a smaller rail centre such as Brunswick Junction had around 25 railway houses by the 1950s as well as barracks. By the end of the twentieth century, most WAGR housing had been erected in the post-war period. Railway housing peaked around 1965, when WAGR owned 1,860 housing units. As lines began to close from the 1960s, and engines moved from steam to diesel, railway employee numbers reduced and railway housing began to be disposed of.

In 1972, WAGR undertook a review of its housing in response to the work of GEHA, and found it to be below the standard of other government departments. Of 985 houses owned at the time, around half were identified for upgrading, with the remainder to be demolished or sold. Around 200 were to be replaced with better quality homes, with transportable units used in smaller rail centres with less certain futures. WAGR, later rebranded as Westrail, continued to remain outside of GEHA. Many of its houses, even those originally built for station masters and therefore the more substantial amongst the housing stock, remained below GEHA standards despite the upgrading program and many tenants making their own improvements. By the twenty-first century some railway homes still retained original Metters stoves and concrete baths. The department decided to cease altogether providing employee housing and began disposing of all its remaining residences, with many homes sold to tenants. Westrail, renamed WAGRC again in 2000 and superseded by the Public Transport Authority in 2003, never came under the auspices of GEHA/GROH.<sup>1451</sup>

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<sup>1451</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.156-67

## 19 COUNTRY HOUSING (1940S-2014)

The State Housing Commission considered 'country' to refer to all regions outside the Perth Metropolitan area, excluding those in the Northwest but including the Eastern Goldfields. 'Northwest' appears to have included the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions. See [Section 20](#).

During the years of the Workers' Homes Board, government housing policy actively supported and encouraged rural development, especially through prioritisation of country applications after World War One and provision of homes in the 1920s for the Group Settlement Scheme. From the mid-1930s, focus turned to the Metropolitan area, with the Board deciding not to build new homes in many country areas, as those they already owned struggled to find tenants or buyers. *For more detail about the pre-war years see [Section 8](#) and [Section 9](#).*

By the mid-1950s, despite successive governments advocating decentralisation, Western Australia's population was still disproportionately centred in the Perth Metropolitan area. In particular, around 75% of the State's industrial workforce lived in this area, with many of the remainder located in a handful of regional centres such as Albany, Collie, Bunbury and Geraldton. Where other areas were growing they had often been significantly assisted by the SHC's Country Housing branch (established 1950).<sup>1452</sup>

Following the war, country houses were predominantly supplied to support industries that would address the building materials shortage. This is discussed in [Section 11.5](#) and accounts for post-war government housing in communities such as Wittenoom, Boyup Brook, Wundowie, Collie, Tone River, Palgarup, Donnelly River, Nannup, Denmark, Walpole, Northcliffe and Manjimup. The largest supply of homes to support the industry of a country town was the provision of 644 homes for Collie as the coal mine expanded. This was greater than the number of homes built in the same period (1945-57) at Albany (445) or Geraldton (341) and only slightly less than the 663 at Bunbury, despite these three being much larger centres with substantial ports.<sup>1453</sup>

Country housing was also established to keep pace with the expanding agricultural areas of the State, especially as the urgent need to house industrial workers eased. Of the approximately 800 homes built in the Wheatbelt between 1945 and 1957, more than half were in Northam (339) and Merredin (110) combined.<sup>1454</sup>

Across all its housing schemes, the SHC constructed around one quarter of its homes in country areas between 1944 and 1956. However, this number is skewed by large groups that would now be considered



SHC homes, Wilson Street Bunbury, 1949  
*The West Australian, Friday 1 July 1949 p.9*

Metropolitan being included in country figures, especially Kwinana (798 homes) and Hamilton Hill (261). If these two areas are considered Metropolitan, the percentage of country homes drops to 19.5%. Most of the SHC's country homes were built under the Commonwealth-State Rental Scheme (65.5%), with 20% State Housing Act

<sup>1452</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.111-13

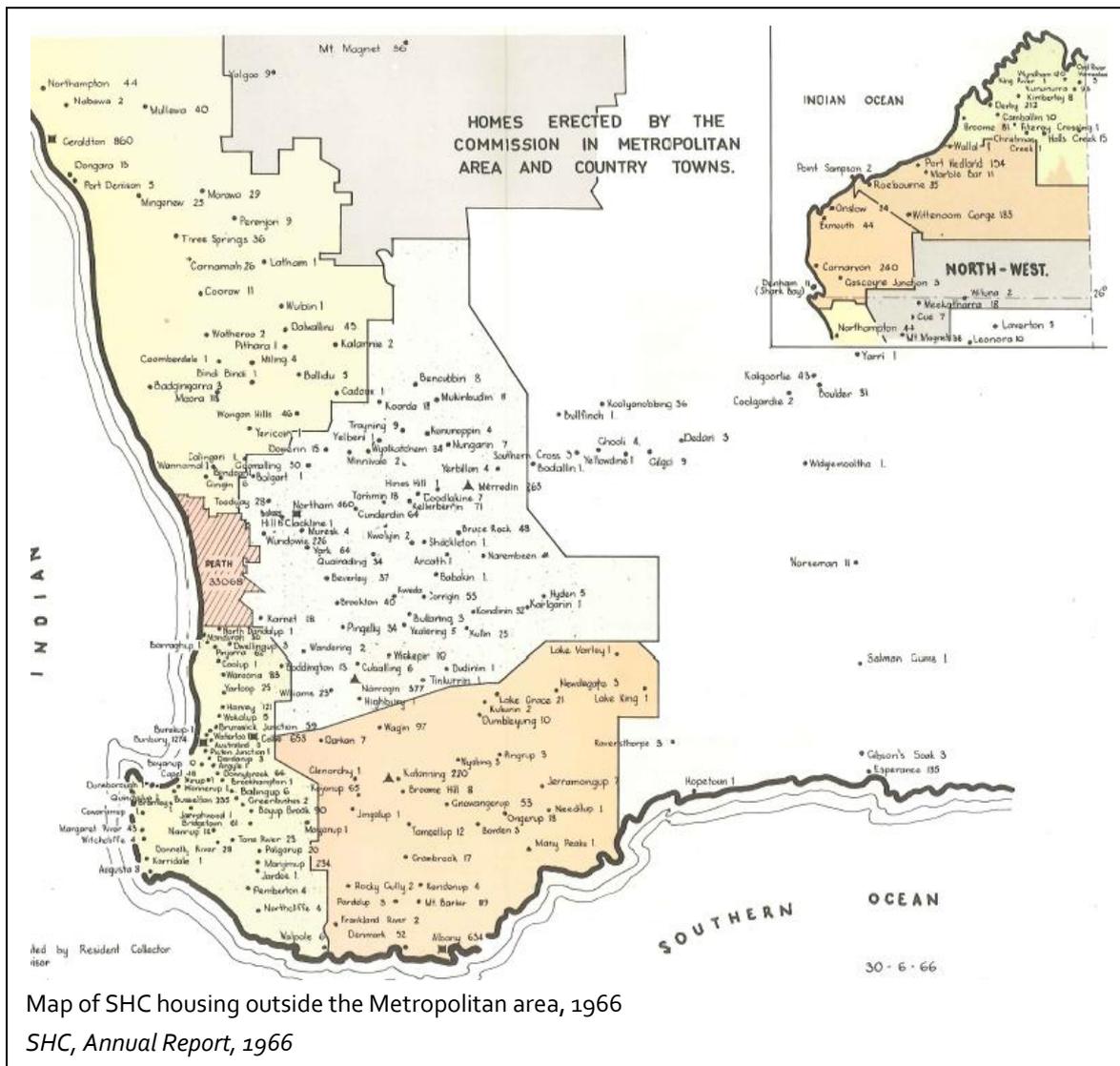
<sup>1453</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>1454</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

Homes, 14% War Service Homes and a handful of McNess and Evictee homes. By comparison the overall rates of construction were 52% Commonwealth-State Rental Scheme, 33.5% War Service Homes, 10.5% State Housing Act, 3% Kwinana homes for BP and 1% McNess and Evictee homes, indicating that War Service Homes were particularly under-represented in country areas.<sup>1455</sup>

The SHC also provided housing in country areas to support other government departments, especially after the Government Employees' Housing Scheme was established in 1958, and through the Government Employees Housing Authority from 1964. Government employee housing accounted for a significant proportion of the SHC's country housing stock. For example, in June 1965, nearly 10% of the SHC's 8,961 country residences were for government employee housing. Ten years later, after a decade of GEHA operations, country housing numbers had increased to 11,117 units, but the percentage of government employee housing remained about the same.<sup>1456</sup> See [Section 18](#).

As Perth grew, the government became concerned to decentralise the population. Providing government employee housing in regional areas contributed to decentralisation. From 1963-64, the Commission also began building standard SHC homes in small country towns to aid this process.<sup>1457</sup>



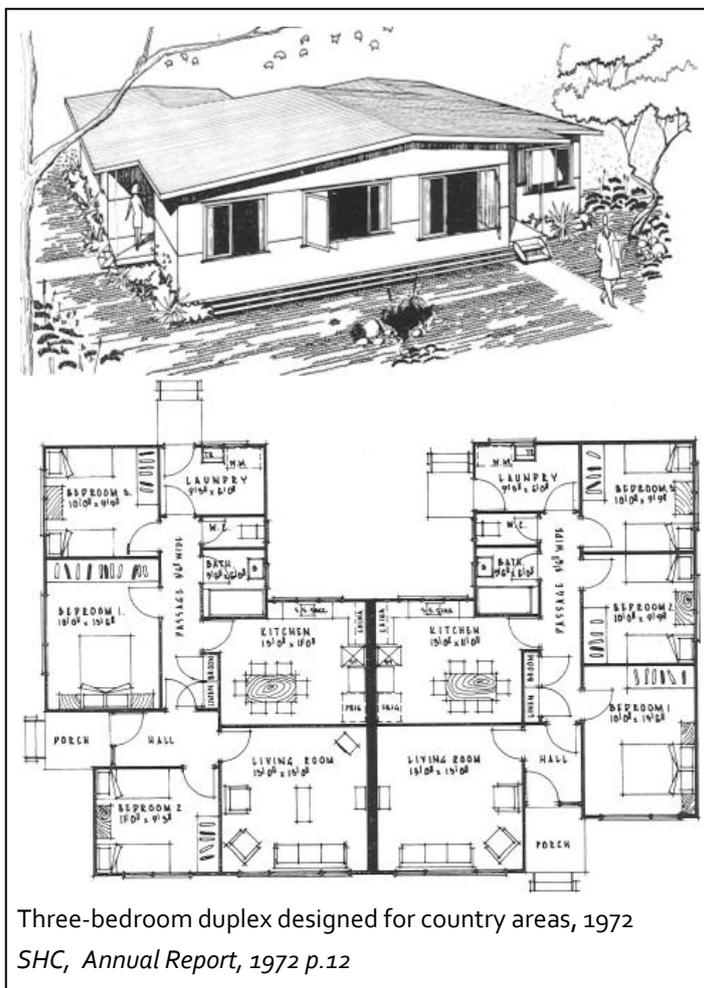
<sup>1455</sup> SHC, Annual Reports, 1956

<sup>1456</sup> SHC, Annual Reports, 1965 and 1975

<sup>1457</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1964

Transportable units were used in remote areas from the mid-1960s into the early 1970s, but these were a small portion of the country homes erected. In 1969-70, SHC constructed 453 homes in country areas, of which nine were transportable dwellings.<sup>1458</sup>

The percentage of Western Australia's population living outside the Metropolitan area declined steadily through the twentieth century, particularly from the 1930s onwards. Total rural population number changes little from mid-century, but the Metropolitan area expanded dramatically. By the time the State population reached one million, around 1970, approximately 70% of residents lived in the Metropolitan



Three-bedroom duplex designed for country areas, 1972  
SHC, *Annual Report*, 1972 p.12

area.<sup>1459</sup> However, the SHC had provided only 20% of its houses since World War Two in country areas by 1970, which even when added to 4% in the Northwest indicates a bias towards Metropolitan housing.<sup>1460</sup>

From 1970, standard designs for country SHC homes were improved with hot water systems, replacement of fireplaces with modern heaters, vinyl-covered plywood floors for wet areas (rather than concrete on timber subfloors), and electric power points in all bedrooms. These changes indicate both movement in acceptable housing standards in general and a desire to retain rural residents in a time of economic downturn for country areas.<sup>1461</sup>

Additional housing was planned for Katanning in 1974 to accommodate workers employed by Southern Meat Packers.<sup>1462</sup>

In 1975, the Henderson Report into poverty in Australia found high levels

of rural poverty, especially among rural labourers. Rural unemployment was much higher than in urban areas, with around 50% of the unemployed outside of Metropolitan areas nationally while only 30% of the workforce was in these regions. Much rural employment was also seasonal and therefore intermittent, making it hard for these workers to maintain housing payments. However, the housing situation or needs of the rural poor were not discussed in the report, another indication that the housing needs of low-income country Australians were often off the radar for city-based government policy-makers.<sup>1463</sup>

<sup>1458</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1970

<sup>1459</sup> Henstridge, John, 'The People of Perth: Past, Present and Future', Data Analysis Australia presentation for UDIA Pemberton, 2003, <http://www.daa.com.au/fileadmin/presentations/udia1-perth-population.pdf> accessed 27 June 2014

<sup>1460</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1971

<sup>1461</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.119-20

<sup>1462</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1974

<sup>1463</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.178-95

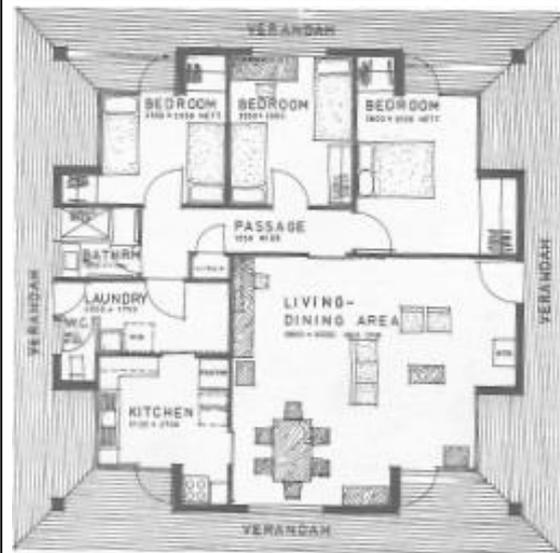
By mid-1976, SCH had built 11,455 housing units in country areas since 1944. The majority of these (68%) were rental properties, while 13% were built under various home purchase schemes, 10.5% were government employees housing (including Shire officers), 6% were Aboriginal housing and 1.5% were to support specific industries.<sup>1464</sup>

New designs more suitable to Wheatbelt housing were developed in the mid-1970s, with the first six prototype homes erected at Merredin in 1976.<sup>1465</sup>

In 1976, the Rural Housing Authority was formed to provide housing finance for farmers and rural employers, enabled by the *Rural Housing Assistance Act 1976*. The RHA operated for 22 years and assisted nearly 600 families, until superseded by the Country Housing Authority in 1998.<sup>1466</sup>

A booklet was produced in 1977 with 40 designs for farm houses, along with estimated costs. The designs were the result of a State-wide competition.<sup>1467</sup> Using competitions to expand SHC designs was a very cost-effective measure. In addition to architects, the judging panel included a farmer and a farmer's wife, indicating a growing attention to the practical needs of the Commission's client base.<sup>1468</sup> These designs were reviewed by residents in 1977-78. Originally designed 'to reflect regional influences' such as 'climate, geography and history', the houses were tested for liveability and several changes were found to be desirable.<sup>1469</sup>

Through the 1990s, Homeswest attempted to ensure roughly 30% of its building program was in country areas.<sup>1470</sup> It is not clear whether this target was met. Existing rental stocks in country areas were significantly lower than 30% (eg. 21.6% in 1994), so the target aimed to increase Homeswest's country presence. In the late 1980s, only around 14% of Homeswest's rental building program had been in country areas.<sup>1471</sup>



Prototype country housing, Merredin, 1976  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1976 p.17*

<sup>1464</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1465</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1466</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2003*

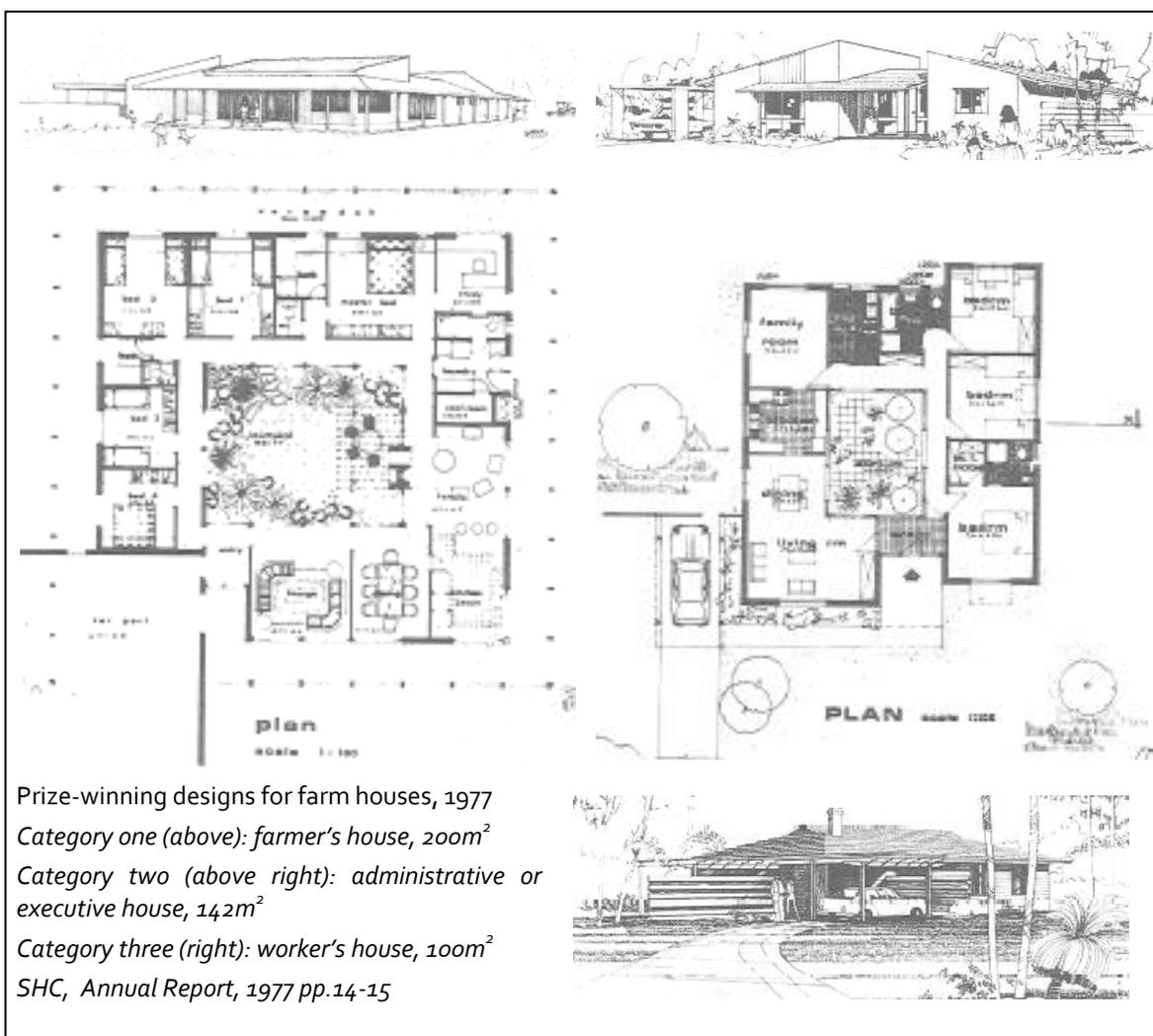
<sup>1467</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>1468</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.125

<sup>1469</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*, quote from p.28

<sup>1470</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1998*

<sup>1471</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1988 and 1994*



The *Country Housing Act 1998* came into effect from 1 July 1998, creating the Country Housing Authority (CHA). The Act repealed the 1976 *Rural Housing Assistance Act* and the 1973 *Industrial and Commercial Employees Act*.<sup>1472</sup> The CHA was 'to facilitate comprehensive housing assistance for rural families, and more effectively contribute to the development of country communities by focussing on housing issues and providing incentives to encourage development of housing'.<sup>1473</sup> It aimed to assist businesses and individuals to remain in rural areas, including retired farmers and rural employers. It also provided emergency concession housing loans in response to natural disasters, such as cyclones, of which there were two in its first year of operation. The Authority provided housing assistance through discounted loans to local governments and service providers for the provision of housing and in its first year provided 27 housing units in this way. It was particularly focussed on the needs of farmers, pastoralists and related business and service providers. Obtaining reasonable finance for housing loans had been identified as especially difficult in rural areas, as many commercial lenders would not invest in the country.<sup>1474</sup>

Recognising that country housing standards were not always equivalent to those available in the city, and as such it could be difficult to attract key employees to rural areas, the CHA tackled the issue of rural housing standards in its loan incentives.<sup>1475</sup>

<sup>1472</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2003

<sup>1473</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 1999, p.3

<sup>1474</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 1999

<sup>1475</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2000

In country towns, Homeswest slowly worked at replacing its ageing housing stock, with 32 replacement new homes commenced in 1999-2000.<sup>1476</sup> A great deal of the original public housing in country areas was built for families, and the replacement program allowed more homes to be provided for seniors or other one- and two-person households.<sup>1477</sup>

The *Regional Forest Agreement* in 2000 resulted in many Southwest timber mills closing and mill workers relocating to other towns. The Ministry of Housing, through its various programs, provided assistance to these workers, including priority rentals, bond assistance, and supported home ownership packages.<sup>1478</sup>

Cyclone Steve in March 2000 severely damaged Carnarvon and caused flooding through much of inland Western Australia. The CHA developed emergency housing finance packages in response, taking into account the disruption to cash flow that damaged businesses would experience.<sup>1479</sup>

From 2000-01, the CHA established a small grants program in addition to its growing loans program. Grants were made to local authorities to promote rural development through provision of rural housing.<sup>1480</sup> However, the CHA did not arrange the actual building or have ownership of the houses.<sup>1481</sup>

The CHA recognised that there was a considerable financial risk involved in lending to areas which were 'vulnerable to seasonal factors such as drought, inhospitable living conditions and fluctuating commodity prices'. As such, the Authority took a flexible and personalised approach in its housing loans scheme, filling a niche market where commercial lenders were hesitant to operate.<sup>1482</sup> In many smaller communities, there was virtually no available rental housing of acceptable standard, and employers had to build housing in order to attract employees.<sup>1483</sup> The CHA did not build its own rental housing, but provided finance to locals for this purpose.

In 2004-05, a Regional Upgrade Strategy was launched by SHC, aimed at replacing 800 and refurbishing 200 regional properties. By June 2006, 98 new units and 93 refurbishments were completed.<sup>1484</sup>

Despite repeated talks of integrating the CHA into the Ministry of Housing, and later the Department of



Regional Upgrade Strategy, before and after, Collie, 2006

SHC, *Annual Report, 2006 p.41*

<sup>1476</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1477</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*

<sup>1478</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1479</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2000*

<sup>1480</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2001*

<sup>1481</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1482</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2004*, quote from p.4

<sup>1483</sup> CHA, *Annual Report, 2005*

<sup>1484</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

Housing and Works, the agency remained an independent statutory authority. In 2006, it was formally agreed not to proceed with a departmental merger.<sup>1485</sup>

The rising State population and labour shift north as the mining industry boomed by 2008 was creating challenges for rural housing such as rising house prices, construction costs and labour shortages.<sup>1486</sup>

One of the CHA's major clients over many years was the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). The RFDS utilised the CHA's affordable finance options to provide rural housing for its employees, mostly highly qualified medical professionals. Good housing was essential for encouraging these eminently employable professionals to commit to working in rural areas.<sup>1487</sup> The RFDS does not appear to have used the Department of Housing's program to provide rental accommodation for NGO workers.<sup>1488</sup>

In 2009, the delivery of CHA loans was merged with Keystart and a Keystart Country Housing Loans Centre was established. The housing loans program for rural development was discontinued, having not received government funding to sustain it since 2006.<sup>1489</sup> Subsequently the mission statement of the agency was 'to provide housing loans to WA farmers and rural businesses where finance options are limited'.<sup>1490</sup>

In September 2008, a minority Liberal government came to power in Western Australia by partnering with the Western Australian National Party after the election. Flowing from power-sharing negotiations, an extensive 'Royalties for Regions' policy was pursued that poured millions of dollars into rural and regional communities over the next four years. One beneficiary of the Royalties for Regions program was GROH, with an addition \$200million for 400 new government employees' homes across the State granted in 2008-09, to be spent by June 2012. The new homes were planned to be pre-fabricated kit homes. The first completed under the Royalties for Regions funding were 24 modular homes transported and erected at Beacon, Newman, Tammin and Tom Price in late 2009.<sup>1491</sup> The Royalties for Regions project also increased business activity in regional areas and thus also demand for government services, so the demand for GROH housing also increased.<sup>1492</sup>

Although the Department of Housing and its preceding agencies always provided some housing in country areas, from World War Two until the Royalties for Regions program this was never proportionate to the size of the rural population. As much country housing has been government employee housing, the provision of public housing was even more disproportionate. It is not clear whether this has been due to lower demand for low-income housing in country areas, Metropolitan bias in the implementation of government housing programs, or cultural reluctance for rural residents to apply for government housing assistance. It is likely all these have been factors.

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<sup>1485</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2006

<sup>1486</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1487</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2008

<sup>1488</sup> Brett Hockley, email to Clare Menck, 26 June 2014

<sup>1489</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2009

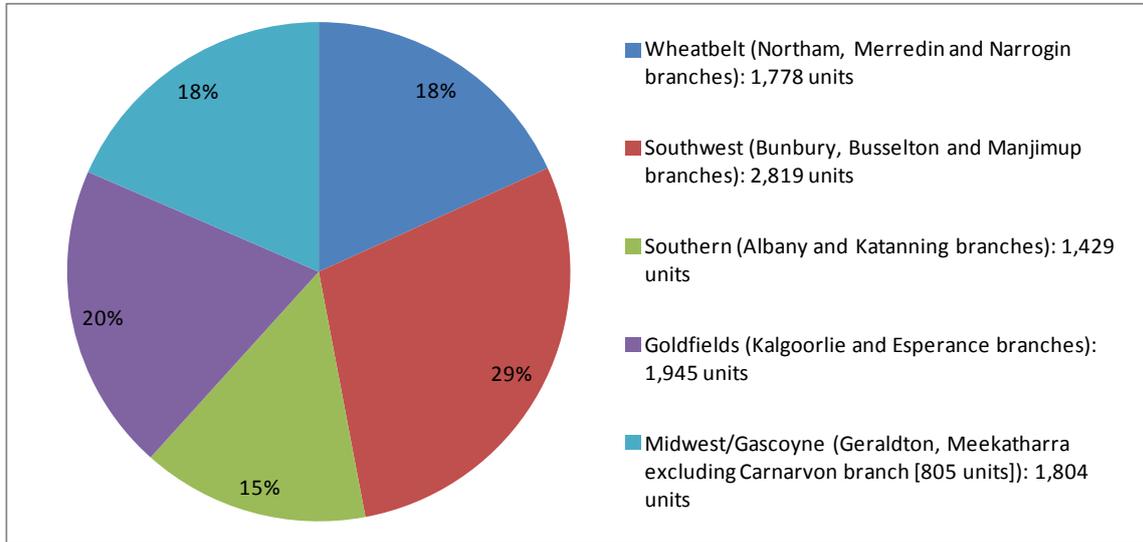
<sup>1490</sup> CHA, *Annual Report*, 2011, quote from p.15

<sup>1491</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2009

<sup>1492</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

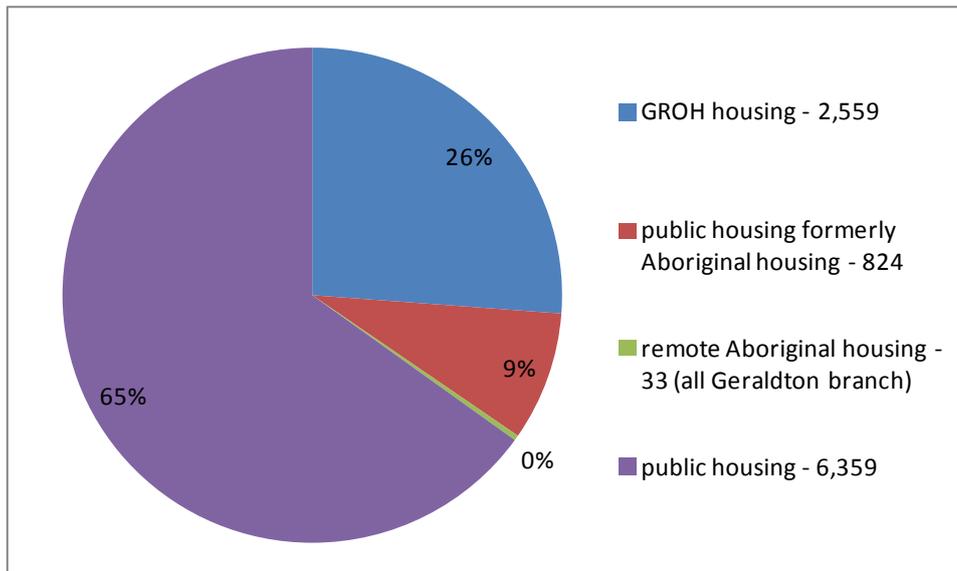
*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 9,775 housing units in 'country' areas, around 22.5% of its total housing stock, which divides as:

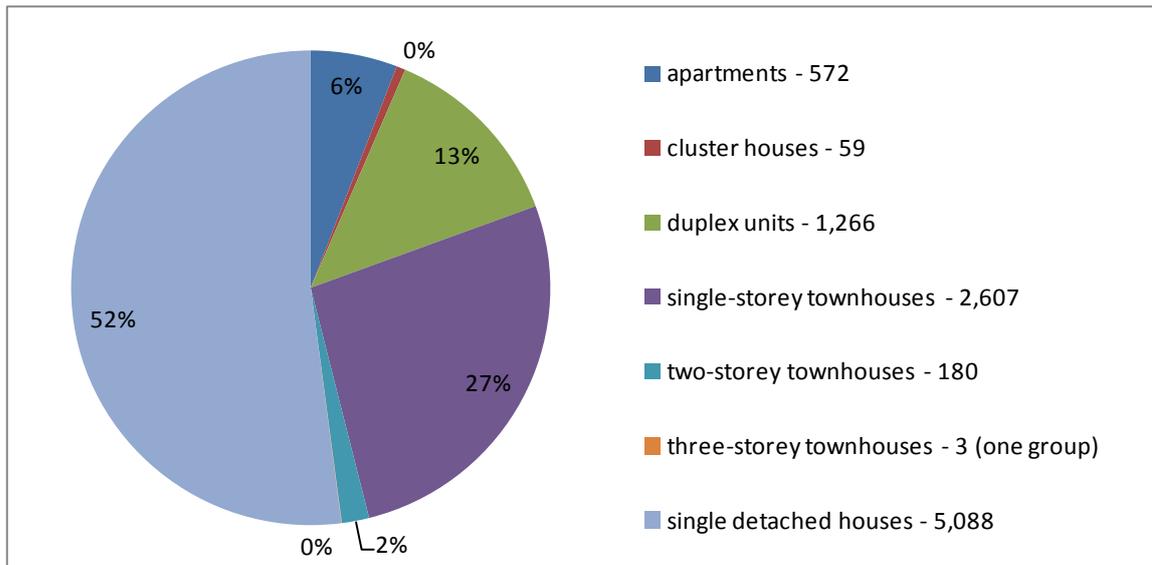


In most country regions concentrations of DOH properties in large centres dominate. Regional centres with large numbers of DOH properties are Albany (843 units, 59% of Southern region housing), Bunbury (1,043 units, including Carey Park, Withers, Eaton and Australind, 37% of Southwest housing), Busselton (631 units, 22.5% of Southwest housing), Geraldton (1,239 units, including 17 suburbs, 69% of Geraldton-Meekatharra housing) and Kalgoorlie-Boulder (1,147 units, 59% of Goldfields housing). The Wheatbelt is somewhat different, with housing stock spread across 64 towns and the largest concentrations, Northam (393 units) and Narrogin (259 units), accounting for only 37% of Wheatbelt housing between them.

Of the 9,775 country housing units:

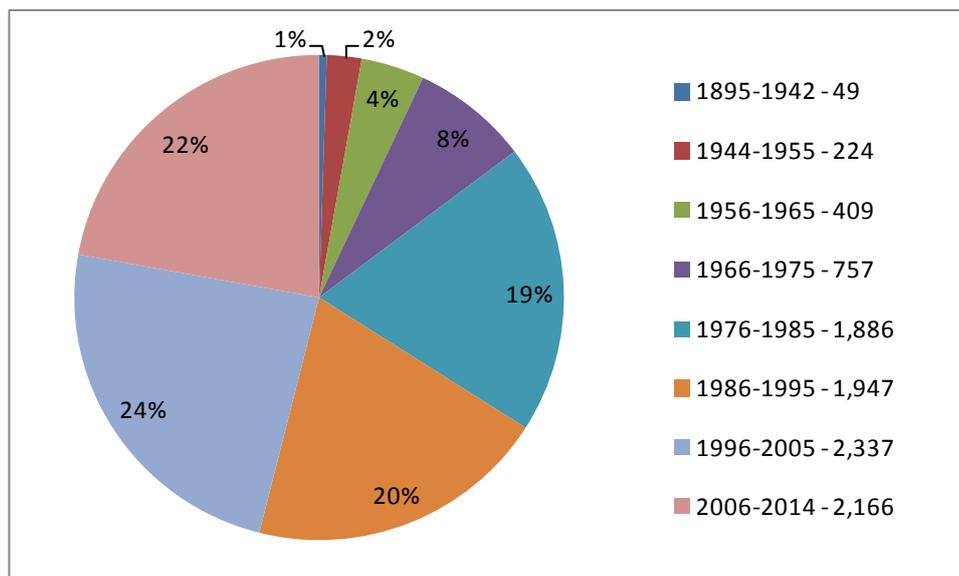


Country housing types divide as:

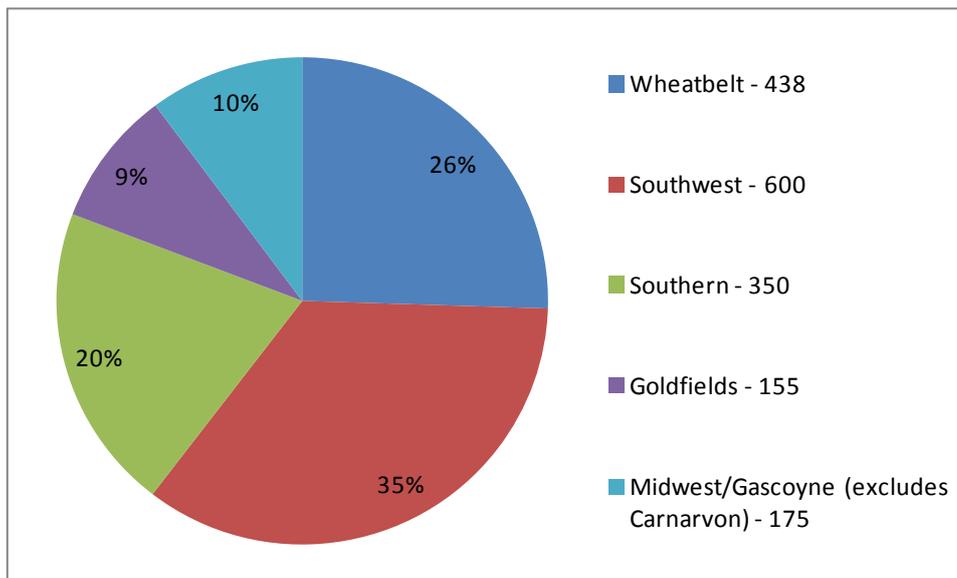


Single detached houses account for 52% of DOH's country housing, compared with only 39% of DOH's total housing stock.

Country housing divides chronologically as:



A further 1,718 country housing units are in Community Housing stock, being:



1970s Wheatbelt design prototypes at Merredin:

DOH retains four three- or four-bedroom homes in Merredin dated 1976, and another four dated 1977, which may be the prototype residences.

Katanning meat works housing:

There is no particular spike in DOH housing stocks after 1974, when housing for the meat works began to be provided. Five DOH properties date from 1974 or 1975 in Katanning.

Royalties for Regions:

DOH listings show 1,193 housing units built between 2009 and 31 May 2014, amounting to 12% of all DOH's country housing stock

## 20 NORTHWEST HOUSING (1947-2014)

The 'Northwest' in many ways has a different history to southern areas of Western Australia. Although it has been variously defined, SHC reports often categorised it as areas 'north of the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel'. The 26<sup>th</sup> parallel (26°S) runs from the SA-NT-WA border to Denham (Shark Bay), about 70km north of Meekatharra and Wiluna. Other definitions include the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions as the 'Northwest', an area whose southern boundary is defined by the Tropic of Capricorn (23°26'S) except in the west where Gascoyne areas stretch south near to 27°S. Almost all major towns of the Northwest are on the coast, including Carnarvon, Exmouth, Dampier, Karratha, Port & South Hedland, Broome, Derby and Kununurra. The largest inland towns, all in the Pilbara, are Newman, Tom Price and Paraburdoo. The Northwest remains sparsely populated, with a surviving pastoral industry, especially in the Kimberley, significant numbers of Aboriginal residents, and an economy heavily shaped by Pilbara mining, much of which now relies on a fly-in fly-out workforce from the south.

No residences were provided in the Northwest by the McNess Housing Trust in its 38 years of operation (see [Section 9.1](#)). Workers' Homes Board reports do not mention the Northwest, and it is highly unlikely that any WHB homes were erected there, as it was a big deal for the agency to expand to the Eastern Goldfields from 1936. The first SHC homes built in the Northwest were at Wittenoom, from 1947-48, followed by Carnarvon and Port Hedland from 1950, Onslow and Roebourne from 1951, Derby from 1952, Broome from 1954 and Wyndham from 1955. By mid-1956, there were 274 SHC homes in these seven towns, of which 152 were at Wittenoom. Almost all (252) were Commonwealth-State rentals, with 19 State Housing Act homes and three War Service homes. In the same period, SHC had constructed 21,600 homes across the State. Twenty-one Metropolitan suburbs in 1956 each had more SHC houses than the entire Northwest combined.<sup>1493</sup>

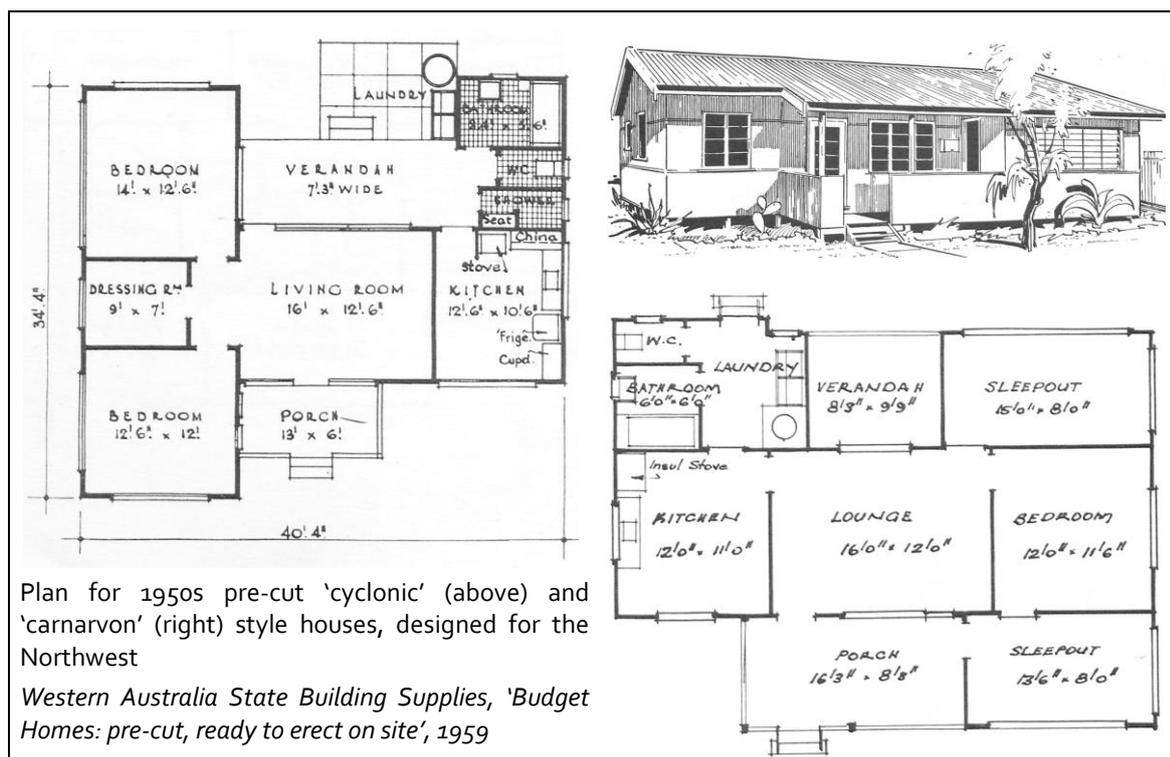


SHC residence at Derby, c.1955, using pre-cut 'cyclonic' standard plan for Northwest housing  
*William Edward Wright, SLWA collection 133227PD*

<sup>1493</sup> McNess Housing Trust, WHB & SHC Annual Reports, 1930-1969

Reports from the 1970s claimed the first SHC Northwest housing designs were drawn in 1948. Presumably this was a reference to the first houses at Wittenoom, but at the time of their construction no special design features for their northern location were noted.<sup>1494</sup>

In 1954, the Commission designed the 'North-West Cyclonic Type house', to be erected in the pre-cut labour-only manner. Seventeen were erected in Northwest ports from Carnarvon to Wyndham in the first year.<sup>1495</sup> A further 48 were built the following year, utilising two 'tropical' designs.<sup>1496</sup> The Northwest design featured 'heavy ¼ inch asbestos sheeting, termite proof concrete stumps to which the house is bolted, [and] anticyclone shutters' and proved successful at withstanding cyclones such as the 1955 storm through Roebourne.<sup>1497</sup> The 'non-cyclonic' design, also called the 'carnarvon' type, featured front and rear sleep-outs.<sup>1498</sup>



Pre-cut homes continued to be used in the Northwest after they had been discontinued elsewhere, presumably because their labour-saving features assisted in remote areas with labour shortages. The SHC reported that 305 such homes had been erected by June 1957. However, its annual tables of houses built do not reflect this number, suggesting these homes were erected for other government departments.<sup>1499</sup>

By the late 1950s, the cost of building homes in the Northwest was prohibitive. The population in the area continued to increase, and existing housing stock deteriorated, causing a greater demand for housing assistance from residents in the Northwest. Twenty-nine SHC homes were constructed in the region in 1957-58.<sup>1500</sup>

<sup>1494</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1947-50 & 1979*

<sup>1495</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*

<sup>1496</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1955*

<sup>1497</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>1498</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1960*; WA State Building Supplies, 'Budget Homes', 1959

<sup>1499</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1957*

<sup>1500</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1958*



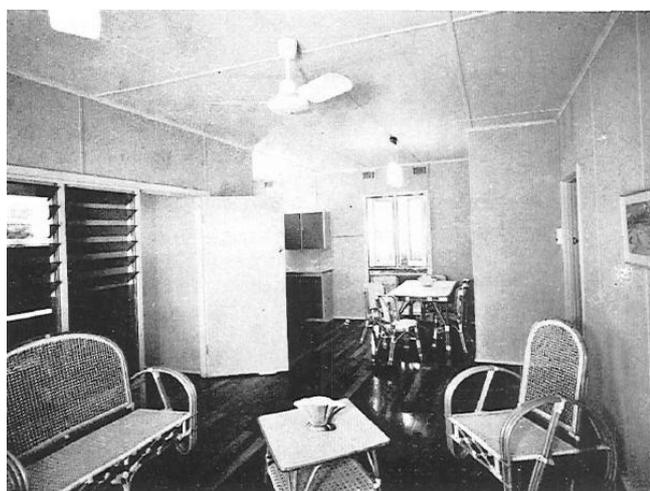
SHC housing in Port Hedland, c.1960, showing cyclone shutters.  
*SLWA collection, 22004oPD*

As the Commission was by 1960 providing government employee housing also, its interest in the Northwest expanded. In 1959-60, 75 Commission-designed homes were built in the Northwest, bring to 453 the number of Commission owned and financed dwellings north of the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>1501</sup>

Research was undertaken to address ongoing termite problems, particularly in Northwest residences. As a result, in 1959-60, the first steel-framed fibro-clad houses were erected, at Wittenoom, bringing the number of SHC homes in the town to 162.<sup>1502</sup>

Kununurra was developed by the WA Town Planning Department from 1960 to support the development of the Ord River irrigation scheme. Planners presumed Ord River farmers would live in Kununurra and commute to their farms, and designed the town along the lines of Metropolitan suburbs. Construction began slowly, with only five houses completed by June 1961. However, by June 1965 there were 65 SHC residences in the new town, all built for other government departments. By 1976, Kununurra had a population of around 1,500, with 238 SHC residences providing a significant proportion of the accommodation.<sup>1503</sup>

By mid-1961, the Commission had constructed 528 homes from Shark Bay northwards, 69 in the preceding year. Fifty of these had been built for other government departments.<sup>1504</sup>



Interior, Northwest design house, Halls Creek, 1960s  
*SHC Annual Report, 1968, p.30*

<sup>1501</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1960*

<sup>1502</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1960*

<sup>1503</sup> Freestone, *Urban Nation*, 2010, p.126; SHC, *Annual Report, 1961, 1965, 1976.*

<sup>1504</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1961*



SHC residence on stilts, Broome, 1967

*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection oo8634D*

Climatic conditions impacted the design and siting of homes in the Northwest, including provision to insulated walls.<sup>1505</sup> For more information on design for climate, see [Section 16.2](#).

Duplexes were erected in the Northwest for the first time in 1962-63, each being two-bedroom homes.<sup>1506</sup> A standard Northwest Cyclonic style house was erected for display at the Perth Royal Show in 1965. After being viewed by an estimated 25,000 people, it was relocated to Armadale after the show, a seemingly incongruous choice.<sup>1507</sup>

Between 1945 and 1966, the Commission constructed 1,253 housing units in the Northwest, including 489 for other government departments.<sup>1508</sup> The rate of Northwest construction increased in the 1960s. In 1965-66, construction included offices, stores, quarters, toilet and ablution blocks, and Aboriginal hostels.<sup>1509</sup>

In 1960, the Commonwealth government lifted an embargo on iron ore export that had been in place since 1938. Iron ore deposits had already been found in the Pilbara in the 1950s, but lifting the embargo encouraged international mining companies to take up exploration of the area to locate commercial quantities and begin large-scale operations. The first commercial shipment of Pilbara iron ore left Port Hedland in 1966. Pilbara pastoral regions transformed into mining centres. In the mid-1960s there were also discoveries of substantial oil and gas deposits at Barrow Island, North West Gas Project between Karratha and Exmouth.<sup>1510</sup>

As mining expanded in the Pilbara, demand for housing also increased, both for workers directly employed in the mines and for government and service industry workers supporting the new towns. The

<sup>1505</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1962*

<sup>1506</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 19-63*

<sup>1507</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>1508</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>1509</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>1510</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement*, 2004, p.22; Lands & Surveys Department WA, *Western Australia: An atlas of human endeavour*, 1979, pp.90-99; McKay, B., Lambert, I & Miyazaki, S, 'The Australian Mining Industry: from Settlement to 2000', at ABS <http://www.abs.gov.au> accessed 29 April 2014



Duplex at Port Hedland, 1967

*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection 011221D*

SHC developed a substantial housing estate from 1970 at South Hedland to house workers for the booming port town.<sup>1511</sup> Government housing was also provided in other new Pilbara towns, such as Karratha (established 1968, SHC housing from 1970-71), Tom Price (est.1965, SHC from 1971-72), Wickham (est. 1970, SHC from 1972-73), as well as existing centres such as Broome, Carnarvon, Derby, Onslow and Port Hedland and reinvigorated nineteenth century gold mining towns such as Marble Bar and Nullagine. The provision of housing in the Northwest became such a significant portion of SHC's work in this period that from 1970 onwards it was separated from 'country' areas for reporting purposes.<sup>1512</sup> For more info see [Section 13](#) and [Section 13.1](#).

Transportable houses were developed for remote areas, including the Northwest, from 1967. Developed to save time and money, and in response to building labour shortages in southern regions as labourers headed north to the mines, they were mostly used for remote locations and particularly for government employees housing.<sup>1513</sup> See [Section 13](#) and [Section 18](#).

A new design for Northwest housing was developed in 1966-67, which provided three-bedroom duplexes. It was intended that these homes would allow a family to 'accommodate a single lodger, without inconvenience to either party'.<sup>1514</sup>

New designs for the Northwest in 1968-69 included two-storey two-bedroom terraces for Port Hedland, Exmouth and Carnarvon; an 8-dwelling complex 'based on the North African Moroccan type' for Port Hedland; and, concrete masonry homes for Port Hedland and Roebourne. Existing Northwest designs had added aluminium fly wire doors, vinyl-covered plywood instead of concrete-on-timber sub floors, instantaneous LP gas hot water, and amendments to stump and floor frame bracing.<sup>1515</sup> The North African Moroccan style homes were 'a new concept in courtyard housing layout', and were first constructed in 1970.<sup>1516</sup>

<sup>1511</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>1512</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports*, for the period 1969-75

<sup>1513</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1966*

<sup>1514</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1967*, quote from p.17

<sup>1515</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1969*

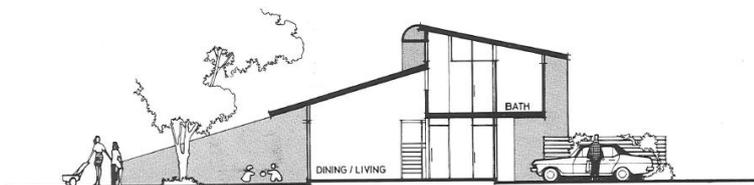
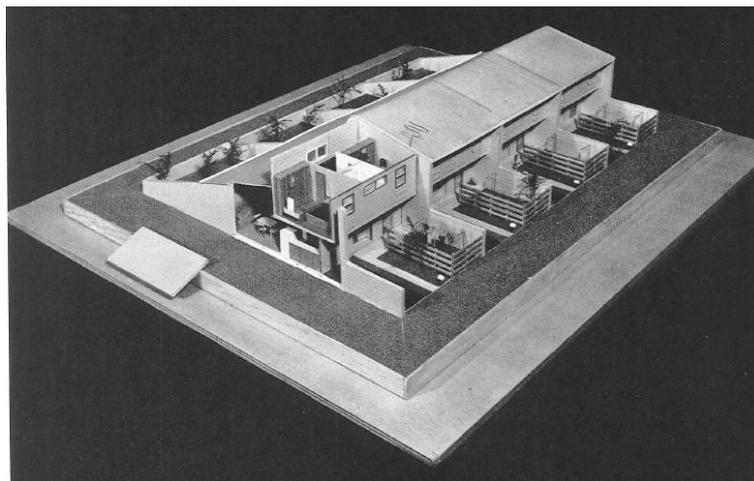
<sup>1516</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

In the Northwest, 'panelised construction' was used in 1969-70 at Balgo Hills, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Carnarvon and Port Hedland. Concrete masonry nurses' quarters were erected at Port Hedland and Roebourne.<sup>1517</sup>

By June 1970, the first year that Northwest housing was reported as a separate section of SHC annual figures, the agency had constructed 2,044 housing units in the region, in 26 towns, including several remote pastoral stations/Aboriginal

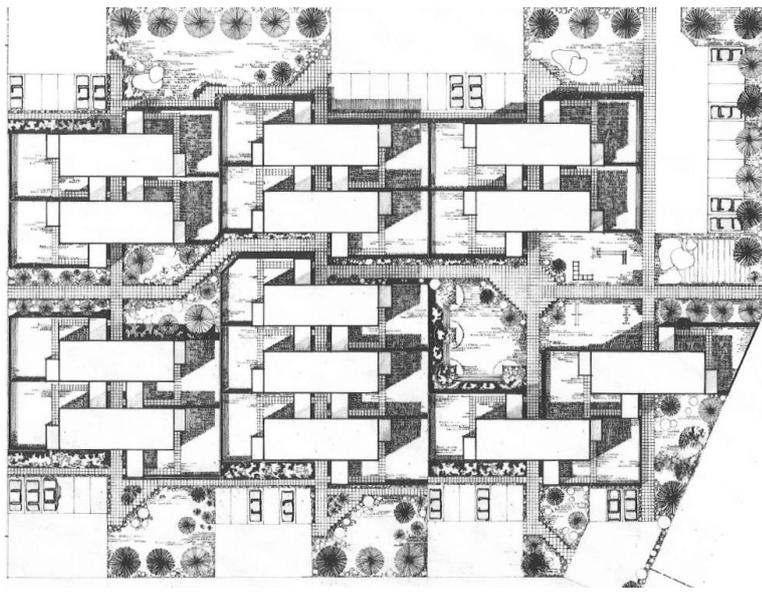
communities. Of these, 791 (39%) had been constructed in the preceding four years. Nearly half had been built for other programs: 495 for other government departments, 100 for GEHA, 238 for the Native Welfare Department and 128 for the 'Exmouth Development Scheme'.<sup>1518</sup> Five years later, another 1,145 residences had been constructed for a total of 3,149 housing units, including nine towns not represented in 1970. Thirty-six per cent of all Northwest SHC residences at this point had been built between 1970 and 1975 and over 60% from 1966 to 1975. Thirty per cent

(946 units) were government employee housing, through GEHA or other departments. By comparison, less than 5% of SHC housing state-wide was for government employees. Aboriginal housing accounted for another 14.5% (454 units) of Northwest government housing. This was 38% of all Aboriginal housing in the State, where as a whole it comprised only 2.5% of government housing.<sup>1519</sup> For more information on Aboriginal housing see [Section 21](#).



1970s Northwest terrace designs Type 1 (above) and typical site plan Type 2 (below)

*SHC, Annual Report, 1971, pp.27&29*



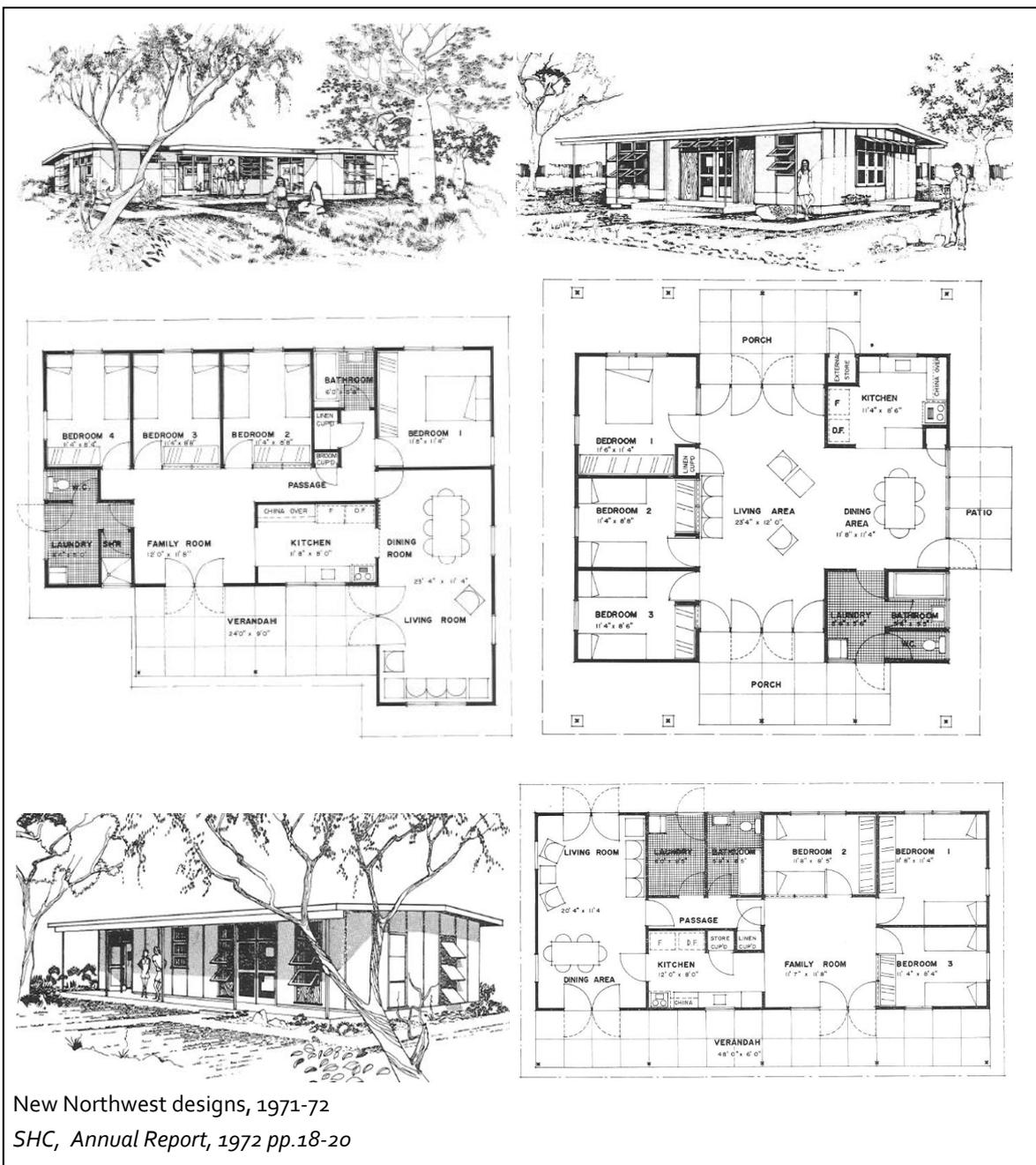
<sup>1517</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>1518</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1970*

<sup>1519</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports, for the period 1970-75*

Standard designs were amended experimentally to suit Northwest conditions, with practical improvements achieved without increasing costs.<sup>1520</sup> Housing in the Karratha localities of Pegs Creek and Bulgarra was all aligned east-west, regardless of street or block orientation, both to reduce exposure to east and west sun and to minimise the impact of cyclones. This included SHC housing in these areas.<sup>1521</sup>

Fibrous plaster was produced in Port Hedland from the early 1970s, and as such the Commission began to experiment with using this material in place of asbestos in its Northwest homes. Concrete bricks and blocks were also being manufactured in the Northwest, and were used for party walls as required by planning bylaws.<sup>1522</sup>



New Northwest designs, 1971-72  
 SHC, *Annual Report, 1972* pp.18-20

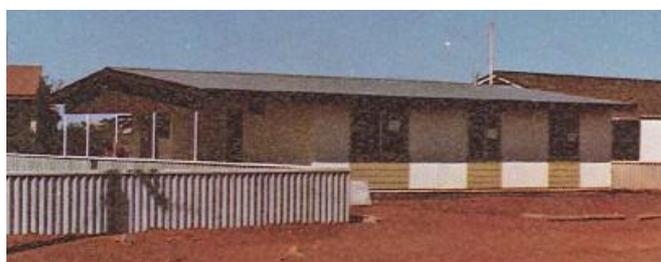
<sup>1520</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>1521</sup> Jo Pritchard, Local History Office, Shire of Roebourne, phone call with Clare Menck, 24 June 2014; Google Earth <https://www.google.com.au/maps> accessed 24 June 2014

<sup>1522</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

The Commission's designs for cyclone conditions were tested in February 1975 when Cyclone Trixie hit Onslow with the highest recorded wind speeds in Australia. Very little damage was sustained to SHC homes, a relief for the Commission after the national shock only two months earlier of Cyclone Tracey flattening Darwin.<sup>1523</sup> The following year, Cyclone Joan hit Port Hedland, resulting in 3% of SHC/GEHA homes losing their roofs and another 15% suffering roof damage. Investigations into the failures followed and the findings influenced later Northwest designs.<sup>1524</sup> In addition, all existing SHC and GEHA properties in the Northwest were upgraded in 1976 and 1977 to meet higher cyclone design standards.<sup>1525</sup>

New SHC designs were developed for the Northwest in 1975-76, with ten prototypes to be erected at South Hedland.<sup>1526</sup>



Prototype housing at South Hedland, 1976  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1976*

Experiments began in 1975-76 into the use of local materials in Northwest construction, including Pindan soil in cement.<sup>1527</sup> The test building was considered successful and the project builder began investigation options to commercially produce bricks and tiles using Pindan soil.<sup>1528</sup> By 1984, Pindan bricks were included on the Commission's 'approved materials' list for Northwest construction.<sup>1529</sup>

The government commissioned a report in 1976 investigate housing in the State's Northwest. It found a 'distressing' divide between standards for public housing and those for private housing, the latter often erected by mining companies in suburbs nearby or even interspersed through public housing areas. Northern housing was rated as a bland attempt to reproduce southern suburbia. SHC practice at the time was to leave asbestos sheeting unpainted, using pastel or white paint for joinery and trims.<sup>1530</sup>

From the mid-1970s, the SHC ran a series of competitions as a cost-effective measure to expand its designs.<sup>1531</sup> In 1978, a competition yielded 40 designs for Northwest houses, from 21 architects, which were made available as a book.<sup>1532</sup>

From 1977-78, it became standard for all Northwest SHC houses to have ceiling fans in every 'habitable room'.<sup>1533</sup> A program began in 1978 to retrofit ceiling fans in all existing Northwest SHC homes and several thousand fans were installed over two years.<sup>1534</sup>

From 1977-78, 'cluster housing' was erected in the Northwest. This was perceived as more suitable on account of being 'more visually suitable than townhouses', with greater private fenced areas including

<sup>1523</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>1524</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1525</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>1526</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1527</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1528</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>1529</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1984*

<sup>1530</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.123-24

<sup>1531</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.125

<sup>1532</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

<sup>1533</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

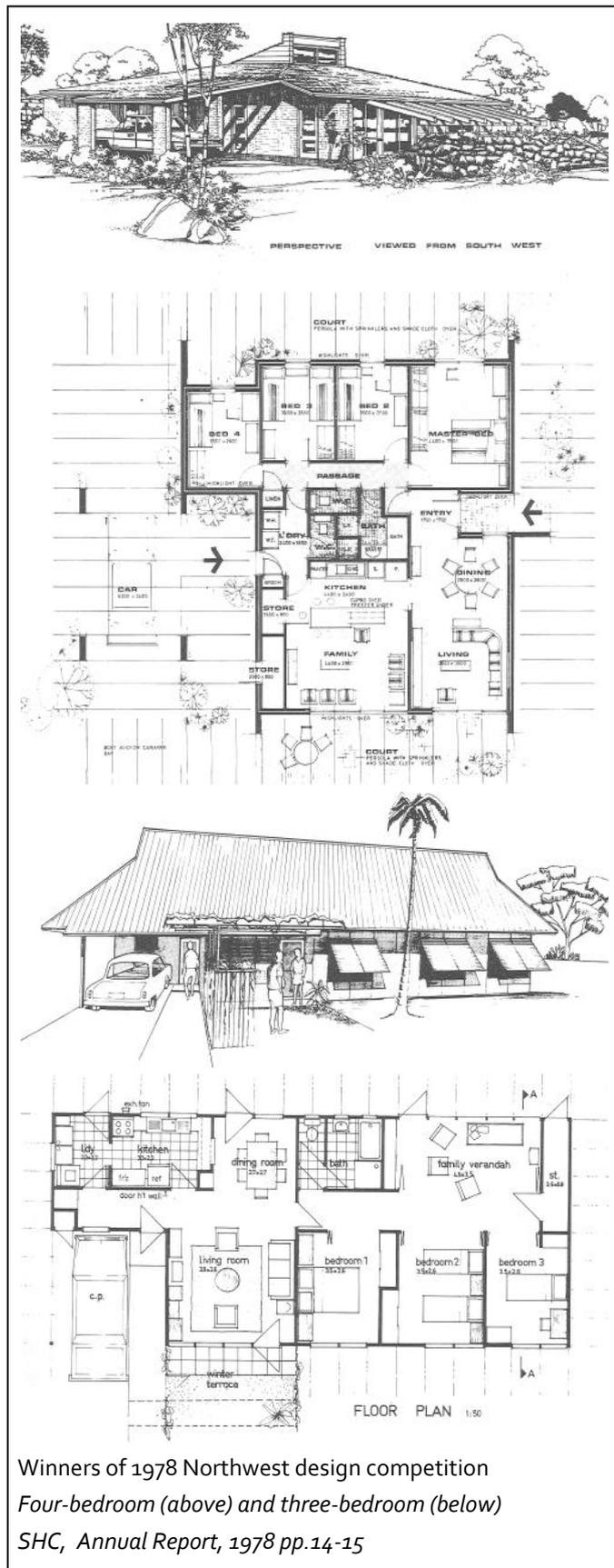
<sup>1534</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

access to private yards, a minimum of 'unassigned space' reducing maintenance and 'more versatile vehicle standing space'.<sup>1535</sup>

Designs for the Northwest were reviewed by residents in 1977-78 and several changes found necessary to make the homes more liveable.<sup>1536</sup> Standards for Northwest housing adopted in 1978-79 included minimum areas, facilities and equipment, along with engineering for cyclonic conditions. Houses began to be constructed of coloured masonry veneer wherever reasonable tenders could be obtained, generally with coloured wide-rib steel roof sheeting. Although masonry veneer was a more expensive outlay, it was seen as a long-term saving due to reduction of ongoing maintenance costs, especially painting, and 'protection from sandblasting in cyclones'. The resulting houses had the appearance of mining company homes in the same areas. However, asbestos cladding also continued to be used extensively.<sup>1537</sup>

The 'design and construct' approach was also adopted for some contracts in the Northwest from 1978-79. However, it seemed potential builders were unable to economically meet the required cyclone standards and as such only 31 homes (19 cluster homes and 12 single detached homes at South Hedland) were built under this approach before the 'experiment' was abandoned for Northwest tenders.<sup>1538</sup>

By 1979, design for Northwest homes had in many ways cycled back to be similar to the original Northwest designs of 1948. Many roof pitches had been tried in the interim, but the original 19.5 degrees pitch, with a hip ended roof, was again adopted by the SHC by the late 1970s as



Winners of 1978 Northwest design competition  
Four-bedroom (above) and three-bedroom (below)  
SHC, Annual Report, 1978 pp.14-15

<sup>1535</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1978, quotes from p.12

<sup>1536</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1978

<sup>1537</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1979, quote from p.12

<sup>1538</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1979



Late 1970s Northwest homes in three different materials  
*Top: two-room duplex of panelised construction, Broome*  
*Centre: masonry veneer single detached residence, Pilbara*  
*Bottom: pensioner units of polyurethane asbestos clad panels, Derby*  
*SHC, Annual Reports, 1978 p.11 (top) and 1979 p.13*

the best roof structure to withstand cyclones. This roof design also allowed for a low eaves line that was 'horizontally sealed with asbestos lining at external door and window head height', providing a 900mm overhang for better shading as well as improved rain protection. Timber or steel roof trusses were increasingly used, often pre-fabricated, providing for rapid construction, and storm battens were concealed below the roof sheeting. Most Northwest SHC houses by the late 1970s were being built using galvanised steel stud or dry timber framing stud and erected on concrete raft slabs. Their floor area was around 130m<sup>2</sup>, including about 28m<sup>2</sup> of 'external covered terrace', compared with similar size floor areas in 1948 that included enclosed verandahs and sleep-outs.<sup>1539</sup> Roof trusses became mandatory in January 1979.<sup>1540</sup>

The prototype Northwest houses trialled in South Hedland in the mid-1970s led to changes for Northwest housing to make homes more

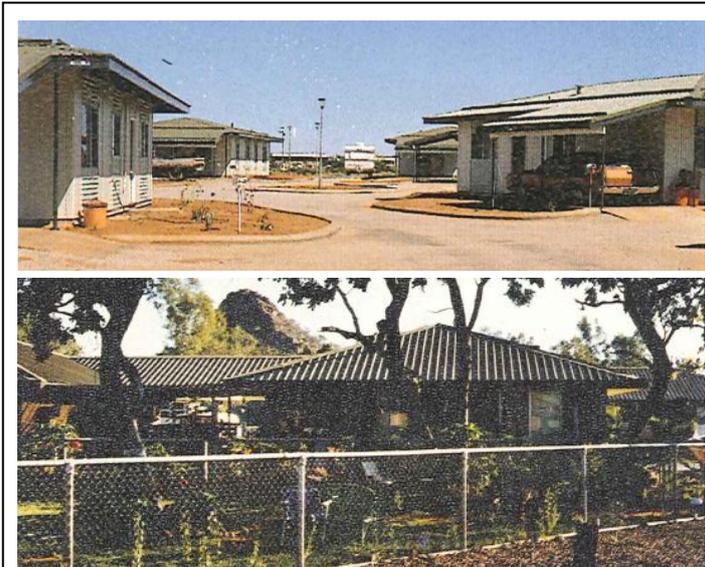
comfortable for residents. From 1976, all Northwest houses had '25mm fibreglass on foil sisalation' under the metal roof sheeting and double sisalation to external walls, including masonry veneer homes. Aluminium sliding windows, fly screens, ceiling fans, kitchen exhaust fans and provision for tenants to install a living room or master bedroom air-conditioner all became standard features of Northwest designs. Internally, there were flush-jointed asbestos wall linings, with wall and floor tiles in wet areas, and optional use of gypsum paper board instead of asbestos for internal linings. Kitchen cupboards were faced with 'prefinished melamine plastic faced boards' and higher quality asbestos floor tiles were used. Despite these many improvements, the real cost of Northwest homes had declined by the end of the decade, due to Commission rationalisation and competitive tendering.<sup>1541</sup>

At the turn of the decade, the Commission focussed its housing construction on the Northwest, following a government directive to reduce waiting times for rental accommodation in the region ahead of the planned North West Gas Project. To keep costs to a minimum and speed construction, many pre-fabricated elements were used, especially wall and roof framing. Most houses were constructed of masonry veneer with coloured steel roofing. In 1979-80, 544 (49%) of the 1,112 SHC homes built in the State were in the Northwest, with large projects at South Hedland (172 units) and Karratha (126). This

<sup>1539</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*, quote from p.12

<sup>1540</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>1541</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*, quote from p.12



Cluster housing at South Hedland (above) and Kununurra (below), late 1970s

*SHC, Annual Reports, 1978 p.11 (above) and 1980 p.20 (below)*

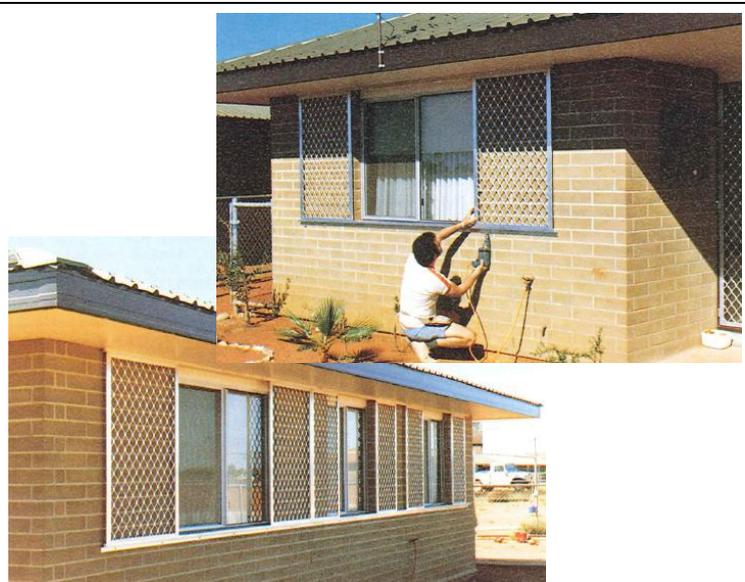
reduced waiting times to between six and nine months, but it was acknowledged that new mining projects could at any time bring a sudden need for additional accommodation.<sup>1542</sup>

Cluster developments were favoured in the Northwest in the early 1980s. Karratha in particular had quite a lot of SHC housing erected in this period. Clusters continued to be perceived as an economical approach to medium-density housing that allowed for better streetscapes, orientation, space for vehicles and resident individuality.<sup>1543</sup> Cluster homes are remembered as being one-bedroom units with common grounds and a parking area that did not provide

enough bays for every unit, compared with townhouses, which had individual parking bays and yards.<sup>1544</sup> However, cluster homes retained by DOH in 2014 include many two and three bedroom units. They appear to have been phased out in the 1990s.<sup>1545</sup>

From 1985, new designs for houses in Broome were implemented, which included 'significant use of verandahs, traditional roof pitch and materials that reflect the old style buildings of Broome'. Ceilings were 2.7metres with ceiling fans and allowance for tenants to install airconditioners. Construction utilised steel-framed walls, timber roof trusses and either Colorbond ribbon sheeting or bricks.<sup>1546</sup>

Cyclone screens were added to Northwest SHC homes from c.1980. Costs of the project were significantly below estimates as Western Australian aluminium screen fabrication was introduced from the early 1980s.<sup>1547</sup>



Cyclone screens being fitted to a house in South Hedland, c.1981

*SHC, Annual Report, 1982*

<sup>1542</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

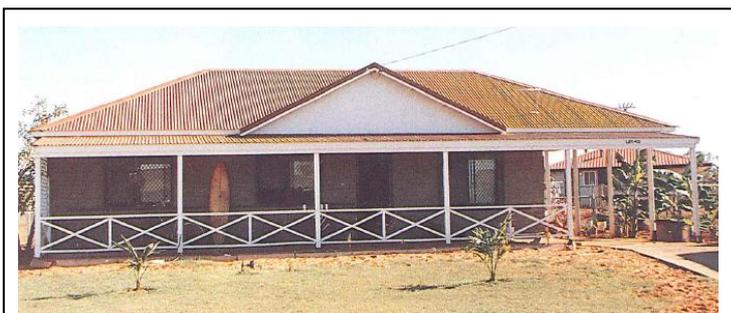
<sup>1543</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1981*

<sup>1544</sup> Beryl Matheson, DOH, email to Beth Ferialdi, DOH, 17 June 2014, forwarded to Clare Menck 23 June 2014

<sup>1545</sup> DOH property lists, 31 May 2014

<sup>1546</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*, quote from p.28

<sup>1547</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*



Homeswest residence, Broome, mid-1980s

*This plan was promoted as being 'in keeping with the character and lifestyle of the town', with 2.7m ceilings, ceiling fans and provision for tenants to install air conditioning.*

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1986 p28.*

GEHA housing for the Northwest until well into the 1980s used the same standard plans as housing in southern areas. From the shift to brick veneer, which was applied to Northwest housing from the mid-1970s, typical GEHA housing was a 'three-bedroom, one bathroom, triple frontage house' on a quarter-acre block with lawns front and back and a rotary clothesline. Such houses were designed specifically to mirror Perth suburban homes, so that employees transferred north could feel they had the same amenity as their Metropolitan counterparts. Informally, they were referred to as 'Craigie Houses', as Craigie was the northernmost Perth suburb at the time. Fixtures such as metal louvers to allow air movement, air-conditioning, heat resistant glass and cyclone proofing did little to adapt the southern-suited designs for northern conditions. The first Northwest-specific GEHA design was in 1987, using verandahs and eaves to maximise shading, and it became

known as the 'Homestead' design. By the 1990s, 'Craigie Houses' had largely been replaced by more climate-suitable plans or retrofit for northern conditions.<sup>1548</sup>

A competition in 1993-94 returned 26 entries for homes suited to Northwest climatic conditions. The winning entries were to be built in Broome, Karratha and Kununurra.<sup>1549</sup>

After several slow years, Pilbara mining began to pick up again in the late 1990s and from 1997 Homeswest restarted subdivision works to expand South Hedland.<sup>1550</sup> The new subdivision, in keeping with policies of the 1990s, was to be a mix of public and private residences.

In response to the 2002 Gordon Report, additional GEHA/GROH housing was built in the Northwest, particularly in Kimberley areas, over the following decade. See [Section 18](#) and [Section 21.5](#).

Pilbara mining boomed from the mid-2000s. Although increasing numbers of workers were fly-in fly-out, there was also a significant increase in Northwest populations. The cost of housing also escalated and there was a shortage of both housing and serviced land. The Pilbara becoming the least affordable place to find housing in the State. Renewal of South Hedland, initiated from the early 1990s, was given a

<sup>1548</sup> Faulkner, *The History of GEHA*, 2007, pp.43-45

<sup>1549</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994, quote from p.25

<sup>1550</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

funding boost in 2006. The government also attempted to increase its overall rental stock, through additional construction and slowing the rate of selling off rental properties.<sup>1551</sup>

The continuing pressure on housing in the north of the State as mining activity remained strong brought increased government funding to provide housing assistance. Average rentals in South Hedland at the time were more than double the State average, and in some housing types, such as three-bedroom homes, as much as four times the State average, despite South Hedland's long history as a low socio-economic area.<sup>1552</sup>

The Pilbara boom saw an increase in government officers assigned to the region, with a corresponding increase in the level of GROH housing provided. Royalties for Regions funding in particular boosted GROH accommodation, with over half the GROH residences constructed with this funding from 2009 to 2013 located in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions.<sup>1553</sup> See *Section 18*.

Projects were initiated to provide housing for 'key workers' who were being priced out of the housing market. In Hedland, the project was initially referred to as the 'Hedland 125 Service Worker Intervention Package'. 'Key workers' included small business owners and employees and service industry workers.<sup>1554</sup> The program was later rebranded as 'Service Workers' Accommodation'. It provided 125 homes across Port and South Hedland in 2012 as an emergency measure, intended as a two-year interim initiative. Employers were invited to apply for housing for their employees. As a longer-term measure, the SHC developed 'Osprey Key Worker Village', on Collier Drive, at the southeast end of South Hedland. All 293 units at Osprey were designed, built and managed for DOH by Fleetwood Pty Ltd, and began to be occupied from 2014. At Onslow, twelve two-bedroom chalets were constructed in the grounds of the Discovery Parks caravan park, 557 Beadon Creek Rd, Onslow, and were fully occupied by June 2014. At Newman, ten two-bedroom residences on Homestead Ramble were anticipated to be ready for occupation in July 2014.<sup>1555</sup>

From 2011, Royalties for Regions funding was also obtained to build 58 homes in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions to house regional employees of non-government organisations, which were struggling to retain staff due to the escalating cost of housing in these regions.<sup>1556</sup> It is not clear if these were included as 'Key' or 'Service' Workers. However, the funding included provision for over 150 homes in Karratha, which in 2014 are not identified as part of the Service Workers program on the DOH website.

Another measure to provide affordable housing for Kimberley workers was financing Foundation Housing to purchase Broome Hotel in 2010. The hotel was subsequently upgraded to provide kitchenettes in all 56 rooms and was operated as a lodging house.<sup>1557</sup>

At the time of writing, iron ore prices have been dropping internationally. BHP, one of the three largest employers in Pilbara iron ore mining, recently announced hundreds and possibly thousands of job cuts in the sector.<sup>1558</sup> The boom years, with associated housing shortages, may be slowing down in the Pilbara. If

<sup>1551</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006 & 2007*

<sup>1552</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2012*

<sup>1553</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, for the period 2009-13*

<sup>1554</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1555</sup> Department of Housing, 'Service Workers Accommodation', <http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/investorsandpartners/swa/Pages/default.aspx> accessed 25 June 2014

<sup>1556</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

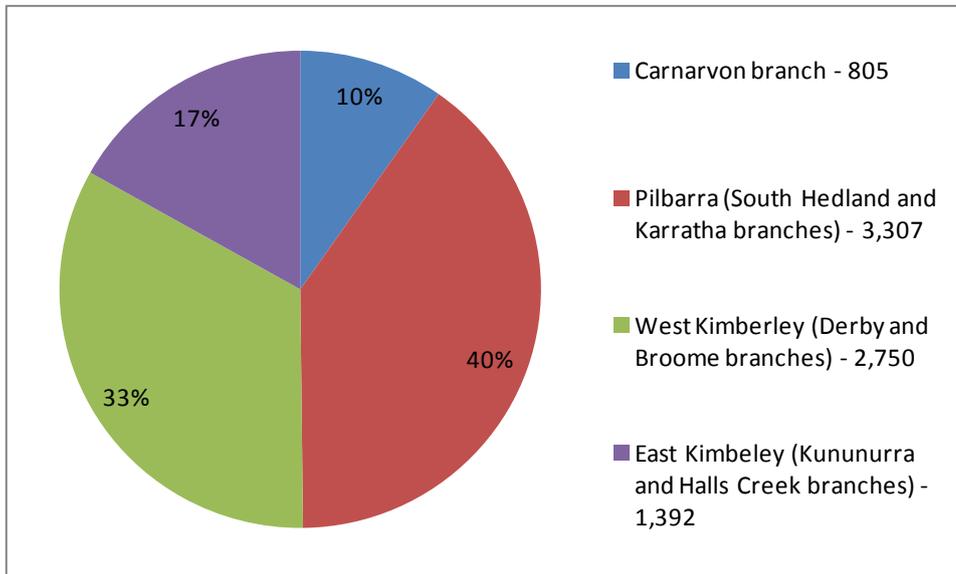
<sup>1557</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1558</sup> Powell, Graeme, 'BHP looks to cut thousands of jobs from its iron ore division in WA', *ABC News online*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-24/bhp-confirms-job-losses/5545820?section=wa> 24 June 2014, accessed 26 June 2014

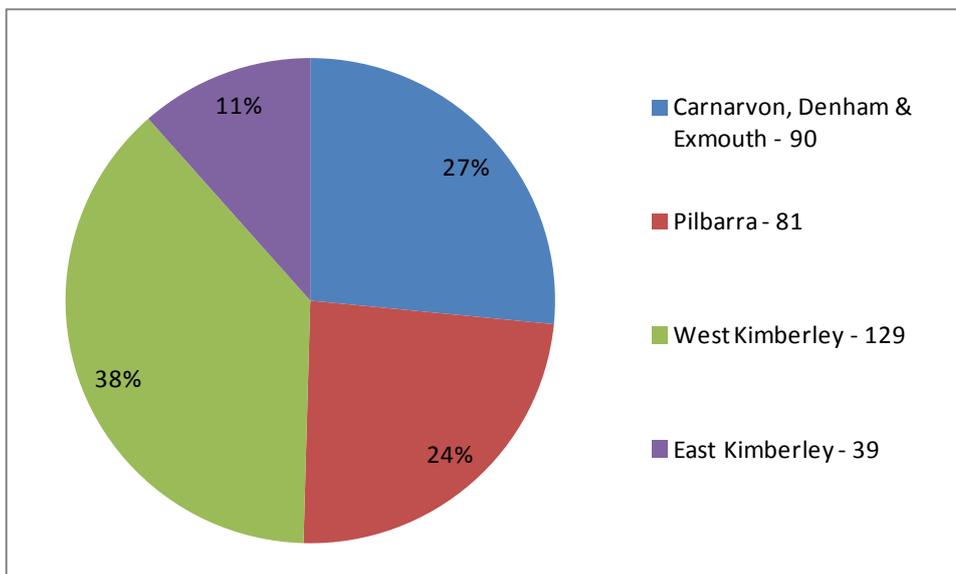
so, the hundreds of government houses constructed in the last decade will mark a particular period of Northwest expansion and may become an un-needed asset if Pilbara populations contract.

*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 8,254 housing units in the Northwest, around 19% of its housing stock, which divides as:



A further 339 Northwest housing units are in Community Housing stock, being:

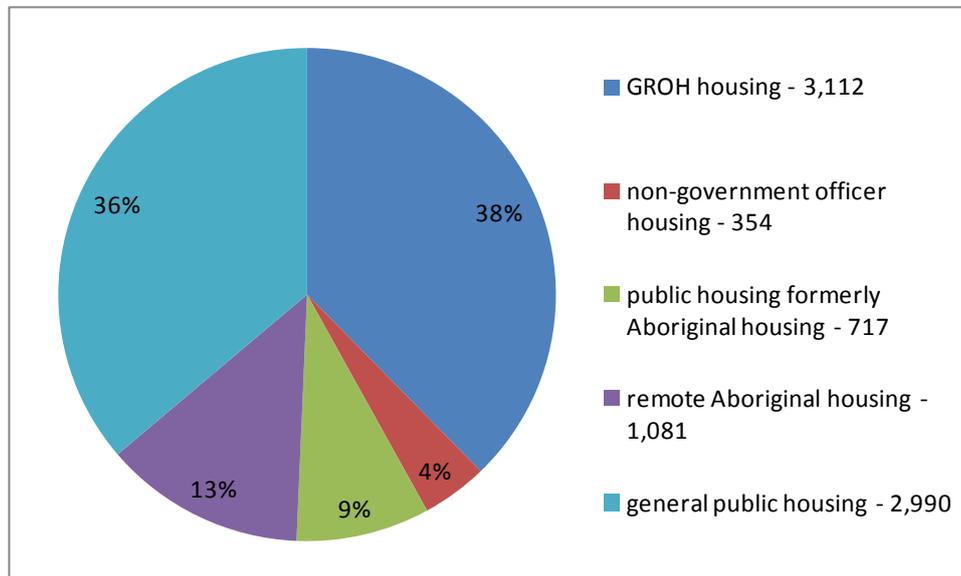


Carnarvon branch, including Denham, Exmouth, Gascoyne Junction and several smaller settlements, has been included here rather than in 'Country' figures as the SHC historically considered it part of its Northwest housing program.

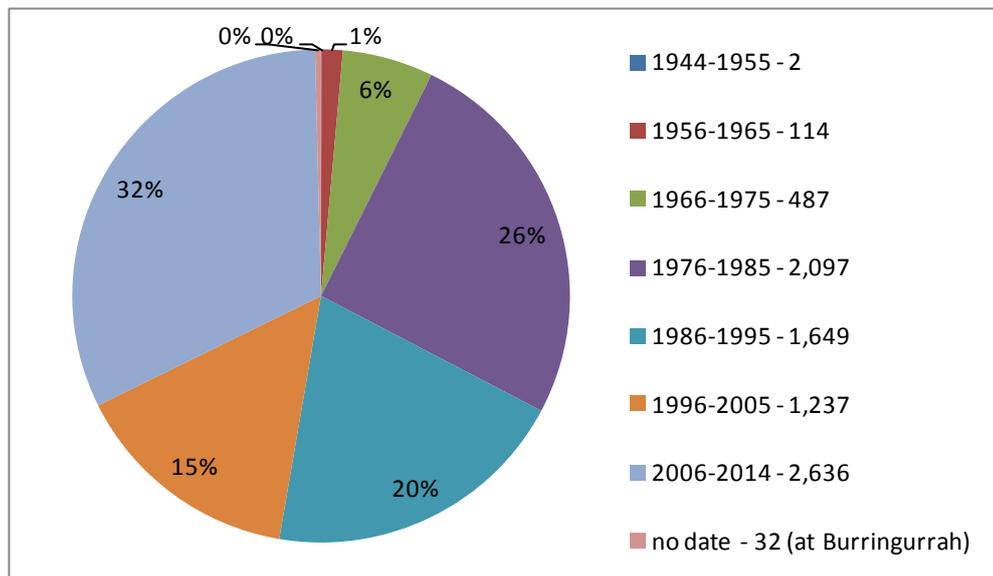
Many of the Northwest residences are at Broome (1,360 units, 16.5% of all DOH's Northwest housing), Karratha (1,314 units, 16% of Northwest housing) and South Hedland (1,124 units, plus another 153 at Port Hedland, for a total of 1,277 units, 15.5% of Northwest housing). Together with Carnarvon (513 units), Derby (665 units) and Kununurra (671 units), these towns provide 70% of all DOH's Northwest housing in six centres.

In other places the number of DOH properties is smaller, but the small size of the towns means they have a substantial DOH presence (eg Newman and Halls Creek, both with over 300 DOH residences).

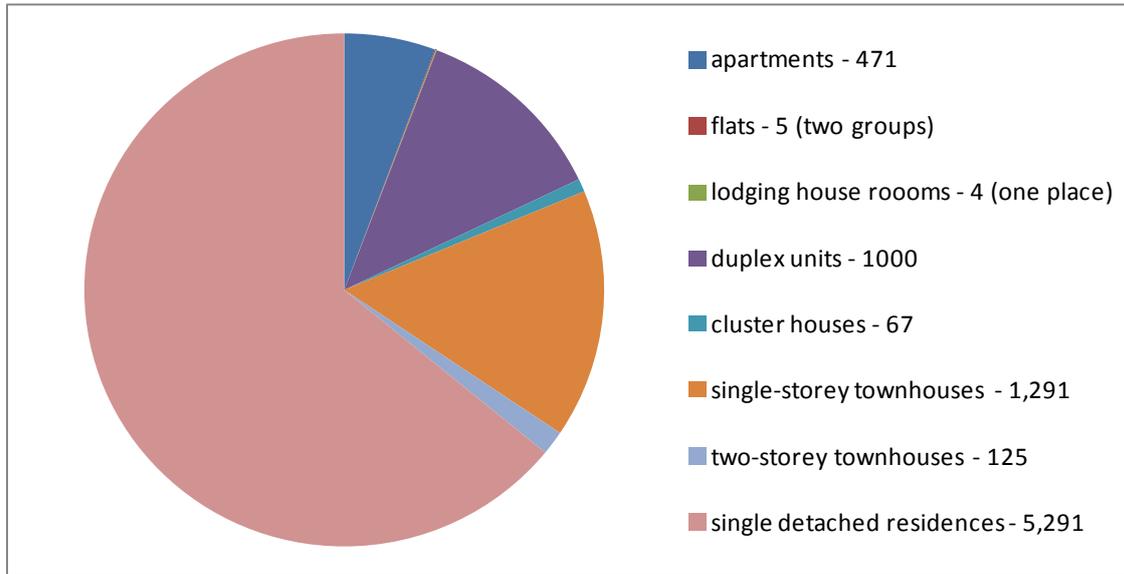
Northwest housing divides as:



The 8,254 Northwest units may be considered chronologically as follows:



Overall, Northwest housing divides into the following housing types:

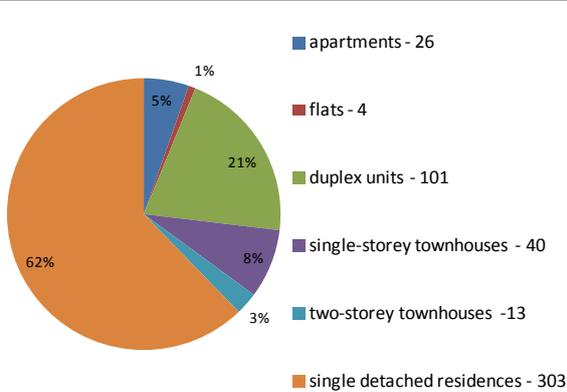


The pre-1956 residences are both asbestos-clad timber-framed single detached residences, each two-bedroom, with corrugated iron roofs, in general public housing stock.

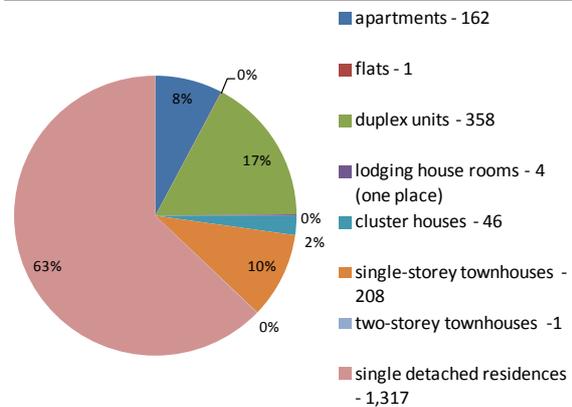
Of the 1956-1965 units, almost all (89%) are single detached residences and the remainder duplex units. Over half (61 units) date from 1965.

The later periods divide by type as follows:

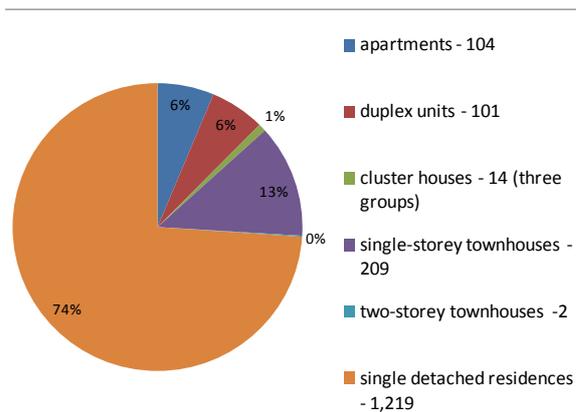
1966-1975



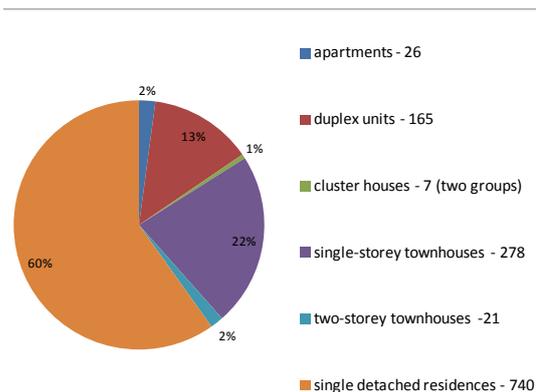
1976-1985



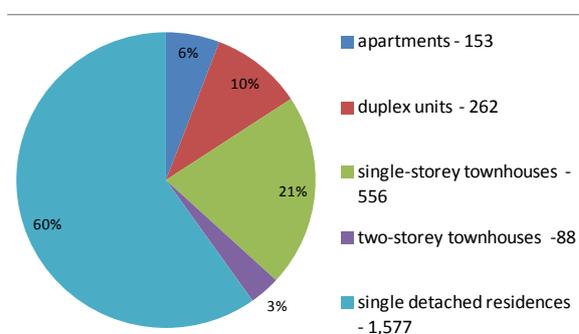
1986-1995



1995-2005



2006-2014



Single detached houses account for 64% of DOH's Northwest housing (compared with only 39% of DOH's total housing stock). This percentage is high largely because over 50% of Northwest housing is GROH or remote Aboriginal housing, and in the Northwest these categories are 76% and 95.5% single detached housing respectively.

#### Termite-resistant dwellings 1959-60

The steel-framed fibre-cement clad dwellings introduced from 1959-60 to deter termites do not appear to have been retained. DOH retains 581 Northwest residences noted as either asbestos or fibre cement cladding with steel frame, with the earliest from 1979 (Derby). The earliest steel-framed residence of any type noted in DOH property listings for the Northwest is from 1970 (Newman). Over 2,000 examples of steel-framed masonry veneer housing units are retained, with the earliest from 1971 (Karratha).

#### Ord River Scheme housing

At Kununurra, DOH retains 671 housing units, of which the earliest is dated 1964 and thirteen are from later in the 1960s. (Ord River Scheme housing began from 1961).

#### Three-bedroom duplexes (introduced 1966-67)

DOH retains 336 three-bedroom duplexes, of which 33 are dated from 1966 to 1969. The earliest four are in Broome.

#### Transportables

DOH retains 442 transportable residences in the Northwest. Transportables were introduced in 1967 but the earliest Northwest transportable in DOH ownership in 2014 is dated 1978 (Karratha)

and Jigalong). The 1978 transportables are all timber framed. From 1979 some are panel framed and from 1984 some are steel framed. Of DOH's Northwest transportable, only 23 are dated earlier than 1999. A further 18 date from 1999 and 2000, one each from 2003, 2005 and 2006 and three from 2008, and the remaining 393 from 2009 to 2014.

#### Panelised construction

'Panelised construction' was introduced from 1969-70. DOH lists 91 places as 'panel system' construction type, all of which date from 2006 to 2014 and 77 of which date from 2013 and 2014. Another 128 units are listed as either asbestos clad, masonry veneer or transportable with 'panel frame'. The earliest of these is at Carnarvon (1970), which is likely one of the first established, as it was reported the approach was first tried in Carnarvon, Balgo Hills, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and Port Hedland. No examples remain in these other centres prior to one at Derby from 1977. A further 86 'panel frame' residences date from 1976 to 1985, twenty-one from 1986 to 1992, three from 1996 to 1998, and 16 from 2010 to 2012.

#### Prototype housing at South Hedland (1975-76)

Forty housing units dated 1976 are retained at South Hedland, and another six from 1977. It is not possible to tell which if any of these were the ten 1975-76 prototype Northwest designs.

#### Cluster housing

DOH retains 67 Northwest cluster houses, of which 44 date from 1978 to 1985. Twenty-six are at Karratha, of which 22 date from 1978 to 1981.

#### Design and Construct (South Hedland, from 1978-79)

It is not possible to determine whether any of the 31 'design and construct' homes from 1978-79 have been retained. Eight cluster homes at South Hedland from 1978 are retained, along with 51 single detached homes dated 1978 or 1979.

#### Broome designs (1985-86)

DOH retains 52 masonry-veneer steel-framed residences at Broome dated 1985 or 1986. Most of these (31) are single detached houses. No full brick residences or steel-frame iron-clad units remain at Broome from this period.

#### 'Craigie Houses'

DOH retains 1,041 Northwest GROH housing units noted as masonry veneer or full brick single detached residences. New GEHA plans for the Northwest were implemented in 1987 to move away from the 'Craigie House' used from the mid-1970s. Of the 1,041 units, 467 are dated prior to 1987 (384 from 1975 to 1986). Another 132 are dated 1987 to 1989. Although 'Craigie Houses' were reportedly phased out by the 1990s, DOH retains 442 brick GROH single detached residences dated 1990 to the present. It is likely these use the same materials in more regional-specific designs.

#### Key/Service Workers Housing

At South and Port Hedland, DOH retains 26 residences dated 2011 to 2014 that are neither GROH nor non-government officer housing, which presumably includes the 'key' or 'service' workers' housing built in this period.

## 21 ABORIGINAL HOUSING (1950S-2014)

From colonisation in 1829 to the end of World War Two, government policy failed to provide for Aboriginal housing.<sup>1559</sup> An Equal Opportunity report in 2004 identified four policy phases in Aboriginal public housing: segregation (1829-1953), transitional (1953-1972), 'social mix' (1972-1980s) and mainstream (1980s-present). Internal government language has tended to use terms such as 'assimilation', 'self determination' and 'practical reconciliation'.<sup>1560</sup>

In the nineteenth century, some Aboriginal communities continued traditional lifestyles and living arrangements. A majority, however, were housed on missions and government reserves as part of non-Aboriginal attempts to control and 'civilise' the Aboriginal population. As the pastoral industry expanded through northern Australia into the late nineteenth century, Aboriginal settlements developed at cattle stations. These often featured hybrid dwellings constructed by Aboriginal residents, but in some places station owners provided basic accommodation, largely single-room metal huts. The relationship between pastoralists and local Aboriginal populations was variable and sometimes extremely negative, even fatal.<sup>1561</sup>

The *Aborigines Act (1905)* established a system of strict government control over Aboriginal lives in Western Australia, along segregationist lines. It did not provide for housing, with the exception of Aboriginal reserves for children removed from their families. Aboriginal persons of any age could also be removed from towns and forced to live on reserves.<sup>1562</sup> A 1934 Royal Commission recommended further restrictions and control, which were brought into force by amendments to the Act in 1936 (changing it to the *Native Administration Act*).<sup>1563</sup>

The Western Australian government established a cattle station at Moola Bulla, in the East Kimberley, in 1910, and encouraged Aboriginal residents on private cattle stations to move there. As this succeeded in reducing killing of privately owned cattle, a second 'feeding station' was established at Violet Valley in 1912. Another station, Munja, was purchased in 1926, and Violet Valley expanded from 1935. From the 1930s, these became increasingly institutionalised in their operations. These government stations remained until the post-war years. Moola Bulla was sold in 1955 with no provision for rehousing the 250 Aboriginal residents, who were evicted.<sup>1564</sup>

<sup>1559</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.61

<sup>1560</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.61

<sup>1561</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.4-7

<sup>1562</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.61&74

<sup>1563</sup> Furnell, L.C. 'Report of the Royal Commission upon all matters affecting the well being of persons of Aboriginal descent in Western Australia', 24 July 1974, pp.13-14

<sup>1564</sup> McDonald, Heather, *Blood, Bones & Spirit: Aboriginal Christianity in an East Kimberley Town*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton Vic, 2001, p.56; Aborigines Department, *Report of the Work of the Aborigines Department During the Year Ended 30th June 1912*, (annual report), Government Printer, Perth, 1913 <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/files/archive/removeprotect/73621.pdf> ; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Part 2, Chapter 7, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-chapter-7> ; Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.4-7

Note: Ross states that two (unidentified) pastoral stations were opened in 1905 and 1912 and ran until 1945 and 1955. It is not known which two stations she is referring to. No record of any other government pastoral properties for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley in this era has been located in this study. *Bringing Them Home* states Violet Valley was purchased in 1935, but the 1912 annual report indicates it originated in that year.

Although housing for Aboriginal people had been identified as a pressing issue as early as 1944, very little was done in response.<sup>1565</sup> Housing for Aboriginal people, even when motivated by genuine desire to improve Aboriginal living conditions, was largely a means of social engineering. According to academic Peter Read, 'a cottage



Aboriginal 'bush camp' of tin shacks and a rough shed, undated  
*Furnell Royal Commission, 1974, p.509*

inhabited by an Aboriginal family was less a shelter than an instrument of management, education and control'.<sup>1566</sup> The 1948 description of a white couple living in a converted 'fowlhouse', with mud floors under water and sacks for roofing, noted it as 'conditions more like those of an aboriginal native's camp', giving some indication of the state of Aboriginal housing at the time.<sup>1567</sup>

Amendments to the *Native Administration Act* in 1944 provided for 'a rudimentary system of "State" accommodation' that 'could not possibly be called housing' for those Aboriginal individuals who met restrictive citizenship conditions.<sup>1568</sup> By the post-war period, it was clear that the Aboriginal population was rapidly expanding and existing provisions for their welfare, which had largely assumed they were a dying race, were inadequate. An inquiry and report of 1947-48 recommended moving government policy from 'negative protective measures' to 'positive welfare'. The *Native Welfare Acts* of 1954 and, more extensively, 1963, began shifting government Aboriginal policy, at least in principle, towards the health and welfare of Aboriginal people.<sup>1569</sup>

In 1951, four 'special type pre-cut homes' were erected by the SHC for Aboriginal families at Port Hedland, and approval granted for up to six more 'modest homes' for 'eligible native applicants' who owned land. The Port Hedland homes used the 'McNally Reid' standard plan, a one-bedroom design with kitchen, central living room, verandahs front and rear and laundry-bathroom enclosed on the rear verandah. The Commissioner of Native Affairs recommended a small number of Aboriginal families for these schemes, of whom only some subsequently had applications approved. The SHC noted that it also housed some Aboriginal families who were eligible to apply for regular SHC housing schemes as they had been recognised as citizens, a complicated procedure permitted from 1944.<sup>1570</sup>

From 1954 to 1972, Aboriginal housing was the responsibility of the Department of Native Welfare (DNW). The DNW segregated Aboriginal people on four kinds of reserves: cultural, sanctuary, camping and institutional. Aboriginal communities on sanctuary reserves, which were large remote areas, were intended to be left to live in traditional ways. On camping reserves, generally outside towns, simple

<sup>1565</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.92-93

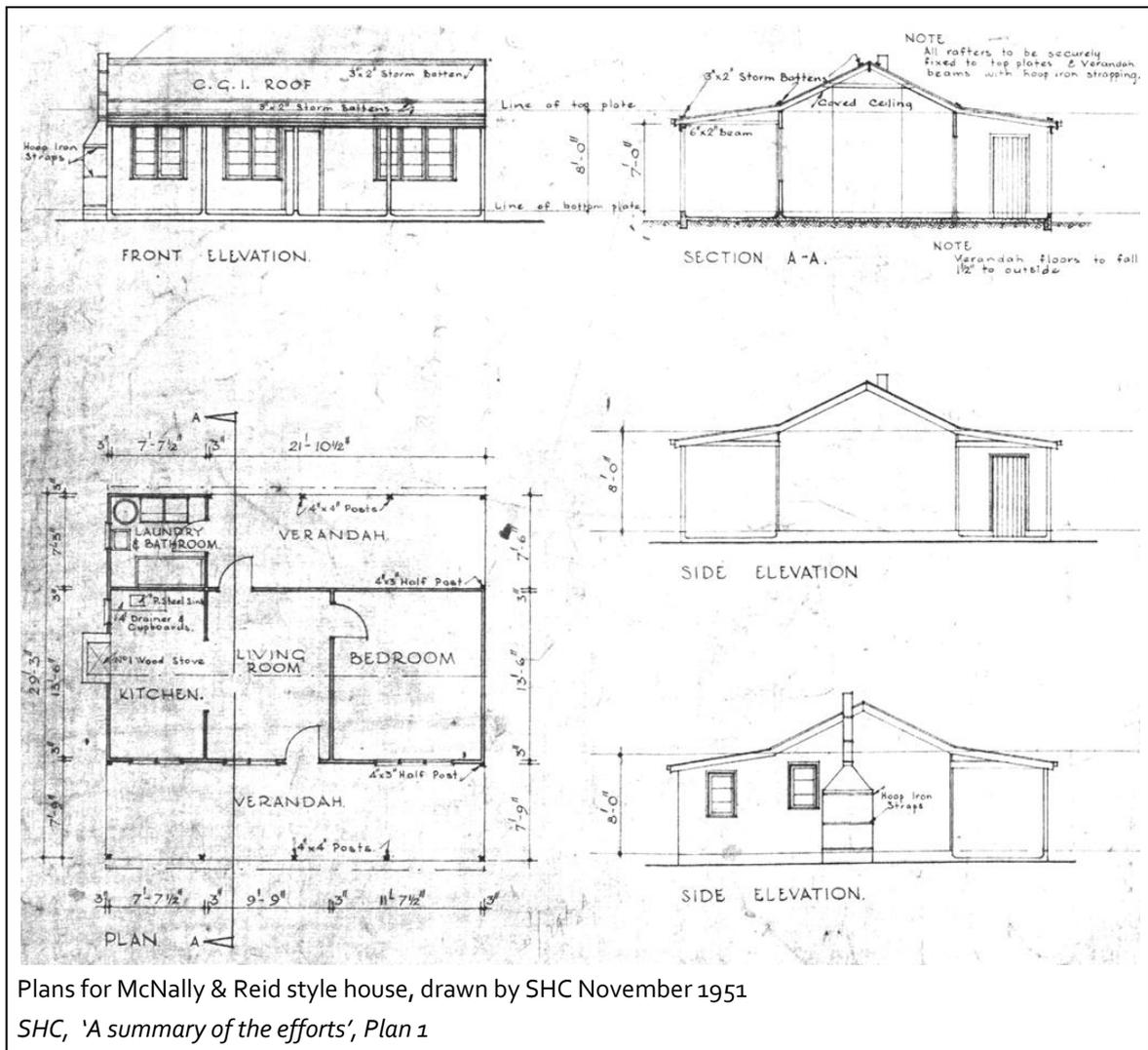
<sup>1566</sup> Read, Peter 'Preface', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.ix

<sup>1567</sup> Moseley, *Royal Commission on the SHC*, 1948, p.6. Note: Moseley had also authored the 1934 Royal Commission into Aboriginal affairs and can be expected to have a reasonably accurate understanding of the condition of Aboriginal homes.

<sup>1568</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.61&74

<sup>1569</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.17-20, quoting F.E.A. Bateman (1948) p.19

<sup>1570</sup> SHC, 'A summary of the efforts made by the State Housing Commission of Western Australia in providing housing for natives in the post war years', (undated, c.1968)



shelters and communal ablution blocks were provided. The DNW recognised that some occupants of camping reserves took up long-term residence, but refused to provide more substantial shelters, even simple cottages, on the grounds that those Aboriginal families requiring such homes could apply for an SHC residence.<sup>1571</sup>

The DNW operated several hostels in Perth in the 1950s for transient Aboriginal persons visiting the city, including Alvan House, Bennett House and McDonald House. Bennett House, opened in 1931, appears to have been the only one of these hostels remaining in operation as a government-run institution by the 1960s. The hostel, designed for around 30 people, was well-used. For example, in 1962 it accommodated 429 people, mostly for less than six weeks. Bennett House was eventually demolished as part of the redevelopment of East Perth in the 1990s.<sup>1572</sup> Alvan House appears to have been renamed Katukutu Hostel, taken over by the Baptist Union and run as a boarding facility for 'young Aboriginal men training and in employment in the metropolitan area'.<sup>1573</sup> McDonald House was operated by the Anglican Missionary Council, with a similar remit. It relocated from Carr Street West Perth to Vale Street Mount

<sup>1571</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.61-62

<sup>1572</sup> Gregory, *City of Light*, 2003, pp.25, 162&325; Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.510

<sup>1573</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.516

Lawley in 1963, with the new premises a repurposed 1920s residence. Both Alvan and McDonald Houses appear to have ceased functioning as Aboriginal hostels in the 1980s.<sup>1574</sup>

The first comprehensive scheme for Aboriginal housing was the federally-funded Native Housing Scheme of 1953. It aimed to provide homes for Aboriginal families who showed inclination to join white society, especially those judged likely to pay rent, maintain a home and look after their possessions.<sup>1575</sup> Initially 25 homes were erected, using a standard plan that was a 'forerunner' to the '79A' standard plan. By 1957, 87 homes had been built, mostly Type 79A.<sup>1576</sup>

The Type 79A standard plan was a timber-framed house featuring a large central living area with all other rooms including kitchen, bathroom/laundry and bedrooms as louvered sleep-outs surrounding the central area. No heating was provided and gaps were purposefully left in case local authorities later wanted the roof height raised. Many of these homes were poorly constructed, such as the use of green timber. One tenant described the house as 'a large covered in birdcage'.<sup>1577</sup>

The first mention of Aboriginal housing in the SHC's annual reports is in 1954, when it is noted that 'a special type of house for Natives' had been developed, using the labour-only pre-cut method. It was designed to have 'all the features for good standard living' while keeping costs as low as possible. The Commission planned to sell these homes under Leasehold condition to 'Natives who are deserving of better living conditions' in both the Metropolitan and regional areas. The first such home was erected in York in 1954.<sup>1578</sup> The first Metropolitan example, also built in 1954, was at Eden Hill. Both the York and Eden Hill houses were built on land owned by the Aboriginal families.<sup>1579</sup> It was reported at the time that the SHC had purchased the land from them to erect the houses. No other information has been located regarding this, and it is not known what the situation of land title was for families who later left the houses. By late 1954, 'special type' Aboriginal residences were completed or under construction at



First Metropolitan Aboriginal house, Eden Hill

*SHC, Annual Report, 1956, also printed in the Sunday Times, Sunday 28 November 1954 p.4*

<sup>1574</sup> HCWA preliminary reviews, P05687 Alvan House and P09959 McDonald House, both December 2008; Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.517

<sup>1575</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.94-98, quote from p.98

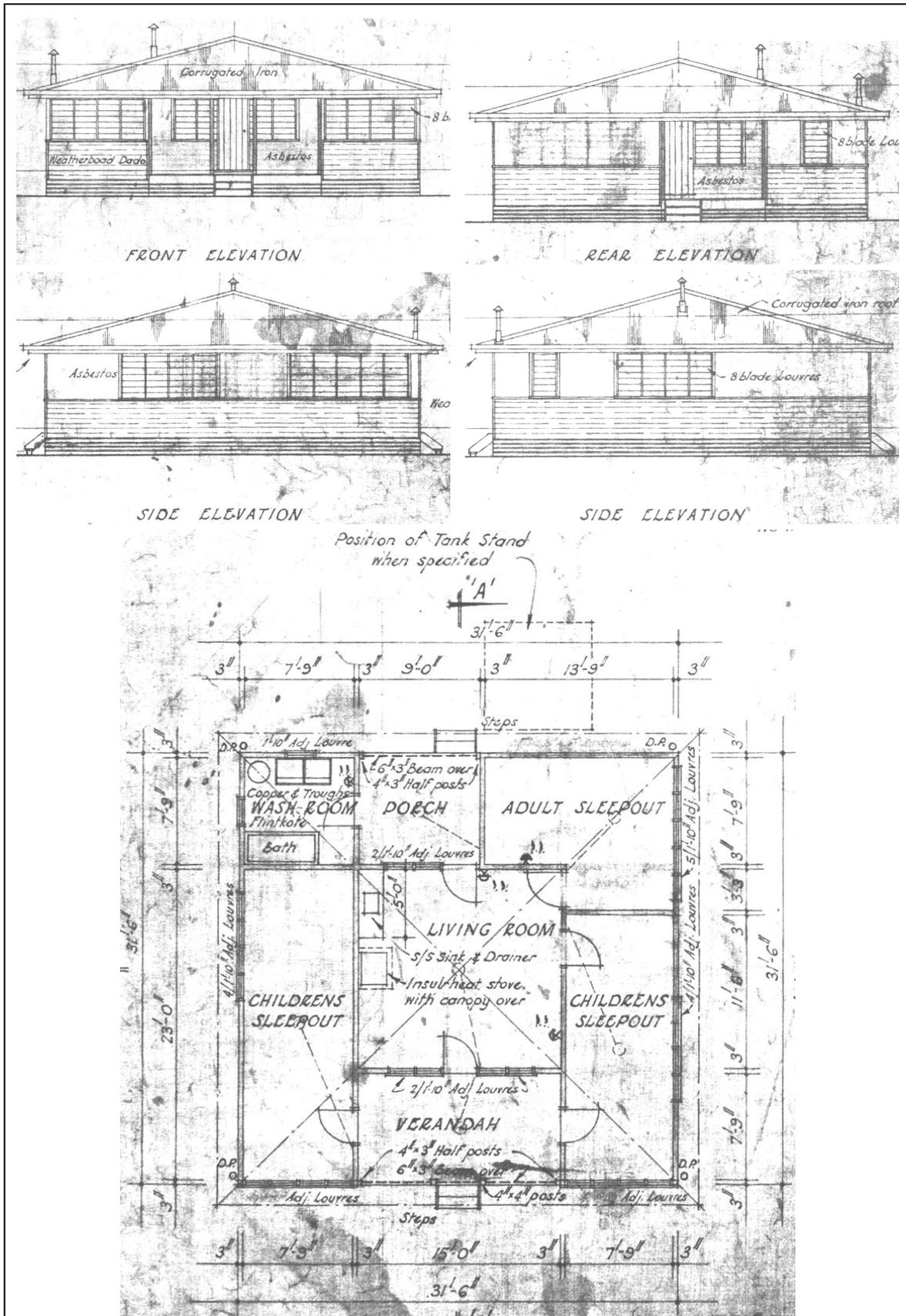
<sup>1576</sup> SHC, 'A summary of the efforts', (undated, c.1968)

<sup>1577</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.94-98, quote from p.98

<sup>1578</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1954*, quotes from pp.11&13

<sup>1579</sup> Department of Housing

[http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Centenary\\_Aboriginal%20housing%20history\\_part%201.pdf](http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Centenary_Aboriginal%20housing%20history_part%201.pdf) accessed 5 June 2014



Plans for Type 79A Aboriginal housing, drawn by SHC July 1974

SHC, 'A summary of the efforts', Plan 2

Bassendean (3), York (4), Pingelly (1), Collie (2), Broome (4), Derby (2) and Wyndham (2).<sup>1580</sup> The following year, 44 were built in Metropolitan and country locations. The design was intended to cater for 'usually large' Aboriginal families.<sup>1581</sup> As such, it featured 'ample verandah sleeping space'.<sup>1582</sup> The overarching philosophy was one of assimilation, and providing suitable housing was seen as a means to this end. The housing, however, was limited, substandard and often conspicuously different.<sup>1583</sup>

These homes were made available at lower cost than regular SHC homes, requiring a £25 deposit and 40 year repayment. They were integrated into SHC housing developments, in an attempt to prevent 'yet another Native Community'. It was hoped that as a result 'the better type of hard-working native or half-caste' would no longer have to 'live under most sub-standard conditions in the Native Reserve'.<sup>1584</sup> However, despite being located among 'white' homes, the Aboriginal homes of the 1950s stood out as distinct, drab buildings, unattractive for tenants or neighbours.<sup>1585</sup> Within two years, 82 Aboriginal families were accommodated by the Commission – 54 in the specially designed houses, seven in regular SHC houses, and another 21 in rental properties. The scheme was reported as 'generally successful' and the Commission determined to 'pursue the policy of providing better type homes for natives who show indication of their ability to reach the standards necessary for assimilation'.<sup>1586</sup>

After three years of providing Aboriginal housing, the SHC had assisted over 100 Aboriginal families into homes. The Commission noted that there was often initial objection from neighbours to placing an Aboriginal family amongst a 'white' community, but believed that most communities accepted these families as neighbours if they met 'reasonable domestic and social standards'. To facilitate integration, a new design was developed that was less conspicuously different to standard SHC designs, although continuing to provide additional living space.<sup>1587</sup>

By 1958, 112 Aboriginal families had been housed by the SHC, but only 80 remained in SHC housing. The other 22 families had either been evicted 'for failing to meet rental and domestic obligations' or left voluntarily when unable to pay rent in arrears. The Commission received criticism for its provision of Aboriginal housing, apparently along the lines of SHC housing failing to assimilate Aboriginal families into white society. Little more than half of those remaining in SHC homes were considered by the Commission to 'have domestic and social standards and a sense of financial responsibility equal to any whites', but this was particularly notable as Aboriginal families moving into SHC housing at the time were understood to have largely come from 'very crude and insanitary bush humpies' of 'scrap and bark'. The Commission appealed for further help from local organisations to aid Aboriginal families in undertaking such a seismic cultural shift, from bush camps to European suburbs, recognising that 'without positive cooperation and local guidance, it is asking too much of those native families to meet all normal tenancy obligations'... 'It is earnestly hoped that in this age of social enlightenment more local bodies will volunteer to assist the official effort to overcome white prejudice to dark skins'.<sup>1588</sup>

In 1960, the period of specially-designed Aboriginal housing was described as 'a social housing experiment', in which only 20% of occupants met obligations and a further 20% met obligations when 'given guidance or kept under observation'. The Commission claimed to maintain a non-discriminatory approach to its general housing program, providing homes regardless of skin colour provided tenants

<sup>1580</sup> *Sunday Times*, Sun 28 November 1954, p.4

<sup>1581</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1955, quote from p.18

<sup>1582</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956, quote from p.16

<sup>1583</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.92-93

<sup>1584</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956, quote from p.16

<sup>1585</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.94-98, quote from p.98

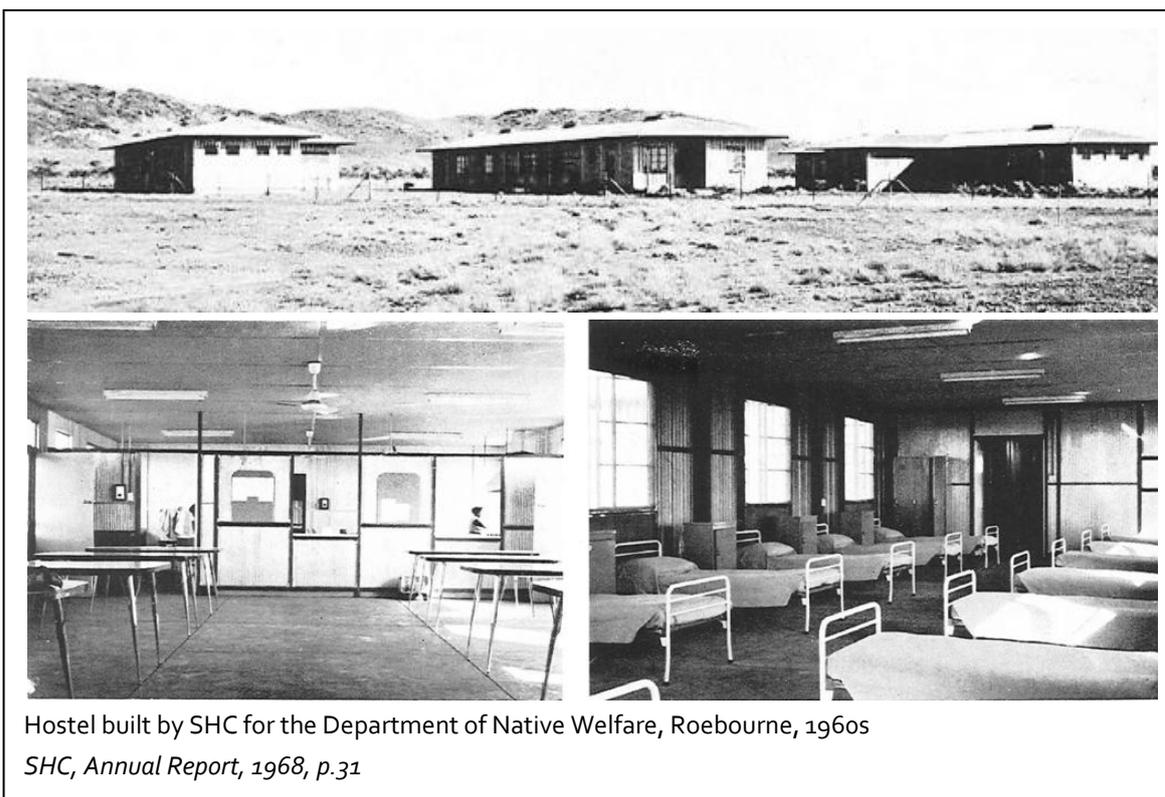
<sup>1586</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1956, quote from p.16

<sup>1587</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1957, p.15

<sup>1588</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1958, quotes from p.13

paid their rent and were clean and socially inoffensive. In the context of Aboriginal housing, it asserted that housing 'subeconomic and/or substandard families' was a social problem requiring community response, and was not the responsibility of the Commission.<sup>1589</sup> It attempted to hand its existing Aboriginal homes to the Native Welfare Department, but this was rejected. Commission involvement in Aboriginal housing construction, however, dropped back to only hostels, transitional houses, ablution blocks and miscellaneous structures.<sup>1590</sup> Seventy per cent of the specially designed Aboriginal homes were designated a 'financial failure', with some demolished and some 'remodelled and re-occupied by white families'.<sup>1591</sup>

In 1960-61, the SHC designed Aboriginal children's hostels at Halls Creek and Nullagine for the DNW.<sup>1592</sup> After 1948, primary school was compulsory for Aboriginal children and several children's hostels were established to bring children close to schools during term time, even where this meant separation from their families. Nine government children's hostels were in use by 1974, at Halls Creek, Marble Bar, Roebourne, Onslow, Cue, Leonora, Yalgoo, Port Hedland and Boulder. The government also owned and fitted out several accommodation facilities managed by private agencies, such as Applecross Cottage, Ardross Hostel, Bedford Park Hostel (for young Aboriginal women secretarial students), Constance Street Hostel Mount Yokine, Geraldton Youths' Hostel, Innamincka Hostel Greenmount, Katukutu Hostel Mount Lawley, Kve Wong Hostel Como, Myera Hostel Subiaco, Oceanview Hostel Mosman Park and Warminda Boys Hostel Bentley. These hostels were often to cater for 10-20 individuals with a resident manager/house parent, and were most likely large 'ordinary' residences.<sup>1593</sup>



Hostel built by SHC for the Department of Native Welfare, Roebourne, 1960s  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1968, p.31*

<sup>1589</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 19-60*

<sup>1590</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.100

<sup>1591</sup> SHC, 'A summary of the efforts', (undated, c.1968)

<sup>1592</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1962*

<sup>1593</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.510-522

*Places that remain in 2014*

## 1950s Aboriginal housing

Only twelve DOH properties dating 1954 to 1959 remain identified as former Aboriginal housing. Of these, only three are of materials that could indicate they were constructed as 1950s Aboriginal housing (Quairading 1955, Bruce Rock 1958, Halls Creek 1959).

However, as the 'experimental' scheme of the 1950s was a home ownership scheme, and those homes that were vacated by Aboriginal families and reverted to the SHC were reportedly largely converted for use by white families, it is unlikely that examples remain earmarked as former Aboriginal housing in DOH property lists.

## Aboriginal hostels (government-owned)

None of government-owned hostels listed in the 1974 Royal Commission remain in DOH ownership.

HCWA includes Katukutu Hostel in its database as P05687 Alvan House, Mount Lawley. It has it earmarked along with P09959 McDonald House Mount Lawley for future assessment as a pair. In 2008, McDonald House was noted as in SHC ownership, but it is not shown in 2014 DOH property lists. The fate of other hostels is unknown.

*For an overview analysis of Aboriginal housing from all periods, see the end of [Section 21.5](#)*

### 21.1 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (1953-1972)

Aboriginal reserves had existed since the nineteenth century, but camping reserves on the edge of towns became more heavily used from the 1940s as post-war agriculture expanded and increasing numbers of Aboriginal farm labourers used the reserves.<sup>1594</sup>

From 1953, a system of transitional housing was developed, as it was felt the problems experienced with standard housing were largely the result of Aboriginal occupants without social and domestic skills required for suburban living. Camps on the fringe of country towns provided small unlined two-room cottages as 'training camps' for Aboriginal families to prove their 'worthiness' for more standard SHC housing. Facilities were so limited that some Aboriginal families preferred to erect traditional shelters nearby rather than live in substandard government housing. Despite assimilationist rhetoric, transitional housing was in fact segregationist practice.<sup>1595</sup>

The DNW was responsible for the transitional housing scheme. By 1953, housing was one of the department's biggest budget lines. Housing was seen as fundamental to stated government policy of assimilating Aboriginal Australians into a 'single Australian community'. There were three stages of 'transition': 'primary transitional', where families were housed together on reserves on the outskirts of towns, 'standard transitional', where families were provided 'rudimentary houses with ablution facilities on the outskirts of regional towns', and, 'conventional', where families were moved to a townhouse 'indistinguishable' from others in the street. 'Transition' was to depend on meeting domestic criteria at each level. Given the poor standard of the housing, these criteria were extremely difficult to meet.<sup>1596</sup> In addition, insufficient stage two or three houses were ever constructed to allow even qualifying Aboriginal families to 'transition'.<sup>1597</sup>

Town reserves were crowded and unhygienic, often accommodating families from different language and cultural groups. Reserve sites were frequently inappropriate, such as being exposed to prevailing weather or providing little shade in summer. Communal amenities included cold showers, wash troughs and toilets, and were often unserviceable. Commentators identified these forced housing conditions as breeding anti-government and anti-society attitudes. A 1970 report described transitional reserves as 'rural black slum ghettos... not conducive to healthy and hygienic living' and 'utterly inadequate' for raising children, as the 'location, design, construction, size, fittings, amenities and furnishings' were far below even minimum SHC standards.<sup>1598</sup>

The transitional housing scheme was first implemented in Geraldton.<sup>1599</sup> Aboriginal families were forcibly moved into the new housing. A former resident of 1950s reserve housing at Geraldton described it as having 'two bedrooms, one up each end, a kitchen in the middle, a big verandah along the front and hot and cold water for the shower recess', with toilets separate in a communal ablutions block. Others recalled steel-framed, metal-clad buildings without ceilings, where wall cladding reached neither the roof nor the bare concrete floor.<sup>1600</sup> There were three standard designs for transitional housing, all developed at Geraldton before being extended across the State. Type 1, 2 and 3 houses had one, two and three

<sup>1594</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.214-15

<sup>1595</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.98-101

<sup>1596</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.62-65

<sup>1597</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.4

<sup>1598</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.62-64

<sup>1599</sup> Bell, Kathy, 'The State Housing Commission and Aboriginal Housing, 1959', in T. Stannage & L. Layman (eds), *Celebrations in Western Australian History (Studies in Western Australian History Vol.10)*, UWA Press, Nedlands, April 1989, pp.32-36

<sup>1600</sup> Prout, Green & Anwar McHenry, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton', 2012, p.10, quoting Alice Nannup

rooms respectively, and a verandah. All were metal-framed and metal-clad. Initially these were built with second-hand materials, but by 1957 the inadequacy of this policy was evident and new materials were utilised. Type 3 homes were developed later, from around 1957, and built in large numbers from 1963 to 1965.<sup>1601</sup>

PRIMARY  
TRANSITIONAL  
GERALDTON  
TYPE III

STANDARD  
TRANSITIONAL  
GERALDTON  
TYPE V.

STANDARD  
TRANSITIONAL  
TYPE 64

CONVENTIONAL  
HOUSING

Stages of Aboriginal 'transitional' housing, 1953-1972  
*Furnell Royal Commission, 1974, p.509*

<sup>1601</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.214-15, 231

Transitional houses were constructed at Narrogin from 1958, with the first four completed in March 1959. Referred to as 'hutments', they were deliberately designed to be too small for guests, unlined and unceiled in keeping with an intention for the structures to be temporary dwellings, and supposedly accompanied with domestic training.<sup>1602</sup>

Aboriginal families could only acquire 'normal' housing in towns where that housing was linked with an employer, such as the Railways Department or a local council. West Australian Government Railways appears to have housed its Aboriginal workers in homes equivalent to the simple timber and weatherboard cottages non-Aboriginal railway workers lived in, although a tendency to house Aboriginal families in the railway cottages furthest from the centre of town was evident. Farms also at times provided accommodation for Aboriginal labourers and their families, although often only for the duration of seasonal work.<sup>1603</sup>

Although the 'transition' program was implemented in 1953, the first of the stage two 'standard transitional' houses were not constructed until 1959. The original plan was Type V, with a second standard plan, Type 64, designed in 1964. Type 64 homes continued to be erected through to at least the mid-1970s.<sup>1604</sup> The SHC constructed transitional housing on behalf of the DNW.<sup>1605</sup>

The first stage three 'conventional' residence was constructed in 1965, at Narrogin.<sup>1606</sup> The 1974 Royal Commission reported that only 35 'conventional' homes had been built by 1968, apparently where pressure from Local Councils required them. Lack of funding was blamed for the slow progress. Although discussed as a three-stage program, it is not clear that the DNW had any firm process in place to ensure its 'transition' policy actually made it to the third stage.<sup>1607</sup>

By the late 1960s, the number of 'transitional townhouses' being constructed for Aboriginal families was increasing.<sup>1608</sup> Transitional housing was also known as the 'town housing project'. The Native Welfare Department generally did not consult with the families it moved, and many either did not want to leave the reserves or did not want to go to the house or even the town where they were allocated housing. Many families left their 'transitional houses', either to return to reserves or, where accommodation at reserves had been demolished or otherwise occupied, to move to larger centres, especially Perth.<sup>1609</sup>

In 1966, census figures listed fewer than 1,000 Aboriginal people resident in the Perth Metropolitan area, of 13,000 Aboriginal persons counted in the State. This was the last census taken before Aboriginal people were formally included in population figures.<sup>1610</sup>

The Constitution was amended in 1967 to finally recognise all Aboriginal people as full citizens of Australia. The substandard living conditions of these 'new' citizens was immediately identified as a major concern, and as responsibility for Aboriginal affairs became a Federal area, more funding for housing was promised.<sup>1611</sup> Prior to this, Aboriginal affairs had not been a substantial national policy issue.<sup>1612</sup>

<sup>1602</sup> Bell, 'The State Housing Commission and Aboriginal Housing, 1959', in Stannage & Layman, *Celebrations in Western Australian History*, 1989, pp.32-36

<sup>1603</sup> Little, Ross, 'Two Generations of Housing in the South and Mid-West, Western Australia, 1960-95', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.171

<sup>1604</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.216

<sup>1605</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967

<sup>1606</sup> Bell, 'The State Housing Commission and Aboriginal Housing, 1959', in Stannage & Layman, *Celebrations in Western Australian History*, 1989, pp.32-36

<sup>1607</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.216

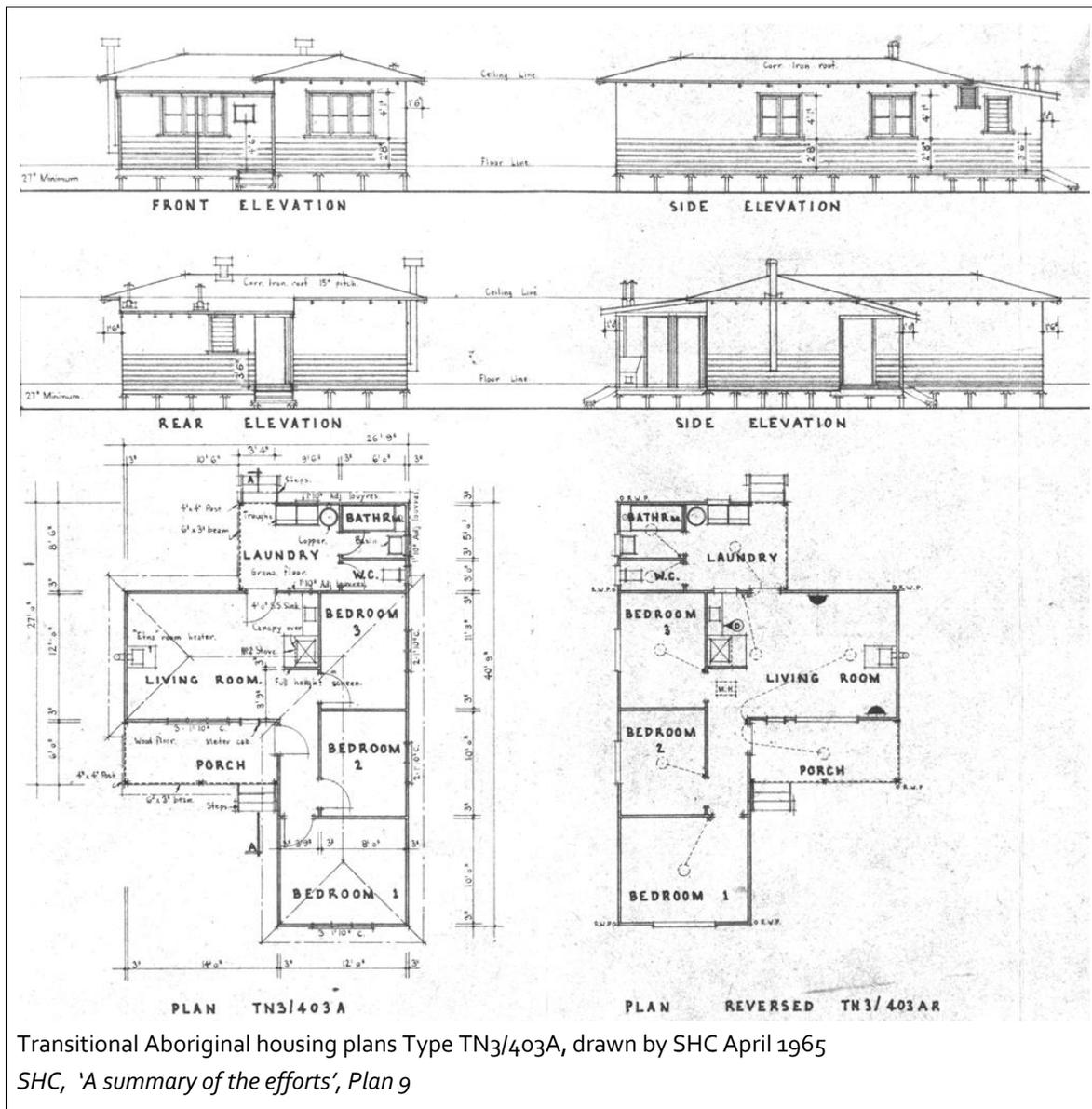
<sup>1608</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>1609</sup> Gregory, *City of Light*, 2003, pp.163-164

<sup>1610</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.63-64

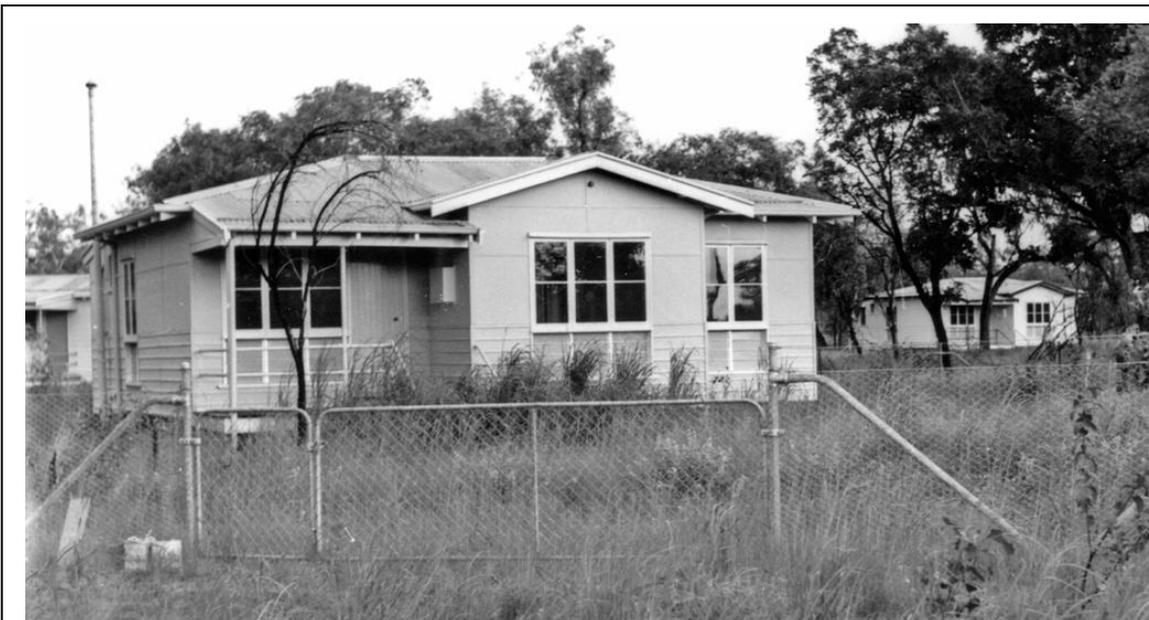
<sup>1611</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.100-01

<sup>1612</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.8



Prior to the 1970s, many Aboriginal families lived on pastoral properties as low-paid or unpaid pastoral labourers, particularly in the Kimberley region. Whole Aboriginal communities, including women and children, resided on the properties with basic necessities provided by the pastoralists. The pastoral properties that had encompassed their lands since the 1880s depended on their labour to remain viable. However, following the recognition of Aboriginal persons as citizens in 1967, the Federal Pastoral Award was applied to Aboriginal pastoral residents. Unable or unwilling to pay their Aboriginal workers, many pastoral properties expelled both the workers and their families. Paying minimum wages to a limited workforce, many contracted only at peak periods, rather than providing food, clothing and shelter for a permanent resident Aboriginal community was in many cases a cost saving. No alternate work or housing was provided. The move coincided with a slump in the pastoral industry, low international beef prices and, from the early 1970s, a general recession, with high unemployment nationally. As a result, increasing numbers of homeless and unemployed Aboriginal families moved into Northwest towns. Town reserves became severely overcrowded, even referred to as 'refugee camps'. The influx was particularly women and children, whose menfolk were often absent in search of transient labouring work.<sup>1613</sup>

<sup>1613</sup> Smith, Tony 'Aboriginal Labour and the Pastoral Industry in the Kimberley Division of Western Australia: 1960-1975', in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol.3 No.4 Oct 2003 pp.552-570



New house for an Aboriginal family prior to being occupied, Kununurra, 1967  
*Appears to be a 'Standard Transitional' Type 64 residence. Note identical residence beyond.*  
*Western Australian Government Photographer, SLWA collection 008852D*

In 1967, the DNW noted 773 homes in the State provided for Aboriginal persons. Of these, 487 (63%) were residences at transitional reserves. A further 251 (32.5%) were 'standard transitional' or 'transitional townhouses' with only 35 houses (4.5%) being 'conventional' housing. As almost 2,000 Aboriginal persons had been noted the previous year as living on DNW-administered Aboriginal reserves across the State, it is clear the 487 transitional shelters at these reserves were extremely overcrowded. Only 98 Aboriginal residences of any sort were listed in the 'Central Division', which included both the Wheatbelt and the Metropolitan area, of which twelve were conventional dwellings, 33 transitional houses and 53 transitional reserve housing. This suggests that many of the 1,000 Metropolitan Aboriginal residents identified in the 1966 census were living in ordinary housing not provided by the DNW, or were homeless.<sup>1614</sup>

Aboriginal housing in the 1960s was designed and built by the SHC but administered by the DNW.<sup>1615</sup> Prior to 1968, it does not appear in the annual SHC housing statistics. At June 1968, SHC listed 575 houses constructed for the DNW, of which only nine were in the metropolitan area, and 74 had been erected in the preceding year.<sup>1616</sup> This is significantly less than the DNW's 1967 figures, indicating not all DNW housing was constructed by the SHC.

Reserves began to be dismantled from 1969, apart from use as transit accommodation. The number of 'primary transitional' homes built on reserves peaked at 487 in 1967, after which these structures began to be demolished. Federal funding increased following the 1967 referendum acknowledging Aboriginal citizenship. One hundred 'conventional' homes were built in the 1968-69, and around that many each year through to at least 1972. By June 1972, there were 425 'conventional' Aboriginal homes in the State and 297 'standard transitional' homes. Over 400 'primary transitional' houses also remained.<sup>1617</sup>

<sup>1614</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.64

<sup>1615</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1967

<sup>1616</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1968

<sup>1617</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.215-16

Many families did not want to leave the reserves, despite their poor conditions. They were still barred from many facilities in white towns and treated as unwelcome residents. Local authorities at times took the extreme measure of bulldozing camps to ensure residents could not continue to live there. The lack of suitable housing for Aboriginal families exacerbated the removal of children, as poor housing was the norm, and was used as a pretext for institutionalising children. Despite official DNW policies from the 1960s moving towards keeping Aboriginal children with their families, an 'obstinate culture of removal' remained.<sup>1618</sup>

Despite mounting evidence of the failure of the transitional housing policy, the DNW continued to actively advocate and pursue the approach into the 1970s. In contrast, the SHC concluded the program was not working and did not continue it after taking over Aboriginal housing. The failure of the program, however, was largely blamed on Aboriginal residents being not sufficiently 'civilised' to manage regular housing, rather than admitting to inadequacies in the quality or quantity of housing that had been provided.<sup>1619</sup>

*Places that remain in 2014 – this chapter*

The reserves were completely dismantled and all Stage One ('Primary') transitional housing is believed to have been removed. DOH retains only two steel-framed iron-clad houses from the 1950s or 1960s, at Wyndham (1956) and Kendenup (1964). The latter is identified as former Aboriginal housing and may relate to the transitional housing scheme.

DOH retains 26 former Aboriginal residences constructed between 1959 and 1964, which may be Stage Two ('Standard') transitional houses. In addition to the Kendenup example cited above, seven others have light-weight cladding (all asbestos) which are more likely to be Stage Two houses than the masonry examples. These seven are at Halls Creek (1959), Narrogin (1962), Carey Park (1964), Rangeway (1964), Kellerberrin (1964) and Merredin (1964).

DOH retains 142 former Aboriginal residences dated 1965 to 1971 and another 82 from 1972. Around half are masonry or masonry veneer.

<sup>1618</sup> Haebich, Anna, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000, pp.516-17, 524-25

<sup>1619</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.64-65

## 21.2 SHC TAKES OVER FROM DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE WELFARE (1972-1980S)

Responsibility for housing Aboriginal persons was transferred to the SHC from the DNW from 1 July 1972. In southern areas, it was intended to incorporate Aboriginal applicants into standard SHC homes as part of policies of 'integration/assimilation'. In remote northern and eastern communities, a policy of creating 'village housing' was pursued.<sup>1620</sup> See [Section 21.3](#).

The legal definition of an Aboriginal person changed in 1972 from the *Native Welfare Act* definition of 'a person having more than one-quarter Aboriginal blood' to less prescriptive terms allowing all those identifying as and recognised by their community as Aboriginal to be legally accepted as such.<sup>1621</sup>

The shift of responsibility for housing was part of a program at State level to move administration of all Aboriginal matters into relevant mainstream departments, mostly the SHC and the Department of Community Welfare. The Department of Native Welfare was subsequently abolished.<sup>1622</sup>

After the DNW was closed, Aboriginal town reserves became the responsibility of the Department for Community Welfare (DCW). The DCW aimed to close the reserves and move residents into nearby towns, but this took many years to achieve.<sup>1623</sup> Moora town reserve closed in 1978, at which time it was 'one of the last of the big Aboriginal reserves to be closed'. Residents were moved into SHC housing in Moora.<sup>1624</sup>

After taking on responsibility for Aboriginal housing, the SHC undertook further research to determine the extent of Aboriginal housing needs. It found that of 30,000 people of Aboriginal descent in the State, only 5,000 were adequately housed. Around 18,000 Aboriginal people lived in urban areas and the remainder were considered 'tribal'. In the first year of its Aboriginal housing responsibilities, SHC housed 533 Aboriginal families and acknowledged it may take ten years to house the whole Aboriginal population. Aboriginal houses were integrated into 'white' communities. They were designed to outwardly look the same as any other SHC house, while internally they were modified 'for harder usage and easier cleaning'. 'Villages' for 'tribal' people were to be prioritised, with the goal of completing twelve within five years.<sup>1625</sup> The SHC estimated around 1973 that half of the State's Aboriginal population would request a conventional home and the remainder would prefer communal living of some sort.<sup>1626</sup>

Within two years of taking on Aboriginal housing, the Commission had housed 1,055 Aboriginal families, bringing the total number it accommodated to 1,300. The Commission employed six supervisors, four of Aboriginal descent, to assist with placing Aboriginal families into metropolitan homes, including following them up after placement in a supervisory role until the Commission was confident they were meeting normal rental requirements. The Commission also worked closely with the Community Welfare Department to assist Aboriginal tenants. As many, especially in remote areas, were unable to purchase furniture, the Commission worked with the PWD furniture office to provide furniture for some of its Aboriginal clients.<sup>1627</sup> This was generally 'durable metal furniture'.<sup>1628</sup>

<sup>1620</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*

<sup>1621</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.6

<sup>1622</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.27

<sup>1623</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.65

<sup>1624</sup> 'The sudden death of sad slum', *The West Australian*, 14 July 1984, <http://www.noongarculture.org.au/moora-out-of-town-reserve-closed/>

<sup>1625</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*, quotes from p.5

<sup>1626</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.222

<sup>1627</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>1628</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.227



Four-bedroom home erected for the Department of Native Welfare, 1960s  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1970, p.41*

The Whitlam Labor government, which came to power in 1972, was keen to both address Aboriginal disadvantage, measured in both socio-economic and health terms, and to improve Aboriginal self-determination through consultation procedures. However, consultation was a slow process, and the need to improve housing conditions pressing, so much funding to address disadvantage in the 1970s was spent on housing projects with little involvement from the Aboriginal communities they would house.<sup>1629</sup>

The SHC deliberately integrated its Aboriginal housing throughout the suburbs of Perth and large regional centres by 'sprinkling' families up to an official 'saturation point' of Aboriginal households in any area. A typical application of the policy might see two Aboriginal houses in a street, at diagonally opposite ends. In some instances, Aboriginal families were housed close to each other, and in towns with high Aboriginal populations Aboriginal housing was clustered.<sup>1630</sup> To assist with dispersing its Aboriginal tenants, the SHC undertook a buy-in program to purchase homes from its existing rental stock for use in its Aboriginal housing program. Although it was aware of Aboriginal culture of hospitality towards kin, the SHC 'nevertheless decided the object was to house them in conventional housing', resulting in overcrowding.<sup>1631</sup>

Problems of housing Aboriginal families in conventional houses continued to be viewed as largely due to Aboriginal tenants' lack of domestic skills. Non-Aboriginal administrators speculated that this may have been because Aboriginal adults had no experience of living in a 'regular' home as they had been children when such houses had not been available to Aboriginal people. A 'Homemaker' program was established in the 1970s to train Aboriginal clients in the 'proper' occupation of a conventional home, including 'domestic chores, household hygiene, budgeting and spending priorities, home planning, parental responsibilities and garden care'.<sup>1632</sup>

In 1974, a Royal Commission reported into a range of matters impacting Aboriginal quality of life in Western Australia, including housing. It noted with approval the separation of housing governance into policies for 'urban' and for 'tribal' Aboriginal people, advocated moves to train 'urban' Aboriginal tenants in European approaches to house occupancy with an aim of full assimilation, recommended employing Aboriginal labourers on housing projects wherever possible, and suggested larger-than-standard houses

<sup>1629</sup> Ross, 'Landscape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.8

<sup>1630</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.65-66

<sup>1631</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.223&229

<sup>1632</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.232-35

could be provided for Aboriginal families. Overall, the Royal Commission's report was very positive about the Government's work in Aboriginal housing in the 1970s, noting it was an underfunded, understaffed and generally difficult field to operate in.<sup>1633</sup>

The Royal Commission reported that some SHC homes for Aboriginal tenants were modified to have internal walls lined with painted, fluted metal to allow for easy maintenance in response to the 'robust living standards' of residents. It was intended that these could be replaced with more standard plasterboard or asbestos linings if the tenants' 'domestic standards' became more like 'the White community in which they are living'.<sup>1634</sup> The Royal Commission did not voice any concern at this practice.

Describing Aboriginal reserves of the Northwest in 1974, the Royal Commission '[found] it difficult to discover sufficiently condemnatory adjectives' yet also noted that, notwithstanding obvious health concerns in the manner reserves were being maintained, some residents did not want to move into more substantial shelters if it meant less connection with their land.<sup>1635</sup>

The Royal Commission's report demonstrates the struggle even educated, compassionate and well-meaning non-Aboriginal Australians had to either conceptualise the reality of Aboriginal life or imagine a diverse range of appropriate, Aboriginal-driven responses to myriad social, political and economic issues for Aboriginal communities of the 1970s. For example, Commissioner Furnell demonstrated an admirable depth of understanding of the historic, social and cultural background that led to the state of Aboriginal housing in the early 1970s. However, he also considered the concept of 'half' or 'quarter' caste Aboriginal persons relevant in shaping policy, expressed concern at the growing 'caste' population, especially in southern regions, and maintained an admiration for 'full blood Aborigines' continuing traditional cultural practices, particularly in remote areas. Although recognising a range of Aboriginal housing aspirations and home lives, from semi-nomadic temporary shelters to suburban homes of western design and standard, Furnell also praised the 'success' of 'quite a large number of Aboriginal families who have succeeded in the march of integration to the point of being quite competent, able and satisfied occupants of modern dwellings'.<sup>1636</sup>

In addition to the 'village' settlements slowly constructed for Northwest Aboriginal communities, urban residences and occasional remote housing was provided. In 1974-75, 118 houses for Aboriginal families were completed, including 45 units at Roebourne for families moving off the reserve. Most of the houses (67) were in the Northwest, a further 39 were in country areas and the remaining 12 were Metropolitan.<sup>1637</sup>

In 1975, the *Federal Racial Discrimination Act* was passed, making it unlawful to discriminate against persons on the basis of race.<sup>1638</sup> Aboriginal families had already in principle been able to apply for regular SHC homes. However, in practice few were accepted and those that were often found themselves evicted, or living in homes not designed for their family sizes and cultural practices.<sup>1639</sup>

The 1975 Henderson Report into poverty in Australia found that well over half the Aboriginal population was living in poverty. Lack of solid data meant this proportion could even have been higher. Urban Aboriginal people, who fared better than those in rural and remote areas, had been recorded with

<sup>1633</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, housing recommendations pp.458-60

<sup>1634</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.223

<sup>1635</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.218-19

<sup>1636</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, quote from p.212

<sup>1637</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1975*

<sup>1638</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.39

<sup>1639</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.8-9

poverty levels as high as 59%, with the majority of these identified as 'very poor'. Housing for many was 'substandard and overcrowded' and in non-urban areas around 20% were living in 'improvised dwellings' such as tents, garages, sheds or 'humpies'. Significant, documented prejudice was keeping Aboriginal tenants out of private rental housing, but numbers in government rental or purchasing their own homes were small (in Brisbane, the only area for which data was given in the report, 12% were in government rentals and 8% owned or were purchasing their home). Bureaucratic application processes were identified as a barrier to Aboriginal applicants receiving government housing and a form of indirect discrimination.<sup>1640</sup>

In the mid-1970s, there were increasing public protests by Aboriginal groups demanding improved housing and better treatment as tenants. In 1975, a protest in Kellerberrin complained of eviction threats based on subjective assessments of domestic standards. In 1976, a march of about 100 people ended with a sit-in at the SHC's East Perth headquarters.<sup>1641</sup>

Lobbying for Aboriginal housing tended to focus on redressing Aboriginal disadvantage, with particular emphasis on the quantity of available housing. The need for culturally appropriate housing, although widely recognised as a significant factor in enabling healthy Aboriginal communities, over many years received less attention in funding and policy initiatives. Culturally appropriate design, if applied, had the potential to influence both individual housing units and the layout of settlements.<sup>1642</sup>

While housing has been a major priority and budget item in funding for Aboriginal affairs since the 1970s, the greatest priority for Aboriginal activism was land. Housing appears to have been more of a non-Aboriginal priority, possibly pursued as an identifiable and measurable symbol of aid for disadvantaged Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives on the provision of Aboriginal housing have almost always been somewhat different.<sup>1643</sup>

From 1972 to 1978, the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) funded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Aboriginal Housing Panel, a national body to design alternate housing for Aboriginal communities. After its funding was discontinued in 1978, no national body for such design was in place up to at least 2000.<sup>1644</sup>

From the early 1970s, direct Commonwealth funding was available to Aboriginal housing associations, including some in urban areas. Some funding was also directed to Aboriginal Hostels Ltd (AHL), a branch of DAA that provided town hostels for transient Aboriginal occupants. By the end of the 1990s, AHL operated 150 such hostels across Australia. Most Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal housing, however, continued to be directed through the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements*, administered by State housing authorities.<sup>1645</sup>

The SHC struggled in its provision of Aboriginal housing. From 1972 to 1976, the Commission housed 1,788 Aboriginal families. A waiting list of 800 families remained at June 1976, with the commission estimating it could provide around 100 additional houses the following year. Aboriginal families increasingly moved into the city, 'causing more overcrowding and social problems', particularly as many

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<sup>1640</sup> Henderson, *Commission of Inquiry into Poverty*, 1975, pp.258-61, 263-67, quote from p.263

<sup>1641</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, pp.106-07

<sup>1642</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.4-5

<sup>1643</sup> Sanders, Will, 'Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future: The Unfinished History of Australian Indigenous Housing', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.239-240

<sup>1644</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, p.9

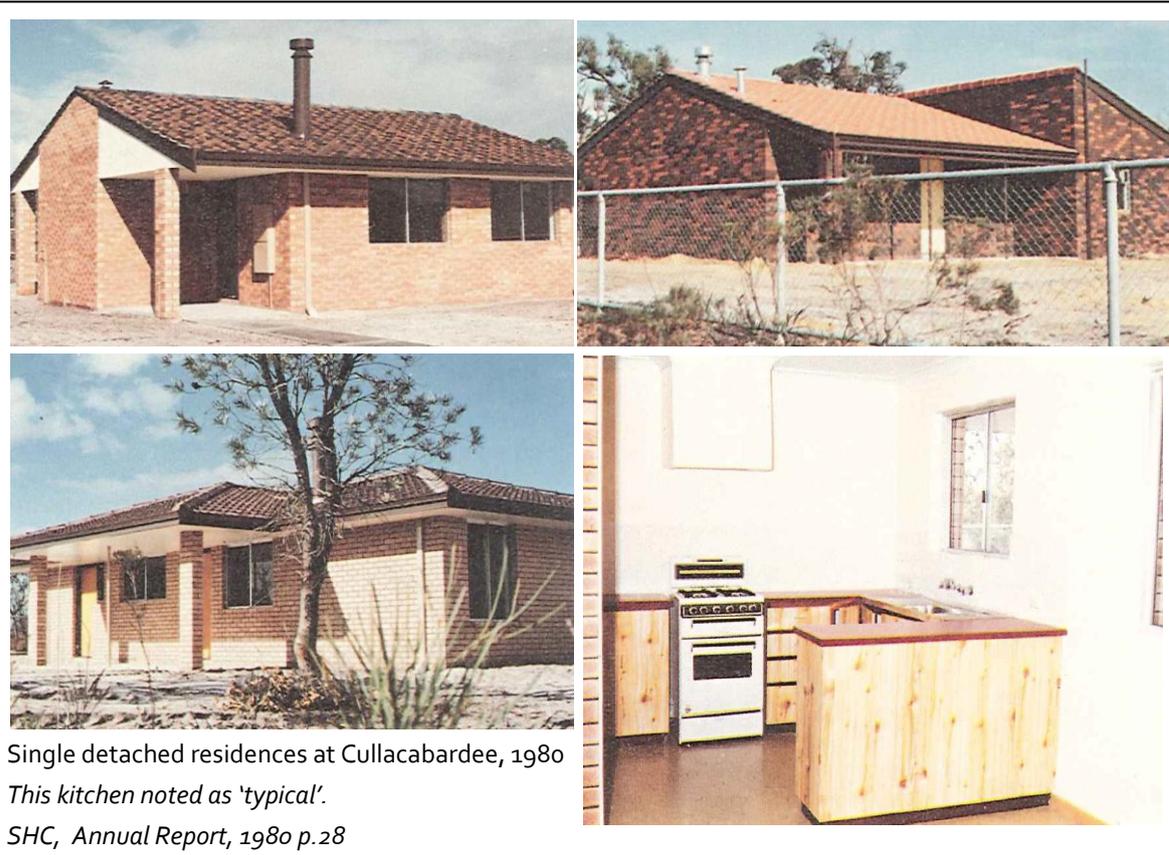
<sup>1645</sup> Ross, 'Lifescape and Lived Experience', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.8-11

Aboriginal reserves were being closed and country housing was in short supply.<sup>1646</sup> In 1976, the SHC expressed the challenges it faced:

*'Many varying points of view exist on the proper approach to housing aboriginals, and some that were unresolved were – whether the housing should be dispersed amongst Caucasian populations; should it be conventional urban housing; what degree of support services was necessary; just what do the aboriginal people themselves want?'*<sup>1647</sup>

A key issue in addressing Aboriginal housing was determining the balance between State and Federal financial responsibility. The SHC continued to see itself as an agency providing a housing service, not welfare, and as such was reluctant to provide Aboriginal housing where it predicted it would be required to cover concessions and rental losses.<sup>1648</sup> A three-year agreement between the State and the Commonwealth on the matter of Aboriginal housing came into force on 1 July 1978. Matters of the shared Commonwealth-State responsibility for Aboriginal housing were clarified, and the Commonwealth agreed to responsibility for 50% of the annual rental losses for Aboriginal housing. It appears most Aboriginal people were still not eligible for housing under the Commission's regular programs.<sup>1649</sup>

Aboriginal housing continued to be challenging. By June 1977, 2,207 Aboriginal families had been housed and another 1,103 remained on waiting lists. New initiatives in the preceding year had been to start a 'self-help housing project' at Saunders Street, Henley Brook, and to house a group of Aboriginal pensioners in transportable homes in the bush near Collie.<sup>1650</sup> The majority of those awaiting housing



<sup>1646</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1976

<sup>1647</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1976, quote from p.7

<sup>1648</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.109

<sup>1649</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1979

<sup>1650</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1977

were outside the Metropolitan area.<sup>1651</sup>

The Saunders Street project used 'panelised' construction of the sort used in the Kimberley 'village' projects. This consisted of load bearing walls of asbestos sheeting with foam infill and 'timber gang nail roof trusses with steel decking'. It was intended to be accessible for the use of unskilled labour.<sup>1652</sup>

From 1978, an Aboriginal advisory board was established to assist the Commission, comprising representatives from Western Australian Aboriginal groups.<sup>1653</sup> This board was formalised in 1978-79 as the Aboriginal Housing Board. However, provision of Aboriginal housing was very slow. In 1978-79, only 40 urban houses were completed, which the Commission blamed on a lack of Commonwealth funding.<sup>1654</sup>

By June 1979, the SHC had housed 2,920 Aboriginal families, with 629 (21%) in homes built or purchased specifically for Aboriginal housing.<sup>1655</sup> However, Aboriginal homelessness remained a huge problem. In 1979, Ivan Yarran of the Black Action Group led a protest outside the SHC's East Perth offices alleging that 400 Commission units were vacant while 3,000-4,000 Aboriginal persons were homeless.<sup>1656</sup>

Aboriginal housing continued to lag well behind demand into the 1980s. The Commission blamed this primarily on insufficient Commonwealth funding. Funds for Aboriginal housing were received both by way of the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements* and through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and it appears the Commission was not prepared to put its own funds towards Aboriginal housing.<sup>1657</sup>

Most Aboriginal housing policy assumed all non-remote Aboriginal persons desired to live in 'conventional' suburban housing. The construction of Cullacabardee Aboriginal Village at Beechboro/Ballajura, completed in 1980, was a rare recognition of varying Aboriginal housing needs, with 27 detached houses, three cottages, a community centre, and a camping area for transient residents.<sup>1658</sup>

The *State Housing Act* of 1980, which replaced the post-war Act and came into effect in 1981, included provision for substantial expansion of Aboriginal housing.<sup>1659</sup>

Flooding at Carnarvon in June 1980 displaced Aboriginal families from the Aboriginal reserve, which at the time included around 22 camps totalling up to 150 residences, comprising metal sheds, tents and humpies.<sup>1660</sup> Land was subsequently set aside on the edge of the town (Boor Street) for a development of 44 residences, the first 16 of which were completed in 1981 and the remainder the following year. A complex of eight aged persons' units was also built closer to the centre of Carnarvon (Quince St).<sup>1661</sup>

At Halls Creek, 15 units for Aboriginal pensioners were constructed in 1981 in 'the Gardens area of Halls Creek'. The intention was to move residents into these homes and demolish the existing accommodation on the Aboriginal reserve.<sup>1662</sup>

<sup>1651</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

<sup>1652</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1977

<sup>1653</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1978

<sup>1654</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1979

<sup>1655</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1979

<sup>1656</sup> Gregory, *City of Light*, 2003, p.170.

<sup>1657</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1981

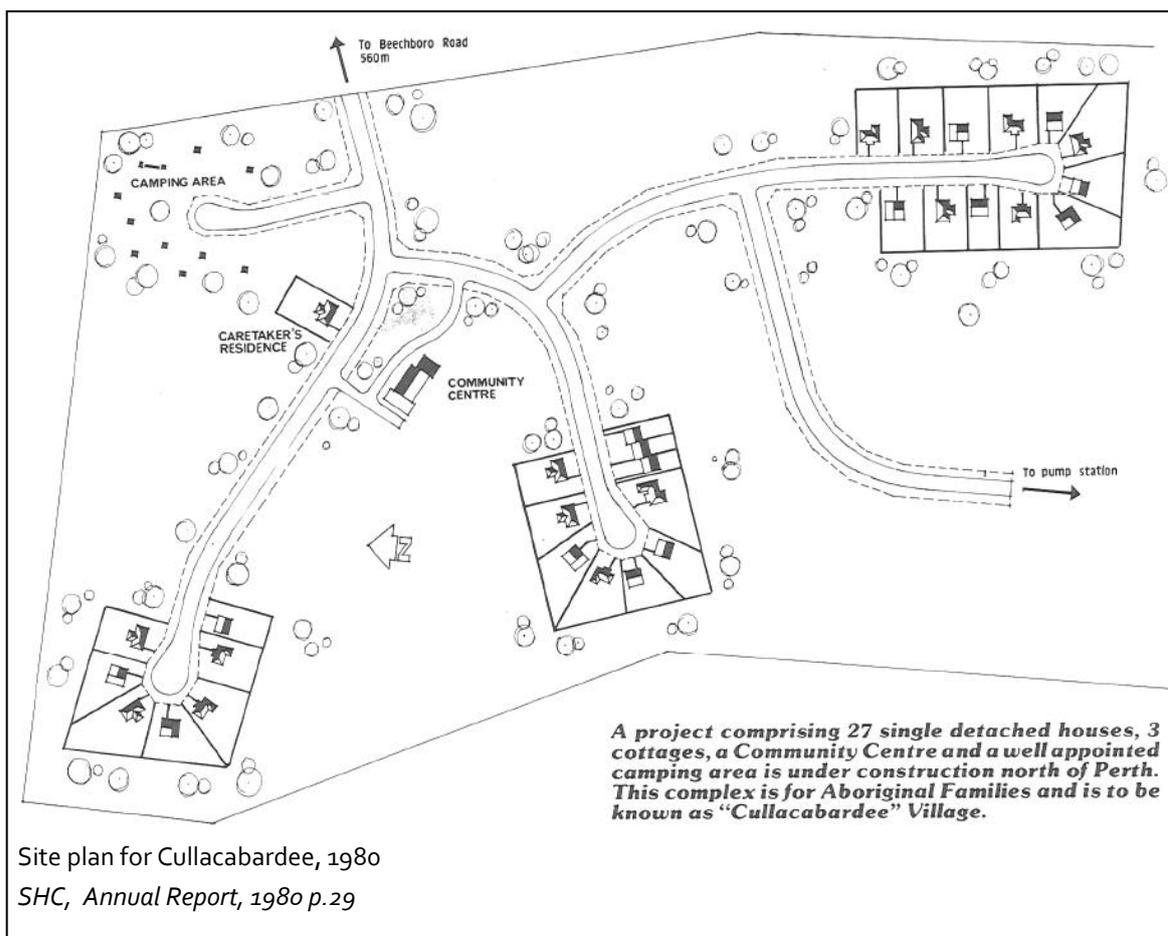
<sup>1658</sup> Sharp, 'A History of Public Housing in Western Australia', 1993, p.110

<sup>1659</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.66

<sup>1660</sup> HCWA Place Record Po6838 Carnarvon Aboriginal Reserve Site <http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au> accessed 8 May 2014

<sup>1661</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1981, 1981-82

<sup>1662</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1981



In 1981-82, the Commission initiated the Aboriginal Home Purchase Assistance Scheme to assist some Aboriginal families to purchase their homes. Eligible families were able to purchase either their Commission rental home or a house in the private market, up to \$36,000, with a thirty-year repayment.<sup>1663</sup>

In 1981-82, the rate of housing Aboriginal applicants in the year was slightly lower than the total rate of housing applicant families (40% compared with 46%). The majority of Aboriginal applications (67%) were for country towns south of the 26<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>1664</sup> At the same time, by the 1980s the Metropolitan area had become 'the most populous Aboriginal centre in Western Australia'.<sup>1665</sup>

The Commission noted repeatedly through its annual reports in the 1970s and 1980s that it engaged in community consultation on layout and house design before any groups of Aboriginal housing were built. Another group was constructed in Broome in 1982.<sup>1666</sup>

<sup>1663</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1982

<sup>1664</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1982

<sup>1665</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.64

<sup>1666</sup> SHC, Annual Report, 1982

*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 812 former Aboriginal residences from the period 1972 to 1984, between SHC taking on Aboriginal housing and the changes of the 1984 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*. This excludes remote Aboriginal housing (see next section)

## Henley Brook Aboriginal Community (panel construction)

Seven former Aboriginal housing units identified as having panel construction are retained from the 1970s. None of these are in the Henley Brook area. Aerial photographs suggest buildings at the former Saunders Street Aboriginal Community, Henley Brook were demolished around 2006.

## Halls Creek housing for people moved off the local reserve (1981)

No Aboriginal houses remain at Halls Creek from 1981. However, there are twelve places retained from 1982 and seven from 1983. Fifteen of these are a group and are likely the group of fifteen noted in 1981. The group is slightly apart from the town, with a central park area, and appears to have been built as a small community. Another four houses (1982) are part of a larger co-located group of 23 former Aboriginal houses within the town, dated 1975 to 1992.

## Broome, 1982

24 houses remain from 1982 and another 14 from 1983.

### 21.3 REMOTE COMMUNITY 'VILLAGE' HOUSING (1970S-2014)

When responsibility for housing Aboriginal persons was transferred to the SHC from the Department of Native Welfare in 1972, the Commission was particularly challenged by 'the housing of Tribal people who are subject to increasing Urban influences', in the Northwest and east of Kalgoorlie. Initially, SHC pursued a policy of creating 'village housing' for these Aboriginal families, sited adjacent to Northwest towns in some instances. The village concept aimed to plan housing groups 'in accordance with known aboriginal cultures and traditions'. The homes were to be built 'on a self-help basis' and provide all facilities including special provision for the aged.<sup>1667</sup> 'Villages' were developed in consultation, with clusters of homes set around a central area.<sup>1668</sup> Residents were viewed as 'unsuited as yet for conventional integrated way of life'.<sup>1669</sup>

Experimental 'village' houses were erected in 1973 at Mount Margaret, La Grange Mission and Kununurra. The houses subsequently built in remote 'villages' were steel framed, with polyurethane fibro wall cladding and concrete raft floors. They were designed for easy erection, and to be upgraded 'as the family becomes more sophisticated and seeks a higher standard of living'. Village homes for non-Aboriginal teaching and nursing staff were constructed as expansions of the basic design to 'provide examples to which the Aborigines may aspire'. Village residences were to cater for elderly, single, young couples and family occupants.<sup>1670</sup> The first three 'village' settlements were planned for One Arm Point (Bardi, 200km north of Broome), Camballin (Looma, 80 miles south of Derby) and Wiluna, sites chosen by Aboriginal



Models of proposed Aboriginal 'village' layout and buildings

*SHC Annual Report, 1972, p.10*

<sup>1667</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1972*, quotes from p.6 & 8

<sup>1668</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

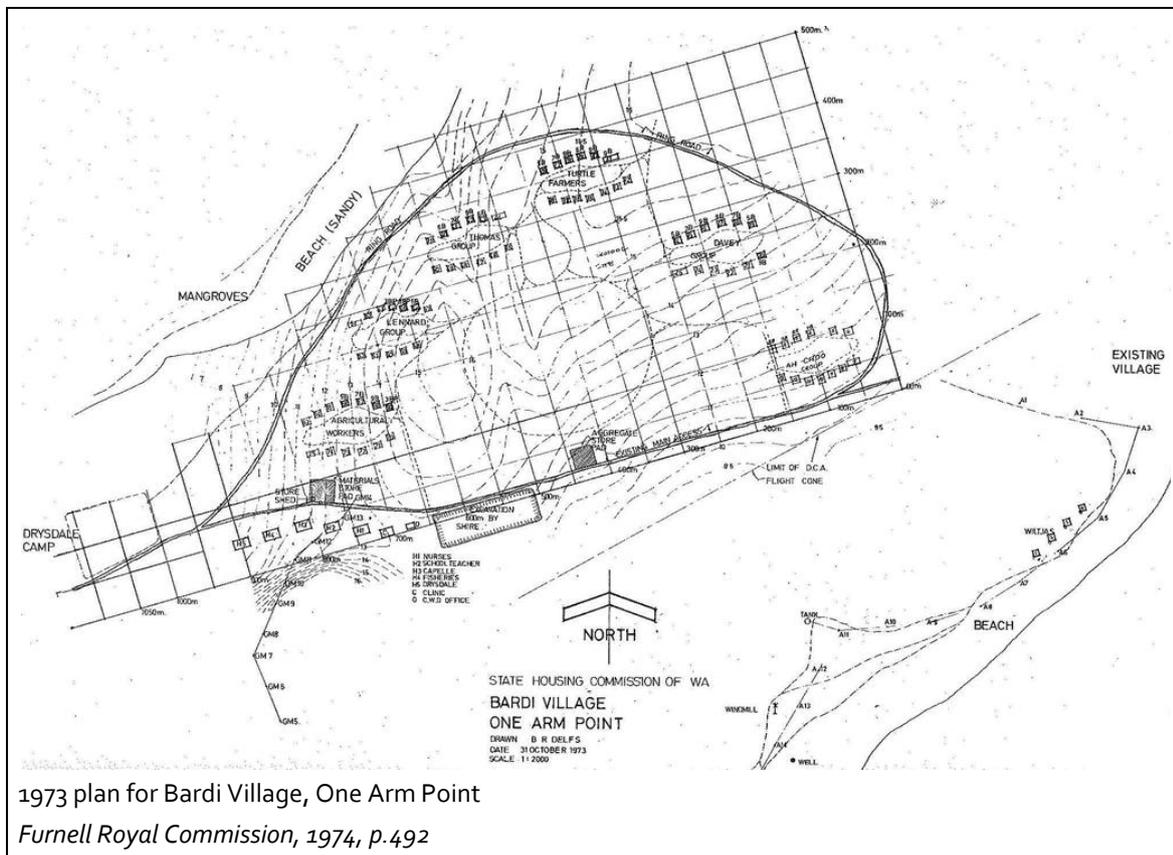
<sup>1669</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.224

<sup>1670</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.224-25, 240

communities.<sup>1671</sup> Progress on the first Aboriginal 'village' developments was slow, with chosen sites having bad access for materials and, in some instances, being out of reach during the wet season.<sup>1672</sup> The village at Wiluna does not appear to have gone ahead within the SHC program.

The Bardi people initiated a return to their traditional lands in the early 1970s, as conditions where they were living in Derby became unacceptable. The settlement of One Arm Point was subsequently erected to house them, the first 'village' community developed by the SHC.<sup>1673</sup> One Arm Point was designed to have 41 houses for Aboriginal families, teachers' and nurses' residences, clinic, shop, school, Community Welfare office and power house, centred around a sports oval functioning as a 'village green'. Provision was made to extend to 100 houses.<sup>1674</sup> By mid-1975, there were 12 houses and a powerhouse and a year later 26 houses and all services were completed.<sup>1675</sup> The One Arm Point development was finally completed in 1977, with 42 houses.<sup>1676</sup> A further thirteen houses were later added in the mid-1980s.<sup>1677</sup>

Looma was constructed on 20,000 acres of land excised by the State government from Liveringa pastoral lease.<sup>1678</sup> It had a similar design to One Arm Point, allowing for fifty houses. Ten houses, a power house and a basketball court were completed at Looma by mid 1975, with 20 more homes the following year. Looma was also completed in 1977, with 40 houses.<sup>1679</sup>



1973 plan for Bardi Village, One Arm Point

*Furnell Royal Commission, 1974, p.492*

<sup>1671</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1973*

<sup>1672</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>1673</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, pp.224-25

<sup>1674</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>1675</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, for the periods 1974-76*. Note: elsewhere the same reports state housing numbers as ten at One Arm Point in 1975

<sup>1676</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>1677</sup> SHC, *Annual Reports, for the period 1982-86*

<sup>1678</sup> Furnell, 'Royal Commission [regarding] persons of Aboriginal descent in WA', 1974, p.225

<sup>1679</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, for the periods 1974-77* Note: elsewhere the same reports state housing numbers as fifteen at Looma in 1975.



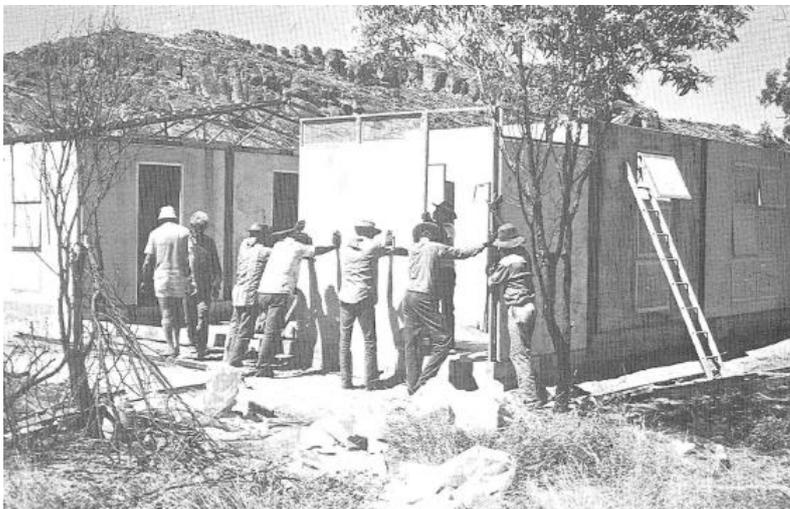
1970s development at One Arm Point  
House (above) and school (below)  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1977, p.46*

These 82 original residences in two towns, along with associated service buildings and facilities, were built over four years, a period when the Commission was constructing on average over 1,300 dwellings per year in the State.<sup>1680</sup>

Dwellings in all 'village' communities were designed for cyclonic conditions, built by Aboriginal labourers under SHC supervision. At completion, Aboriginal 'villages' were to be handed over to the communities, to be administered by a local Aboriginal housing society.<sup>1681</sup>

Work was also underway by mid-1974 at La Grange Mission, Derby Reserve and Fork Creek, south of Wyndham.<sup>1682</sup> By mid-1975, there were four houses completed at Warburton, one at La Grange and eight pensioner units and an ablution block at Fork Creek.<sup>1683</sup>

Aboriginal 'villages' were begun at Fitzroy Crossing (Junjuwa community) and La Grange (Bidyadanga community) in 1976, aiming to provide 53 and 60 homes respectively.<sup>1684</sup> Aboriginal occupants moved into homes before they were completed.<sup>1685</sup> Junjuwa Village was completed (56 houses) and handed over to community management in 1978-79, and an additional village at Fitzroy Crossing for the Kroonul community was being planned.<sup>1686</sup> By



Local Aboriginal people constructing their SHC homes at Looma using modular panels, c.1974  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1975, p.33*

<sup>1680</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1977*

<sup>1681</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>1682</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1974*

<sup>1683</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 19-75*

<sup>1684</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1976*

<sup>1685</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1977*

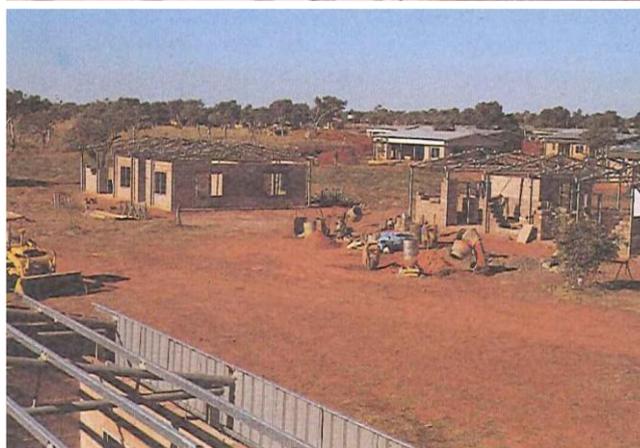
<sup>1686</sup> *SHC, Annual Report, 1979*

1978, locals at La Grange had acquired sufficient skills that the Commission was planning to withdraw its personnel and allow the locals to complete the project.<sup>1687</sup> By 1980, La Grange received direct Commonwealth funding and relied on the SHC only for consulting and supervision services.<sup>1688</sup> The SHC concluded involvement at LaGrange in December 1982, by which time 37 houses, a preschool and an office had been erected over seven years.<sup>1689</sup>

By 1978, planning was underway for Aboriginal 'villages' at Go Go Station (Bayulu community) and Christmas Creek (Kroonul community).<sup>1690</sup> Construction at Christmas Creek did not begin until 1980, however.<sup>1691</sup> Built to house the Wangatjunka people, it used the Commission-supervised 'self help' construction model.<sup>1692</sup> Residences were 'panel-type houses on concrete slabs'<sup>1693</sup> The Wangatjunka-Christmas Creek village was completed and handed over in 1985, comprising 29 homes, clinic, community hall, shop, power house, workshop, project officer's house and transit accommodation unit.<sup>1694</sup>

At Go Go, locals requested verandahs rather than open breezeways, which had featured in 'village' standard plans to date, and new designs were developed to incorporate this request.<sup>1695</sup> Bayulu Village (Go Go Station) was completed and handed over in 1982.<sup>1696</sup>

The 'village' concept for Aboriginal housing was applied at Beechboro/Ballajura in the 1980s with the



Residences under construction by the local Aboriginal community at La Grange (Bidyadanga)  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1978 p.42*

<sup>1687</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

<sup>1688</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

<sup>1689</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1983*

<sup>1690</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1978*

<sup>1691</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1980*

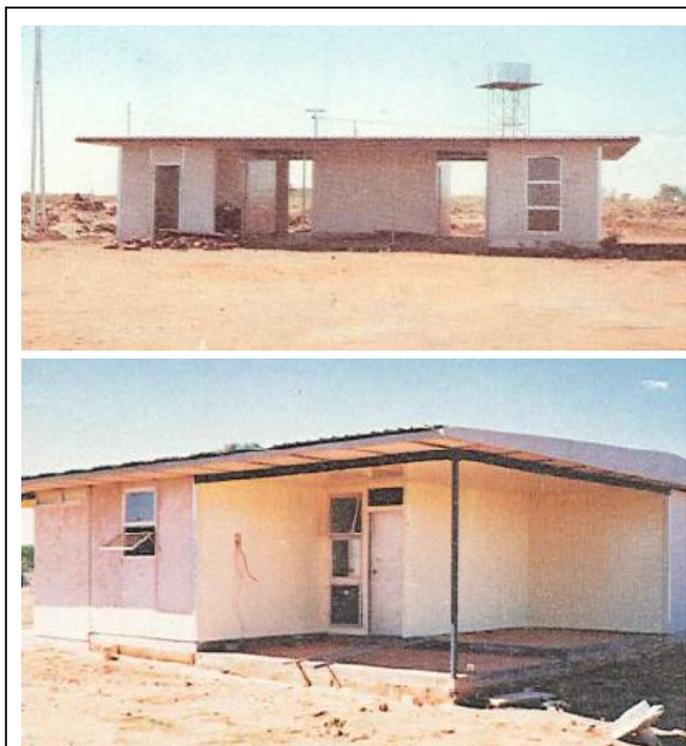
<sup>1692</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1981*

<sup>1693</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1983*, quote from p.11

<sup>1694</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1985*

<sup>1695</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1979*

<sup>1696</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 1983*



1970s Aboriginal village housing at Fitzroy Crossing  
*Early design showing breezeways (above) and later, more enclosed plan (below)*  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1977 p.46 (above) and 1979 p.40 (below)*

construction of Cullacabardee Aboriginal Village. The thirty houses were to be built in three clusters, with a central community centre. Each house was to have a large open fireplace and wide rear verandah.<sup>1697</sup> Cullacabardee opened in September 1980.<sup>1698</sup>

In 1982-83, new designs for Aboriginal 'village' housing were developed. The new designs were more conventional, taking on board feedback from Aboriginal clients, including their desire for 'conventional living areas' and gas stoves, while retaining large outdoor living areas. New designs were for two- to five-bedroom homes, and included verandahs on north and south elevations for shading and, for homes in areas prone to cyclones, cyclone screens on windows.<sup>1699</sup>

New 'villages' were designed for Mount Welcome Station, outside Roebourne, and the Kurnangki community at Fitzroy Crossing, from the early 1980s.

The Roebourne settlement, also known as Woolshed or Cheeditha, was handed over in 1984, comprising 12 houses and a store.

By 1983, the 'Community Self-Help Housing Programme' had operated for ten years constructing Aboriginal villages. In that time, 256 homes and 33 other buildings, such as preschools, workshops, stores, halls and clinics, had been constructed.<sup>1700</sup> Considering the rate at which other SHC homes were constructed, this was a very slow way to provide remote housing.

An Aboriginal settlement of 15 houses was handed over to the Bindi Bindi community at Onslow in 1985. Kurnangki was also completed in the year.<sup>1701</sup>

By 1987, nine Aboriginal communities had been granted self-management: One Arm Point (Bardi), Looma (Camballin), Junjuwa (Fitzroy Crossing), Go Go (Bayulu), Christmas Creek (Wangatjunka), Woolshed/Cheeditha (Mount Welcome, Roebourne), Kurnangki (Fitzroy Crossing), Bindi Bindi and Geraldton Pensioner Village.<sup>1702</sup> Other 'village' settlements under construction were Noonkanbah (Yungngora community) and Tjalku Wara Community, both near Port Hedland. Noonkanbah used rammed earth construction in at least some of its homes. It was built between 1985 and 1989, comprising around 35 homes. The Upurl Upurlila Community was also in a six-year process of relocating from

<sup>1697</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1980

<sup>1698</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1981

<sup>1699</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1983

<sup>1700</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1983

<sup>1701</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

<sup>1702</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1987



New housing nearing completion at Noonkanbah, 1985

*SHC, Annual Report, 1985*

Cundelee, which had inadequate water supply, to Coonana, with the new village completed in 1989. Buildings on this project were supplied by the Federal Department of Housing and Construction.<sup>1703</sup>

Two new villages were started in the late 1980s: Cherrabun, for Djugerari community, begun in 1988, and Warrimbah, begun in 1989.<sup>1704</sup>

All Northwest settlement construction was periodically set back by cyclones damaging unfinished buildings.

By 1990, most remote Aboriginal housing was constructed by public tender rather than Aboriginal labour, although the 'villages' started with Aboriginal labour in the 1980s continued to build in this way.<sup>1705</sup> This trend continued into the 1990s, and was attributed to the smaller family groups moving back to these 'village' areas.<sup>1706</sup>

The Management Support Program was initiated in 1992 to assist Aboriginal communities in developing skills for housing management, including repair and maintenance skills and systems of community management. The program aimed to bring homes back to liveable standards as a cheaper way to increase housing numbers than building from scratch. By 2002, 45 Aboriginal communities had participated in the program, 93 Aboriginal people had been trained or employed, and 81 homes had been restored.<sup>1707</sup>

It was hoped the appointment of a Director of Aboriginal Housing from 1994 would in particular assist with providing strong management for Aboriginal 'village' units constructed by Homeswest in remote areas. At June 1994, there were 769 homes in these villages.<sup>1708</sup>

An initiative to reward well-managed remote Aboriginal communities launched in 1996, called 'Clean Communities Are Healthy Communities'. The inaugural winner was Ngallagunda in the Kimberley, with

<sup>1703</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, for the periods 1983-90

<sup>1704</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, for the periods 1987-90

<sup>1705</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1990

<sup>1706</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

<sup>1707</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.180-81

<sup>1708</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1994



Gibb River community, winner of the 1997 'Clean Communities' award  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

other awards going to Barrel Well (Murchison), Lombardina (Kimberley), Burringurrah (Murchison) and Yirrangkaji (Pilbara).<sup>1709</sup>

In 1998-99, the Aboriginal Affairs Department passed to Homeswest responsibility for demonstration projects in remote communities and maintenance for power, water and sewerage systems at 56 Aboriginal communities. A further 16 communities were to have their infrastructure maintenance transferred to Homeswest over three years.<sup>1710</sup>

Remote communities continued to be provided with a few new homes most years. For example, 33 dwellings were commenced in nine remote communities in 1999-2000. The following year, programs began to replace 15 homes each at Junjuwa and Looma over three years. The Aboriginal Housing Infrastructure Unit also examined house designs for community housing with the aim of initiating a 'limited design' concept as a cost saving measure, using a reduced number of housing designs for remote community construction. From 1999, the Ministry of Housing launched an 'environmental health package' to improve community conditions through sealing roads to reduce dust, greening and reticulating communities and providing recreation facilities such as swimming pools and basketball courts to address the 'boredom, despair and substance abuse among Aboriginal youth'. The first three swimming pools were at Burringurrah, Jigalong and Mugarinya/Yandeyarra.<sup>1711</sup> By mid 2002, encouraging improvements were recorded in the health of children in these communities and a fourth pool, at Karalundi, was completed.<sup>1712</sup>

In 2001-02, tenders were called for 'community layout plans' for six Aboriginal town reserves: Mirima and Nulleywah at Kununurra, Guda Guda and Warrayu at Wyndham, and Lundja and Nicholson Camp at Halls Creek.<sup>1713</sup>

From the 2000s, work began to 'regularise' Aboriginal town reserves by upgrading roads and essential services to the standards of adjacent towns, with the intention to pass ongoing responsibility for infrastructure to the relevant local government authorities.<sup>1714</sup>

There were significantly more remote Aboriginal communities than those where the SHC had implemented self-help 'village' construction programs from the 1970s to the 1990s. A 2013 map shows over 150 Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley alone, and around fifty in the rest of the State. In many communities, housing was financed directly by the Commonwealth, through Indigenous Community

<sup>1709</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1710</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1999*

<sup>1711</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report, 2000*, quote from p.81

<sup>1712</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1713</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2002*

<sup>1714</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2003*

Housing Organisations, funded from 2002 through the Commonwealth Housing and Infrastructure Program.<sup>1715</sup>

Pooling of State and Commonwealth funds for construction in Aboriginal communities eventually led to an increase in building projects. In 2004-05, 190 community houses were planned across the State, nearly triple the previous year's build.<sup>1716</sup> The actual number begun in 2004-05 was 134, nearly double the previous year but less than the ambitious predictions.<sup>1717</sup> A further 138 homes were constructed in 2005-06.<sup>1718</sup>

The Housing Authority operated under the *Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement*, which brought State and Federal agencies together. Normalisation of Aboriginal housing was a key goal in this period, including bringing services in remote communities and town reserves up to general standards and equivalent costs to urban areas. By this time, the Housing Authority supported 91 remote Aboriginal communities.<sup>1719</sup> A five year plan to improve town-based communities between 2007 and 2011 managed in that period to upgrade power to 25 communities and water to seven.<sup>1720</sup>

Demolition of the 1980s Aboriginal 'village' at Roebourne began in 2011, with 21 new homes constructed and plans underway for another 36.<sup>1721</sup>

Water and power supplies had been brought up to general town standards at 27 Aboriginal town reserve communities by mid-2013, of which six also had water services 'regularised'.<sup>1722</sup>

By June 2013, the Housing Authority managed 2,439 homes in 122 remote Aboriginal communities, of which around 56% were managed by 'six regionally based primarily Aboriginal organisations' and the rest directly by the Authority.<sup>1723</sup>

<sup>1715</sup> Department of Aboriginal Affairs, [http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/Documents/Maps/Maps%20May%202013/WAComs\\_DAA.pdf](http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/Documents/Maps/Maps%20May%202013/WAComs_DAA.pdf) and [http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/Documents/Maps/Maps%20May%202013/KimberleyComs\\_DAA.pdf](http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/Documents/Maps/Maps%20May%202013/KimberleyComs_DAA.pdf); Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, [http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=142%3Aremote-aboriginal-housing-in-western-australia-and-the-aboriginal-housing-legislation-amendment-act&catid=22&Itemid=57](http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=142%3Aremote-aboriginal-housing-in-western-australia-and-the-aboriginal-housing-legislation-amendment-act&catid=22&Itemid=57);

Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Database <http://www.atns.net.au/agreement.asp?EntityID=1973>; all accessed 27 June 2014

<sup>1716</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2004*

<sup>1717</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2005*

<sup>1718</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1719</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2007*

<sup>1720</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1721</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1722</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1723</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*, quote from p.73

*Places that remain in 2014*

DOH retains 1,114 units of remote Aboriginal housing in 31 communities, of which 1,065 (95.5%) are single detached houses. The others are:

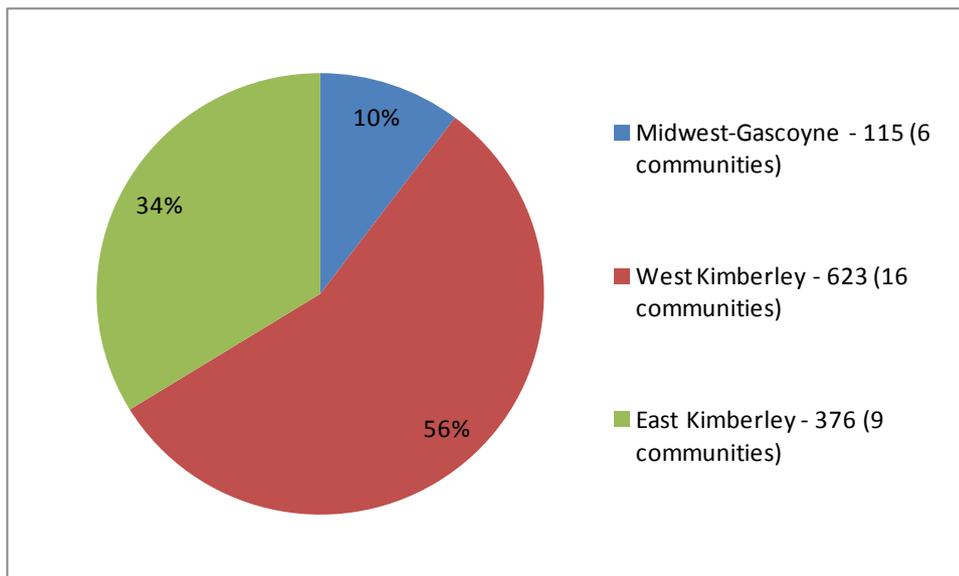
Apartments: eight units (seven in one aged persons' complex at 25-26 Acacia Way Mungullah [1981] and one disability unit at Mowanjum [1985])

Lodging house bedrooms: four units, in one lodging house (Beagle Bay, 1984)

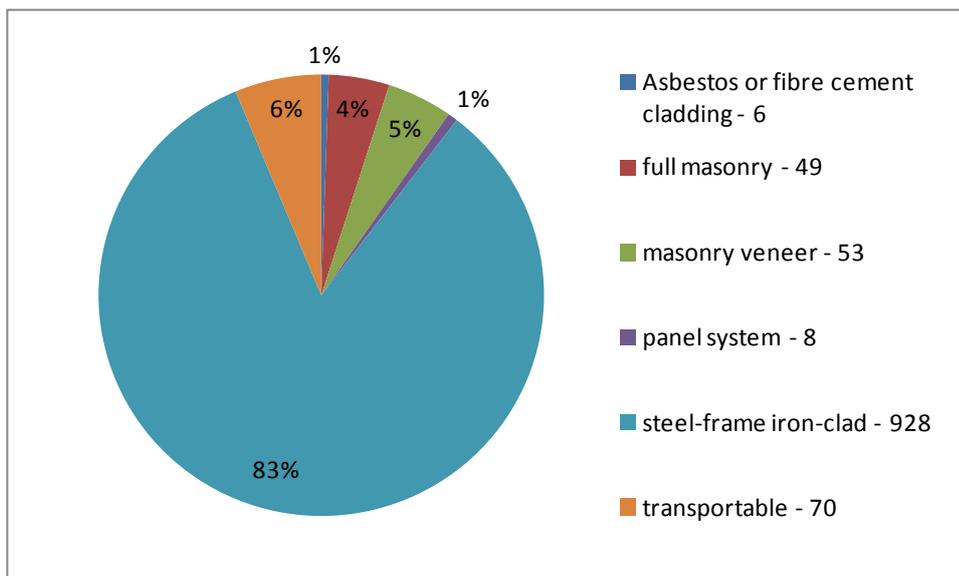
Duplexes: 33 units, mostly (21 units) from 1980 to 1985, with one from 1975, two from 1997 and nine from 2007 to 2014. Mostly (22 units) aged persons' housing, with others unspecified

Single-storey townhouses: four units, in one complex at Lundja (2011)

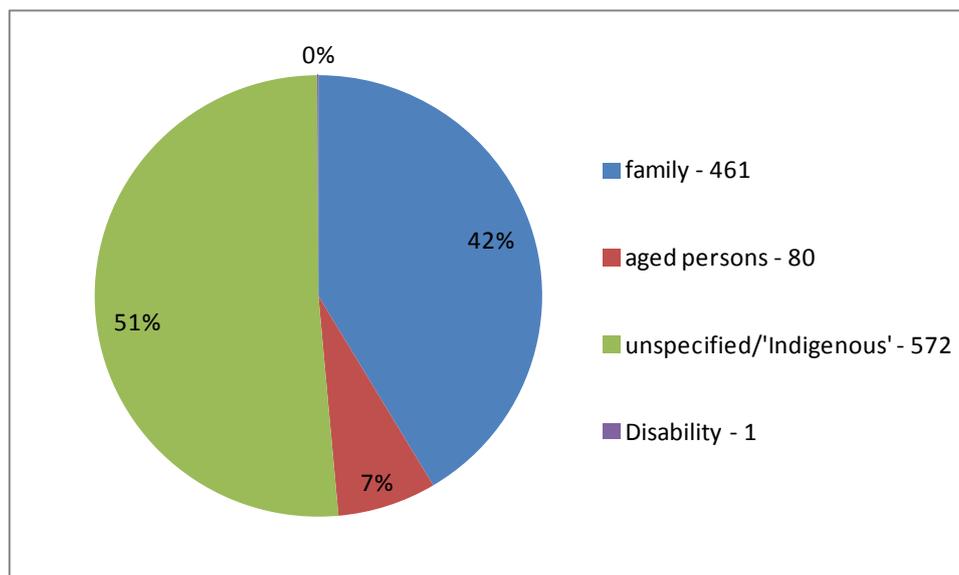
By region, remote Aboriginal housing divides as:



Building materials for DOH's remote Aboriginal housing are as follows:



DOH's remote Aboriginal housing divides by 'dwelling use' as:



Most of the places with unspecified use are likely to be for families, as 87% of them are single detached residences of three or more bedrooms.

1970s-1980s 'Village' model remote communities

One Arm Point (Ardyaloon, Bardi)	Although central community facilities and recreation areas remain, there is little other evidence of the original 'village' plans. DOH retains 79 residences at Ardyaloon (one GROH, others remote Aboriginal) and eight GROH residences listed as One Arm Point. Four residences are from the 1970s, nine from 1984, and the rest from 2000 to 2013.
Looma/Camballin	Some evidence of the early planning remains, including centrally located community facilities, but the 'clusters' now appear more like ordinary rows of houses in a roughly grid-pattern arrangement. DOH retains 100 units, of which the earliest are four from 1974.
Wiluna	Wiluna is a regular gazetted townsite and none of DOH's 60 housing units are designated remote Aboriginal housing. No DOH residences are listed for the former Wiluna town reserve, Bondini.
Fork Creek (Twelve Mile?)	no records
Derby Reserve (Karmulinunga)	Twelve units are retained at the former town reserve, all remote Aboriginal housing, six from 1987 and 1991, six from 2013 and 2014.
La Grange/Bidyadanga	The eastern portion of the town has a spread-out plan, with roughly central community areas, and some evidence of former 'clusters' around the eastern centre. DOH retains 131 units, including five dated 1970 and two from 1978-79 and 45 from 1980.
Warburton	Twelve units, all of which are GROH residences. Three date from 1981 to 1985, and the remainder from 1996 to 2005.
Fitzroy Crossing	None of DOH's 146 units are designated as remote Aboriginal housing or specifically linked to the Junjuwa, Kroonul or Kurnangki

	communities, or any of the seven former town reserves sites listed with Department of Planning as having Aboriginal layout plans.
Go Go Station/Bayulu	One residence, for GROH, dated 1970
Christmas Creek/Kroonul/Wangatjunka	The community retains an open layout with a large central open space. DOH retains six units, all GROH residences, of which four are dated 1983 to 1986 and the others 2006.
Mount Welcome Station near Roebourne/Woolshed/Cheedit ha	It is not possible to tell which if any of DOH's 59 units in Roebourne are connected with the Aboriginal reserve. None are designated as remote Aboriginal housing.
Bindi Bindi – Onslow	It is not possible to tell which if any of DOH's 39 units in Onslow are connected with the Aboriginal reserve. None are designated as remote Aboriginal housing.
Geraldton Pensioner Village	The location of this village is unknown. There are no remote Aboriginal residences listed at Geraldton or surrounds.
Noonkanbah (Yungngora community, near Port Hedland)	The small settlement retains an open layout with central communal areas and some evidence of houses being 'clustered'. There are 61 DOH units listed for Yungngora, all of which are single detached residence remote Aboriginal housing. Twenty-nine units date from 1984 and the other 32 from 2009 to 2013.
Tjalku Wara Community – near Port Hedland	Could not be identified in DOH database
Upurl Upurlila	Reported as relocating from Cundeelee, which had inadequate water supply, to Coonana; could not be identified in DOH database.
Cherrabun (Djugerari)	Three units, all GROH, one from 1989 and two from 2013
Warrimbah	Could not be identified in DOH database
Metropolitan	Of four Aboriginal communities established in the Metropolitan area (Saunders St Henley Brook, Gnangara, Swan Valley Nyungar Community Lockridge, Cullacabardee Ballajura), only Cullacabardee remains, with the other three closed and demolished in the 2000s.

Many remote communities have changed name, or are known by several different names (sometimes a European and an Aboriginal name, sometimes different Aboriginal names). Further research may find other names for the communities mentioned above.

Information about individual remote communities, including town layout plans, can be found at the Department of Planning's website: <http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/668.asp>

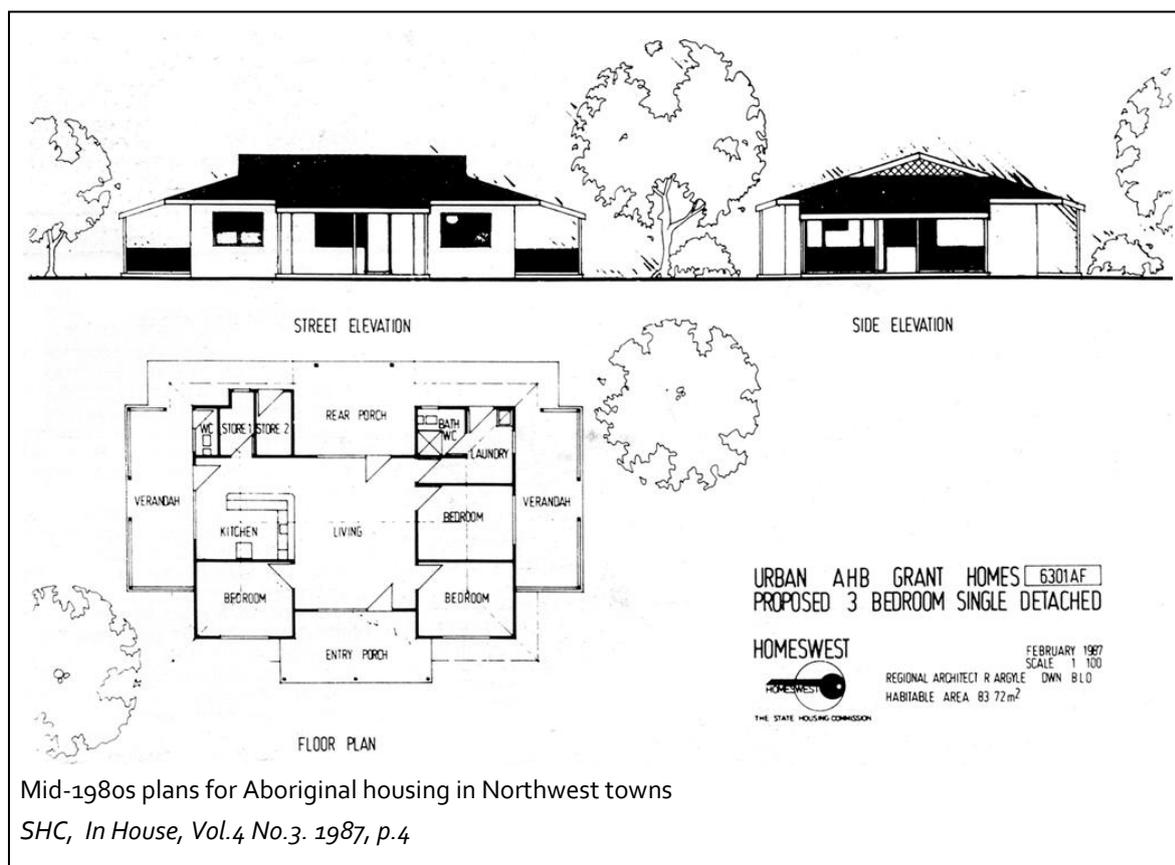
## 21.4 MAINSTREAMING ABORIGINAL HOUSING (1980S-2000S)

The *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* of 1984 was a landmark in Aboriginal Housing as, for the first time, it tied funding to provision of rental accommodation for Aboriginal tenants. Initially, this funding was mostly directed to regional and remote areas.<sup>1724</sup>

The *Western Australian Equal Opportunity Act (1984)* mirrored the 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act* with extension to non-racial discrimination. It specifically legislated against discrimination on the basis of race in the provision of housing.<sup>1725</sup>

In 1985, Aboriginal housing developments were underway at Bayswater, Leonora and Geraldton, within regular subdivisions rather than 'village' style housing.<sup>1726</sup>

A consultative process was undertaken from September 1985 with Aboriginal communities at Derby and Marble Bar, Shire representatives, Homeswest architectural officers and an Aboriginal Housing Board research officer, to develop new Aboriginal housing designs suitable for 'the needs of tribally oriented Aborigines'. Homes were to 'suit the lifestyle of Aborigines who wished to live in a town setting, be easily managed and maintained by Aboriginal tenants, and visually blend into a North-West country town'. Features of the new designs included wider verandahs that included sheltered sleeping areas, breezeways, external access to ablutions and extra storage space. Designs were completed late in 1985, and the first four residences built to the new designs were occupied at Marble Bar by 1987.<sup>1727</sup>

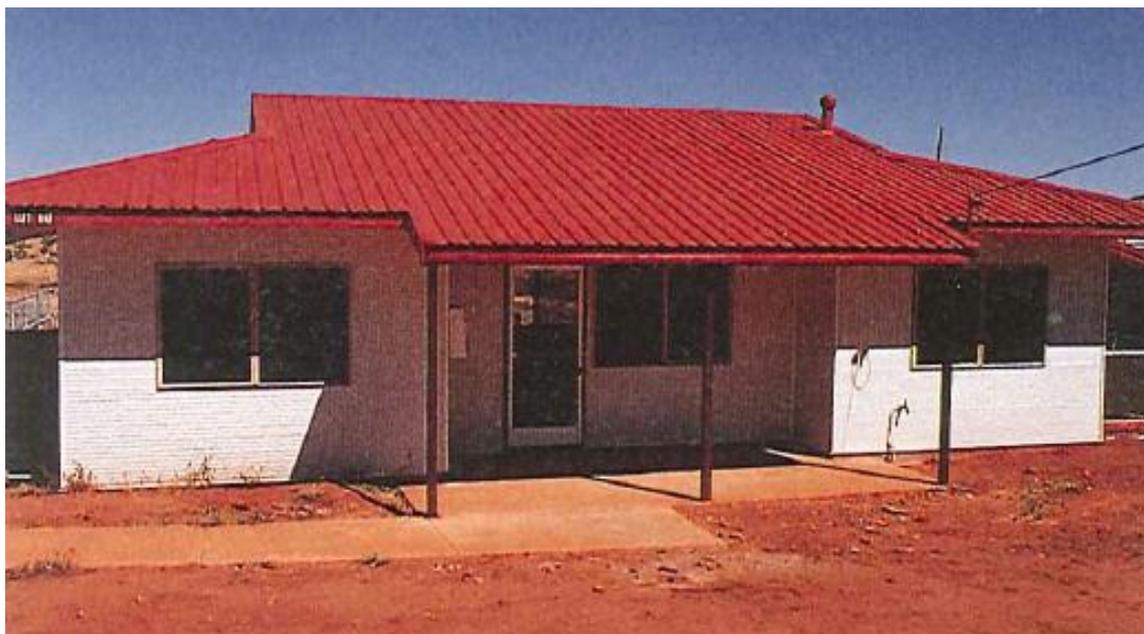


<sup>1724</sup> Prout, Green & Anwar McHenry, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton', 2012, p.14

<sup>1725</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.39-40

<sup>1726</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 1985

<sup>1727</sup> Isaacs, Robert, 'New homes in Marble Bar', in *InHouse*, Vol.4 No.3. 1987, p.4



New Aboriginal housing at Marble Bar, 1987, designed in consultation with local Aboriginal communities  
*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1987*

From 1985-86, Homeswest embarked on a five-year program to move all Aboriginal families out of remnant 'transitional housing' unless they specifically desired to remain.<sup>1728</sup>

Aboriginal housing in the mid-1980s followed a policy of 'integration and social mix'. Spot purchase was favoured to provide Aboriginal housing in established areas, with a focus on larger homes. In 1985-86, half the spot purchase homes were four-bedroom residences. There was also an increasing need for Aboriginal pensioner housing in the areas where elderly people had kinship ties.<sup>1729</sup>

While remote Aboriginal housing was generally provided on new sites, selected in consultation with the communities, in 1986 Homeswest constructed six houses and upgraded services at the existing Aboriginal reserve outside Wyndham. In addition to the new designs for Northwest Aboriginal housing 'to reflect local needs', pre-1979 Aboriginal houses were upgraded.<sup>1730</sup>

An innovative home was constructed from 1986 for the Nyungar community at Gngangara. Referred to as a 'hill house', it was of concrete construction, set into the hillside and insulated with earth coverings.<sup>1731</sup>

The Aboriginal Housing Board, established as an advisory body in 1978, continued as a non-statutory body administering grant funding for Aboriginal housing under the *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*. The Board was supported by 25 local housing committees. By 1988, it administered 2,224 rental properties across the State. Another 2,500 regular Homeswest properties were estimated to be occupied by Aboriginal tenants.<sup>1732</sup>

In 1987-88, a program was initiated to upgrade 'traditional Aboriginal housing' erected prior to the 1972 dissolution of the Native Welfare Department. Extensive upgrades were required and in many cases

<sup>1728</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>1729</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>1730</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*, quote from p.33

<sup>1731</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1986*

<sup>1732</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report, 1988*

properties were demolished as upgrading was not feasible. Housing on Aboriginal reserves was also undertaken, with typical projects underway in 1988 at Derby (Karmulinunga Aboriginal Corporation), Three Mile Aboriginal Reserve Port Hedland, and Town Reserve Marble Bar.<sup>1733</sup>

Experimental designs for Aboriginal housing, using more local materials and labour, were initiated in 1988, with prototype houses built at Noonkanbah and Warrimbah.<sup>1734</sup>

By June 1989, Homeswest managed 33,189 rental properties, of which 7% were specifically for Aboriginal housing and an additional 7.5% occupied by Aboriginal tenants.<sup>1735</sup> Although the

provision of homes exclusively for Aboriginal occupants may have been intended to reduce waiting times for Aboriginal applicants, in fact by 1990 it appeared that Aboriginal applicants had longer waiting times than equivalent non-Aboriginal tenants. A 1990 report considered that this could be due to the level of discretion Homeswest officers had in assigning housing, adherence to ratios of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal tenants within housing areas, and an in-house perception that, as there were 'Aboriginal-only' houses provided, Aboriginal applicants should not have equal access to general housing stocks.<sup>1736</sup>

By the late 1980s, much early Aboriginal housing was marked for upgrading. Halls Creek, Mawarkarra at Roebourne, and Mungullah at Carnarvon were all subject to upgrades around 1989. New housing tended to focus on large four or five bedroom family homes and provision for the elderly.<sup>1737</sup>

By 1991, Homeswest administered 2,389 rental properties through the Aboriginal Housing Board, of which 1,083 were in country areas, 624 in the Northwest and 691 in the Metropolitan area. In 1990-91, 2,745 applications for Aboriginal housing were received, with 1,220 found homes within the year. Approximately 60% were housed in Homeswest properties and 40% in Aboriginal Housing Board properties.<sup>1738</sup>

Aboriginal tenants were expected to meet the same requirements as all tenants: timely payment of rent, harmonious neighbourly relations and acceptable standards of property maintenance. As Homeswest



Aboriginal housing at Gnangara, mid-1980s  
*SHC, Annual Report, 1985 p.7*

<sup>1733</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>1734</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1988

<sup>1735</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>1736</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.77-78

<sup>1737</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1989

<sup>1738</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1991

moved towards a more corporate business model through the late 1980s, evictions for failure to meet these requirements increased. The Court Liberal government, elected in 1993, aimed to reduce government debt on all fronts. This including pursuing the estimated \$11 million owed to Homeswest at the time in unpaid rent and evicting tenants unable to pay. Seventy per cent of Aboriginal households at the time were in rental accommodation, mostly renting from Homeswest. Despite this being only around 18-19% of Homeswest tenancies, Aboriginal tenants made up 50-60% of evictions in the 1990s. Several legal attempts to prove Homeswest was being discriminatory had little success.<sup>1739</sup> However, between 1996 and 2004, the Equal Opportunity Commission received over 400 complaints from Aboriginal Homeswest tenants alleging discrimination on the basis of race and/or gender, disability or marital status.<sup>1740</sup>

Up to the 1990s, Aboriginal tenants were rarely placed into higher density housing, such as apartments and townhouses, as they were considered unsuited to this style of living. This limited their housing options, as around 45% of Homeswest's Metropolitan housing at the time was medium density accommodation.<sup>1741</sup>

New housing construction for Aboriginal tenants in the early 1990s focussed on homes for singles, both youth and the elderly.<sup>1742</sup>

A restructure of Homeswest's Aboriginal Housing programs was undertaken in 1994-95, to create formal links with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and create an Aboriginal Housing Directorate in-house. The Director of Aboriginal Housing, appointed in 1994, was one of six directors within the agency. Three avenues for housing assistance were administered: the Urban program, for construction or purchase of rental housing in metropolitan and regional urban centres; the Remote program, for construction of new housing, with community consultation, in remote areas; and, the Management Support program, to assist remote Aboriginal communities in the ongoing maintenance and management of their housing.<sup>1743</sup> By 1998, the Aboriginal housing branch noted its three areas of work as supporting Aboriginal clients applying for or already holding tenancies in regular Homeswest properties, providing supplementary urban housing specifically for Aboriginal clients, and supporting remote Aboriginal communities in procurement, management and maintenance of housing.<sup>1744</sup>

A program to replace older Aboriginal housing in country towns, some of which was over 40 years old, began in 1995-96 with homes near Albany and Bunbury.<sup>1745</sup> The oldest of these homes had been constructed by the Native Welfare Department, and possibly other agencies, prior to SHC venturing into Aboriginal housing.

An Aboriginal Building Seminar jointly hosted by Homeswest in 1996-97 recommended development of regional Aboriginal building companies with tender preference from Homeswest. At Geraldton, a training scheme for Aboriginal workers seeking a career in the building industry completed six family rental homes for Homeswest in 1996-97 and was commissioned to build another four the following year.<sup>1746</sup> This

<sup>1739</sup> Beresford, Quentin, 'Homeswest versus Aborigines: housing discrimination in Western Australia', in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 22 September 2001, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Homeswest+versus+Aborigines%3A+housing+discrimination+in+Western+...-a081790249> accessed 6 May 2014; EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.43-51, 66

<sup>1740</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.238

<sup>1741</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.75

<sup>1742</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1992

<sup>1743</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1995

<sup>1744</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1745</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1996

<sup>1746</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1997

scheme continued into the 2000s. By 2002, it had trained 20 Aboriginal workers through building Homeswest properties.<sup>1747</sup>

The 1996 census showed that Aboriginal communities depended much more heavily on rental housing than non-Aboriginal Australians. Further, Aboriginal renters were far more likely to be in government than private rentals. This dependence on public housing was particularly marked in urban areas, but in these areas few Aboriginal tenants were in Aboriginal-specific housing, while in remote areas Aboriginal-specific housing made up a much larger proportion of Aboriginal accommodation.<sup>1748</sup>

As such, the New Living redevelopment programs from the mid-1990s on particularly impacted on Aboriginal tenants. As Homeswest reduced its percentage of properties in former public housing estates, high numbers of former residents were moved to alternate locations, often in the outer suburbs with few services, or even to regional and rural towns.<sup>1749</sup>

In 1997, an Equal Opportunity Commission report found that only 2.3% of Homeswest's budget was for Aboriginal housing, although around 15% of Homeswest tenants at the time were Aboriginal. Around 29% of evictions and 36% of termination notices were served on Aboriginal tenants. A further, limited-scope, report in 2000 found that where priority transfer applicants wished to exercise some choice in their housing placement, Homeswest took more than three times longer to place Aboriginal applicants than their non-Aboriginal equivalents, and more than five times longer where transfers were for medical reasons, with Aboriginal transferees generally placed into older houses.<sup>1750</sup>



Aboriginal housing at Oombulgurri (Kimberley), late 1990s

*Oombulgurri was closed by the government in 2011 and remaining residents moved into Wyndham, after a coronial inquiry found high levels of suicide, child neglect, sexual abuse and domestic violence in the community. Despite protests, demolition of around 40 remaining buildings began in October 2014 (ABC news online, 23 Sept & 1 Oct 2014)*

*SHC, Homeswest Annual Report, 1997*

<sup>1747</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2002

<sup>1748</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.82

<sup>1749</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.233-35

<sup>1750</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.80-81

By 1998, urban housing specifically for Aboriginal clients was 'basically similar to mainstream Homeswest homes, with special considerations given to location and design'. Design features appear have to included additional bedrooms and, in some instances, extra showers and toilets.<sup>1751</sup>

A two-year *State-Commonwealth Aboriginal Housing Bilateral Agreement* was signed in December 1997, between the State and Federal governments and ATSIC, consolidating planning and service delivery for Aboriginal housing. The Aboriginal Housing Board became the central decision maker for policy, planning and funds allocation, resources were to be pooled between agencies, and as far as possible Homeswest homes were to be owned or managed by Aboriginal community housing organisations.<sup>1752</sup>

From April 1998, a training scheme jointly funded by Homeswest and the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth was initiated to train and employ members of Aboriginal communities in housing management and maintenance. Trainees' first projects were repairs and upgrades on houses at Warmun and Gnangara.<sup>1753</sup>

A new 'breezeway design' was piloted at Anderson Street, Port Hedland, in 1998-99, developed for large Aboriginal families with a preference for outdoor living and 'a more robust, outdoor lifestyle'. It was subsequently used at Roebourne, Newman and Wiluna.<sup>1754</sup>

By 2000, 18% of Homeswest clients identified as Aboriginal. Approximately 2,500 homes were set aside specifically for Aboriginal clients, allowing them to move ahead on the general waiting list if one of these homes became available in their requested residence area. This was only enough to house about one third of the agency's Aboriginal tenants, however. Around 50-100 new urban homes for Aboriginal tenants were constructed each year through the 1990s.<sup>1755</sup>

Access to affordable and appropriate housing remained a significant problem for Aboriginal communities into the twenty-first century. This remained a problem for indigenous populations across Australia and in comparable countries, including New Zealand and Canada, in the same period.<sup>1756</sup>

Under the new administrative structure of DHW, from July 2001, Homeswest was linked with Aboriginal Housing. In mid-2002, a new Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council replaced the Aboriginal Housing Board.<sup>1757</sup>

In May 2001, a policy document was adopted by the Commonwealth-State Housing Ministers' Conference to guide Aboriginal housing for the decade ahead. Called *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*, it outlined 'principles, objectives and implementation strategies' to improve Aboriginal housing.<sup>1758</sup> The intended outcomes of the program were more and better housing and housing services, improved partnerships with Aboriginal people, and greater efficiency, accountability and coordination of services.<sup>1759</sup> By 2005, however, funding from this initiative had not been released for urban areas and the Commonwealth subsequently determined to direct all money from the program to remote Aboriginal housing.<sup>1760</sup>

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<sup>1751</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1752</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1753</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1998

<sup>1754</sup> SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, 1999, quote from p.54

<sup>1755</sup> Ministry of Housing, *Annual Report*, 2000; SHC, *Homeswest Annual Report*, for the periods 1994-99

<sup>1756</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.57

<sup>1757</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2002

<sup>1758</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2003, quote from p.23

<sup>1759</sup> Department of Social Services, 'Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010', at <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/publications-articles/housing/building-a-better-future-indigenous-housing-to-2010> accessed 9 May 2014

<sup>1760</sup> Prout, Green & Anwar McHenry, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton', 2012, p.15

*Places that remain in 2014 – this chapter*

DOH retains 1,076 former Aboriginal housing units dated from 1985 to 2002 (excluding remote Aboriginal housing).

**Marble Bar new designs, 1985**

Four steel-framed asbestos-clad three-bedroom single detached family residences, listed as former Aboriginal housing, are likely to be the first four homes built to the new 1985 plans.

**Housing to replace remnant 'transitional housing', 1985-1991**

DOH retains 434 former Aboriginal residences constructed between 1986 and 1991.

**Integration and social mix policies, inc. larger houses, mid-1980s**

In addition to the 434 units mentioned above, another 77 places were acquired in this period but constructed earlier (1952 to 1983), suggesting they were acquired in accordance with the mid-1980s move to create social mix through spot purchase. Seventeen of these acquired residences have four bedrooms, of which all but two are in the Metropolitan area. Another five homes are listed as acquired in 1984 or 1985, with pre-1983 construction dates, being two three-bedroom and three four-bedroom residences, all Metropolitan.

**Gnangara 'hill house'**

Gnangara Aboriginal Community was closed around 2008, and buildings removed over the following years. The land is now being subdivided for alternate uses.

**1988 prototype housing**

No DOH housing from 1988 or nearby years remains at Noonkanbah. Warrimbah is not in DOH records at all.

**New prototype, 1998-99**

Eight former Aboriginal residences remain at Anderson St Port Hedland. All are single detached residences, arranged with shared outdoor spaces. DOH lists them as constructed in 1996 and 1997, but it is likely they are the 'breezeway design' prototype houses noted in the 1998-99 annual report. The 1996 houses are fibre cement clad and the 1997 ones are iron clad, all on steel frames. The 1996 houses are all four-bedroom, while the 1997 houses are one five- and two three-bedroom houses.

There are 13 DOH former Aboriginal single detached residences at Newman, Roebourne and Wiluna dated after 1997. All of these are steel-framed three- or four-bedroom homes, and may be those built following the Port Hedland prototype. At Newman they are dated 1997 to 2000 (six units), at Roebourne 2002 to 2006 (four units) and at Wiluna all from 2000 (three units). The earlier examples are more likely to follow the Port Hedland model.

## 21.5 RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES (2000S-2014)

The 1999 suicide of an Aboriginal teenage girl at the Swan Valley Nyungar Community led to an inquiry in 2002 into the activities of all government agencies involved with Aboriginal communities. The specific issues examined by the inquiry were in relation to violence and sexual abuse, particularly involving children, but its investigations and recommendations included housing services. Headed by Aboriginal magistrate Sue Gordon, who had also previously served on the SHC's Board of Commissioners, the inquiry's 2002 report became known as the 'Gordon Report' and influenced government Aboriginal policy for many years. It found alarmingly high levels of sexual abuse of Aboriginal children and family violence within Aboriginal communities. One of the report's significant findings was a lack of coordination between government agencies in responding to this problem or providing services to Aboriginal people.<sup>1761</sup>

Despite being only 2.3% of the State's total population, Aboriginal people in 2002 made up approximately 18% of public housing tenants and 34% of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) housing services, which addressed homelessness and crisis accommodation. Prejudice in the private rental market led most Aboriginal renters to depend on government rental accommodation. Homelessness and overcrowding of existing housing were identified as risk factors for abuse situations.<sup>1762</sup>

The Department of Housing and Works reported to the Gordon Inquiry that around 11% of Aboriginal residents of Aboriginal communities lived in temporary dwellings. Of the permanent houses, 23% required major repairs and 11% needed complete replacement. The Department at the time had 2,509 'mainstream' properties specifically for Aboriginal tenants, as well as 1,023 homes in remote Aboriginal communities. Shortage of housing was particularly acute in remote and regional areas.<sup>1763</sup>

Aboriginal housing built in towns was constructed on freehold land owned by DHW. In remote communities, houses were on Aboriginal Lands Trust or reserve land and were managed by the communities. The Department had no staff in remote communities, and communities were often not providing adequate management services. As a result, DHW aimed to place housing officers into remote communities from 2002.<sup>1764</sup>

The Gordon Report on the whole endorsed the direction of DHW's Aboriginal housing policies, especially those that emphasised capacity building for Aboriginal communities, and recommended they be strengthened and expanded. It also recommended increasing maintenance for Aboriginal homes. Aboriginal women's refuges were identified as a vital service for families suffering violence, but it was noted that community funds were often directed towards recreational facilities in preference to refuges.<sup>1765</sup>

Challenges for the Department in rehousing victims of family violence and child abuse were also identified. In remote communities, there were often no suitable rehousing options. In many areas, applicants for priority assistance seeking to escape violence struggled to meet Homeswest requirements regarding previous rental histories and tenancy debts.<sup>1766</sup>

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<sup>1761</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002

<sup>1762</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.176-86

<sup>1763</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.176-86, 195

<sup>1764</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.179-80, 186

<sup>1765</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.176-86

<sup>1766</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.186-90



Swan Valley Nyungah Community, March 2009, after its closure

Photographs by 'Gnangarra'...commons.wikimedia.org

The Gordon Report recommended coordinated government responses, and affirmed the pilot Strong Families Program. This provided cross-sector collaboration to respond to families with community difficulties, including tenancy issues. The report affirmed and encouraged moves to support Aboriginal home ownership, but also recommended substantial increases to the public housing stock. Another impact of the Gordon Report for ongoing DHW practice was its call for increased government officers in remote Aboriginal communities, such as the appointment of Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers. Housing for these additional officers was the responsibility of GEHA.<sup>1767</sup> See [Section 18](#).

In 2003-04, a program to assist Aboriginal families with practical skills for managing a home, such as budgeting, home skills and meeting tenancy obligations, was re-started in Queens Park, based on a 'homemaker' program offered by the Department of Community Welfare from the 1970s into the early 1980s. The following year it was extended to other areas of the State.<sup>1768</sup> This had been another recommendation of the Gordon Report.<sup>1769</sup>

In December 2004, an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) report entitled 'Finding a Place' released the findings of an inquiry into discriminatory practices in providing public housing for Aboriginal people, following a two-year investigation. The SHC appointed Shelter WA to work through recommendations with the SHC to address areas of concern.<sup>1770</sup> The damning report, which considered over 500 submissions from tenants, service providers, advocates and agency-critical Homeswest officers, accused Homeswest

<sup>1767</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, pp.192-94

<sup>1768</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2004

<sup>1769</sup> Gordon, Hallahan & Henry, *Putting the picture together*, 2002, p.193

<sup>1770</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2005

of individual and institutional racism.<sup>1771</sup> The EOC report found that application of standard Commission policies and practices particularly caused difficulties for applicants with large families, a previous history as public rental tenants, histories of family violence, or parents and grandparents in poor health and poverty, which amounted to a majority of Aboriginal tenants.<sup>1772</sup>

The EOC inquiry considered four measures of disadvantage: overcrowding, housing affordability, children living in poverty and accessibility to services. It concluded that on all four measures, Aboriginal Homeswest clients experienced 'disproportionate disadvantage' compared with non-Aboriginal clients. The inquiry concluded that DHW was likely to have breached the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* and *Equal Opportunity Act (1984)*, especially through indirect (institutional) discrimination, but that such breaches were extremely difficult to prove at law and would be unlikely to lead to convictions.<sup>1773</sup>

The EOC report recommended changes to housing allocation policies. Prior to this, Homeswest had been permitted to consider the ethnicity and racial preferences of neighbours when allocating tenancies. Aboriginal applicants were also routinely housed in substandard or inappropriate housing, as they were removed from Homeswest's waiting list if they refused to accept placement in these homes. Those with a negative history with Homeswest were excluded even from emergency accommodation such as that provided to protect children at risk of sexual abuse or families fleeing. As a result of the shortage of housing for Aboriginal clients, many without accommodation resided with Aboriginal friends and family, of whom a great number were existing Homeswest tenants. These Aboriginal families were 'de facto emergency housing providers'. This caused significant overcrowding, increased the risk of sexual abuse of children, often transgressed social contact taboos, and led to existing Aboriginal Homeswest tenants struggling to meet tenancies obligations and suffering complaints of antisocial behaviour.<sup>1774</sup>

The report also recommended increasing Homeswest's stock of public housing to reduce waiting lists. In addition to a general increase, it recommended ensuring the level of funds to house Aboriginal tenants be proportional to the percentage of tenants of Aboriginal origin, at the time around 18%. Increased housing for Aboriginal youth was to be pursued, the possibility of cluster housing for young single Aboriginal mothers was put forward and housing for Aboriginal seniors was encouraged. More large houses, of five or more bedrooms, were also needed, and Aboriginal organisations were to be consulted in designing homes, especially for remote communities. Security of all Homeswest residences was to be improved to ensure all tenants fleeing family violence could be assured of a secure home.<sup>1775</sup>

The Commission issued a response statement in June 2006, outlining strategies to improve services, overseen by the Director General.<sup>1776</sup>

By 2006, it was acknowledged by the Commission that despite previous efforts, housing outcomes for Aboriginal persons remained generally poor. Aboriginal housing was talked about in annual reports as a top priority for the agency. Priority statements reaffirmed obvious areas of need such as improved housing conditions, environmental health and service provision. Aboriginal home ownership and Aboriginal community housing management were to be increased and improved. New supported housing for Aboriginal clients with special needs, such as mental health concerns, disabilities or those being released from prison was developed. Measures were taken to address overcrowding and a backlog of maintenance and infrastructure needs was tackled. The Commission also worked to increase training

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<sup>1771</sup> Laurie, V & Taylor, P, "'Racist' officers favour white tenants', in *The Australian*, 16 December 2004, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/news/aust16deco4.html> accessed 5 May 2014

<sup>1772</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

<sup>1773</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.11-12, 39-51

<sup>1774</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.22-24,

<sup>1775</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, pp.22, 31-32

<sup>1776</sup> SHC, *Annual Report, 2006*

and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in its works program. In 2005-06, 25% of the Commission's capital works program (excluding home loans) was spent on Aboriginal Housing.<sup>1777</sup>

From the 1990s into the 2000s, the State Housing Commission had an Aboriginal representative within its Board of Commissioners, including Sue Gordon, Janice Krakouer and Peter Yu.<sup>1778</sup>

Between 2005-06 and 2006-07, maintenance spending on Aboriginal rental properties increased from \$1.1million to \$4.2million. During the year, the 500<sup>th</sup> Aboriginal client purchased their home under the Aboriginal home ownership scheme.<sup>1779</sup> Between 2003 and 2008, the number of 'non-remote' Aboriginal public housing tenants more than doubled, despite overall rental stock numbers falling in the same period. Western Australia by this time had one of the highest percentages of Aboriginal public housing tenants of all States and Territories in Australia.<sup>1780</sup>

A 2008 national survey found that 68.5% of Aboriginal Australians were living in rental properties, compared with approximately 26% of non-Aboriginal Australians. This rose to 85% in remote areas.<sup>1781</sup> Although the figures do not identify how many of these renters are in government housing, the 2004 EOC report's findings suggests a large proportion were social housing tenants.

As part of the *National Affordable Housing Agreement*, which replaced *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements* from 2009, flexibility in assigning Commonwealth funds led to increasing 'mainstreaming' of Aboriginal housing programs. Quotas for Aboriginal tenants in urban public housing were left to the discretion of the States.<sup>1782</sup> Commonwealth funds were no longer tied to providing and reporting on Aboriginal housing in urban areas. The Department of Housing subsequently merged its urban Aboriginal housing stock into general public housing.<sup>1783</sup> Aboriginal housing stock had previously been identified as 'Fund Six'. The EOC report of 2004 found that 'Fund Six' was also used at times to refer to Aboriginal clients and recommended strongly that this practice cease immediately.<sup>1784</sup> Although former Aboriginal housing is still tagged in the DOH database with fund code '6', it is no longer managed separately and, with the exception of six regional houses from 2011 (possibly an error), no new properties have been tagged 'Fund Six' since late 2008.<sup>1785</sup>

The *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*, signed in 2008, allowed for nearly \$500million of funding over five years, with a target of 76 new homes in WA in the first year. In 2009-10, the Housing Authority exceeded its target by completing 78 remote community houses and refurbishing another 150. Housing was factory-built and erected with 36% Aboriginal employment. In the same period, the Housing Authority moved to directly managing Aboriginal community housing, using Authority staff, with 1,103 houses in 33 communities transferred to direct management in the first year of the approach.<sup>1786</sup> Targets were again exceeded the following year, with 84 new builds and 271 refurbishments. The Federal government provided bonus payments to States that exceeded their annual targets.<sup>1787</sup>

<sup>1777</sup> SHC, *Annual Report*, 2006

<sup>1778</sup> SHC etc, *Annual Reports*, 1990s-2006

<sup>1779</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2007

<sup>1780</sup> Prout, Green & Anwar McHenry, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton', 2012, p.19

<sup>1781</sup> ABS, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, 2008, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0> accessed 27 June 2014

<sup>1782</sup> Prout, Green & Anwar McHenry, 'Aboriginal Housing in Geraldton', 2012, p.20

<sup>1783</sup> Kevin Troop, Manager Asset Management DOH, email to Kim McKay, 4 June 2014, provided to Clare Menck by email from Beth Ferialdi, DOH, 17 June 2014

<sup>1784</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place', 2004, p.30

<sup>1785</sup> DOH Property lists, February 2014

<sup>1786</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2010

<sup>1787</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

Work began in 2010 on new residences on the site of Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home in Queens Park. The new dwellings were to be occupied by former Aboriginal residents of the home.<sup>1788</sup> Eleven houses had been completed by June 2011.<sup>1789</sup>

The *Aboriginal Housing Legislation Amendment Act (2010)* transferred management of additional Aboriginal housing in remote areas to the Department of Housing.<sup>1790</sup> The Commonwealth funding model for remote community housing had been labelled by many as a failure.<sup>1791</sup> Buraluba Yura Ngurra Workers Hostel

By July 2010, 22% of Homeswest tenants identified as Aboriginal. In the Metropolitan area, this was about 13%. The percentage increased in northern regions of the State, with around 49% of Wheatbelt tenants being Aboriginal, 46% of Goldfields and Midwest tenants, 61.5% of Pilbara tenants and 69% of Kimberley tenants. Halls Creek (including remote communities in north-eastern desert areas) was identified as a specific region with almost 95% Aboriginal tenancy. Despite the 2004 EOC report noting eviction of Aboriginal tenants as a significant problem and recommending ways to reduce evictions, between 2006 and 2010 the percentage of bailiff evictions for Aboriginal tenants remained disproportionately high and was even increasing. However, as bailiff evictions were only about 7% of all tenancy terminations and comparable data was not retained, it was not clear if overall Aboriginal tenants were being removed from Homeswest properties at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal tenants.<sup>1792</sup>

In 2011, the EOC released a further report, describing its monitoring of DHW's implementation of recommendations from the 2004 report. Although the formal implementation process had been



Buraluba Yura Ngurra Workers Hostel for Aboriginal workers and trainees, Halls Creek  
*Housing Authority, Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1788</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2010*

<sup>1789</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2011*

<sup>1790</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place: Final Report', 2011, pp.6-7

<sup>1791</sup> Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, [http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=142%3Aremote-aboriginal-housing-in-western-australia-and-the-aboriginal-housing-legislation-amendment-act&catid=22&Itemid=57](http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=142%3Aremote-aboriginal-housing-in-western-australia-and-the-aboriginal-housing-legislation-amendment-act&catid=22&Itemid=57) accessed 27 June 2014

<sup>1792</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place: Final Report', 2011, pp.18&38



Indigenous short-stay accommodation, Derby  
*Housing Authority, Annual Report, 2013*

completed, both DOH and EOC committed to continuing work together on issues requiring further attention. Progress had been made in addressing systemic discrimination against Aboriginal people but much work remained. Although DOH supported the majority of the 2004 report's 165 recommendations, very few had been fully implemented in the ensuing years.<sup>1793</sup>

In July 2011, the Housing Authority opened the first of four Kimberley hostels providing supported accommodation for Aboriginal workers and trainees and their families, a 24-bed facility five kilometres from Halls Creek. It was jointly funded by the Housing Authority and the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.<sup>1794</sup>

The Housing Authority was a major contributor to the rebuilding of Warmun, destroyed by floods in March 2011. Temporary housing was provided in town while the community was rebuilt, with large numbers of community members employed in the reconstruction works.<sup>1795</sup> Within fifteen months, 56 new houses were constructed and another twenty refurbished.<sup>1796</sup>

In 2012, work commenced on hostels at Derby and Kalgoorlie-Boulder to provide short-stay accommodation for Aboriginal visitors to the towns. Such accommodation was desired to reduce the number of visitors sleeping in public places or overcrowding the homes of public housing tenants, and each hostel provided around fifty beds.<sup>1797</sup>

In September 2012, the Transitional Housing Program was launched to assist families in the East Kimberley into home ownership. Forty transitional homes were constructed in Kununurra for local Aboriginal people engaged in employment or training, who were given the option of purchasing the home they were renting while being provided social support services to assist with moving towards home ownership. Participation in the transitional program was also dependant on good rates of school and

<sup>1793</sup> EOC, 'Finding a Place: Final Report', 2011, pp.6-7, 52, 55-72

<sup>1794</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1795</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2011

<sup>1796</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

<sup>1797</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report*, 2012

work attendance from clients.<sup>1798</sup> Unlike the 'transitional' system of the 1950s-1970s, these 'transitional' houses do not appear to have been constructed with different standards to regular government housing.



Aboriginal transitional Housing, East Kimberley, 2013

*Housing Authority, Annual Report, 2013*

By 2013, Perth was reported to have the highest homelessness rate in the country, with estimates that up to half of those living on Perth streets were Aboriginal. Many individuals displaced by the 2003 closure of the Swan Valley Nyungar Community continued to be homeless, and several were known to have died homeless in the decade since the community's closure.<sup>1799</sup> Family violence and other family conflict continued to be the greatest contributors to Aboriginal homelessness.<sup>1800</sup>

The history of Aboriginal housing is contested, with some seeing an endless colonial struggle, others identifying ongoing improvements in quality, quantity, location and Aboriginal control in housing, and still others identifying a 'high point' in Aboriginal housing policies nationally in the early 1980s, from which the situation has declined.<sup>1801</sup>

Despite all efforts to sensitively and professionally consider a range of views regarding Aboriginal government housing, it should be noted that this report is from a non-Aboriginal perspective. It is recommended that an Aboriginal perspective also be obtained if policy decisions are to be made based on this report's information.

<sup>1798</sup> Housing Authority, *Annual Report, 2013*

<sup>1799</sup> 'Homeless protest at Matagarup', 16 May 2013 <http://thestringer.com.au/homeless-protest-at-matagarup-we-will-not-be-swept-away-2/#.U2HNplcZMYs> accessed 1 May 2014

<sup>1800</sup> Roberts, Chantal 'National Family Homelessness Project: A Longitudinal Research Project on Aboriginal Homelessness in Perth Western Australia', Centrecare, 2004, p.8

<sup>1801</sup> Read, Peter 'Preface', in Read, *Settlement*, 2000, pp.xi-xii

*Places that remain in 2014 – this chapter*

DOH retains 531 housing units listed as either former or remote Aboriginal housing dated 2003 to 2014. From 2009, housing was no longer listed as specifically Aboriginal housing except in remote communities, so this figure does not entirely represent the number of houses built in response to government inquiries in the 2000s. There are also 77 GROH residences in remote Aboriginal communities from the same period, built in part in response to the Gordon Report.

**Gordon Report**

As outlined in [Section 18](#), the first GROH residences in response to the Gordon Report, between 2003 and 2006, were at Kalumburu, Balgo and Warburton. Fourteen GROH residences in these communities from this period remain in DOH ownership dated 2005, half of which are at Warburton. The second round of Gordon Report GROH housing was at Djarindjin, Bidyadanga, Warakurna and Warmun in 2007 (13 homes in total, all still in DOH ownership) and Jigalong, in 2007-08 (six 2008 homes remain). All thirty-three homes built at Halls Creek in 2008-09 in response to the Inquiry are also still in DOH ownership.

**National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing 2008 - funding boost (factory-built housing)**

DOH retains 309 remote Aboriginal houses built from 2009 to 2014. Only eleven of these are masonry construction, with the remainder a mix of transportable, panel system, fibre clad and iron clad, mostly the latter (227 units).

**Hostels**

The hostels at Halls Creek (2011) Derby and Kalgoorlie (2012) cannot be identified in DOH records.

**Warmun floods, 2011**

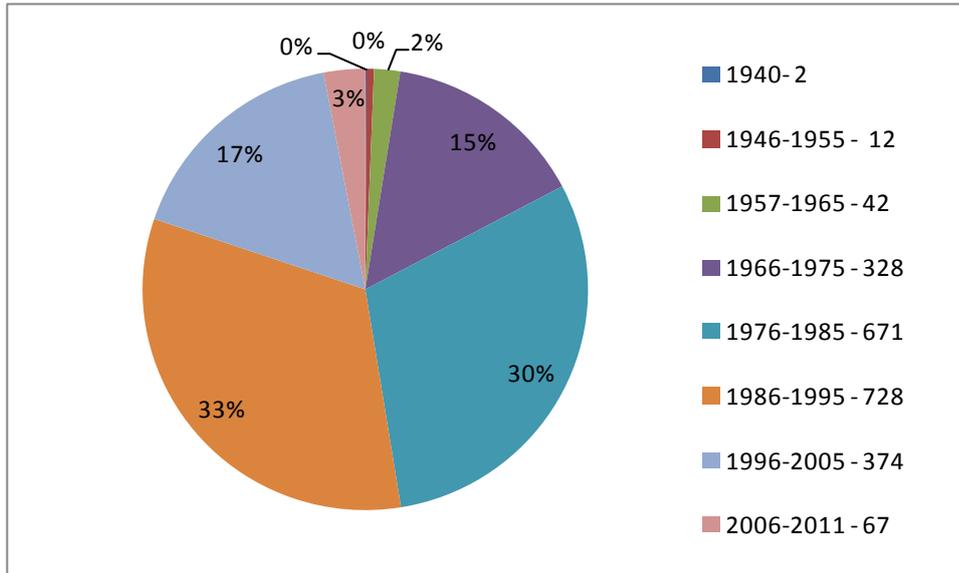
DOH retains 54 units at Warmun dated from 2011 to 2014.

**Transitional housing, Kununurra**

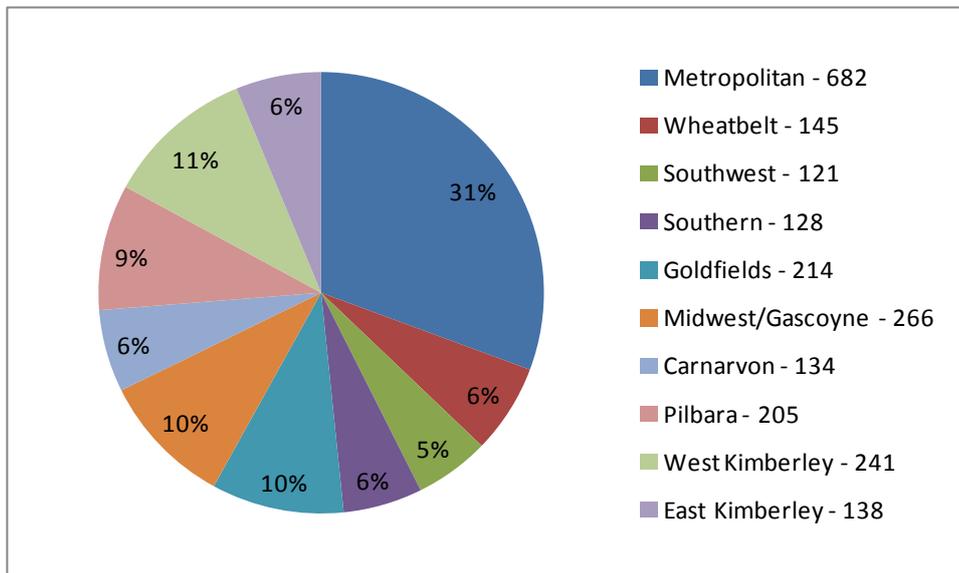
Only three non-GROH residences remain at Kununurra from 2012 to 2014, suggesting the option of tenant purchase for 'transitional' houses built from 2012 has been largely taken up.

*Places that remain in 2014 – Aboriginal housing in general*

Although DOH no longer separates Aboriginal and regular housing, except in remote communities, its database continues to note those that were Aboriginal housing prior to 2009. There are 2,223 housing units identified as formerly Aboriginal housing, now part of regular public housing stocks, and 1,114 units of remote Aboriginal housing. One residence from general public housing stock is noted as 'dwelling use – Indigenous'. Another 15 with this 'use' are former Aboriginal housing and 568 are remote Aboriginal housing. Remote housing is discussed at [Section 21.3](#). The other 2,224 units divide chronologically as:

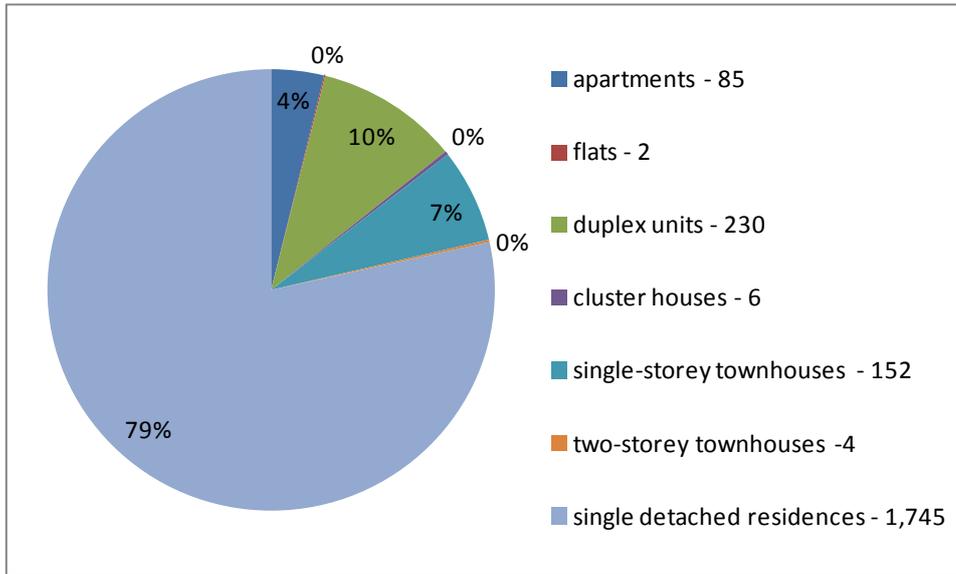


Aboriginal housing (non-remote) divides by region as:



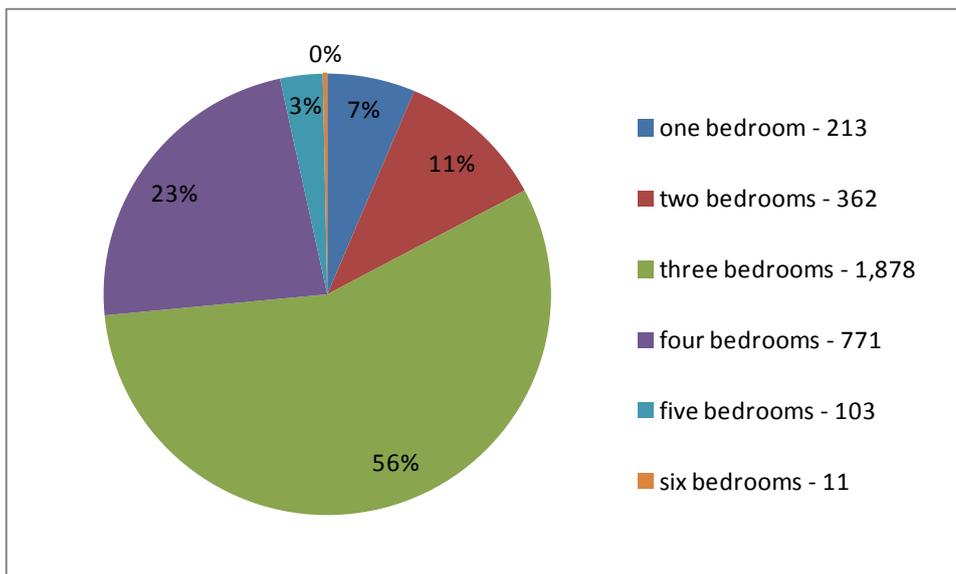
Regionally, 30.5% of Aboriginal housing is in the Metropolitan area, 32.5% in the Northwest (including Carnarvon) and 37% in Country areas.

Aboriginal housing (non-remote) divides by housing type as:



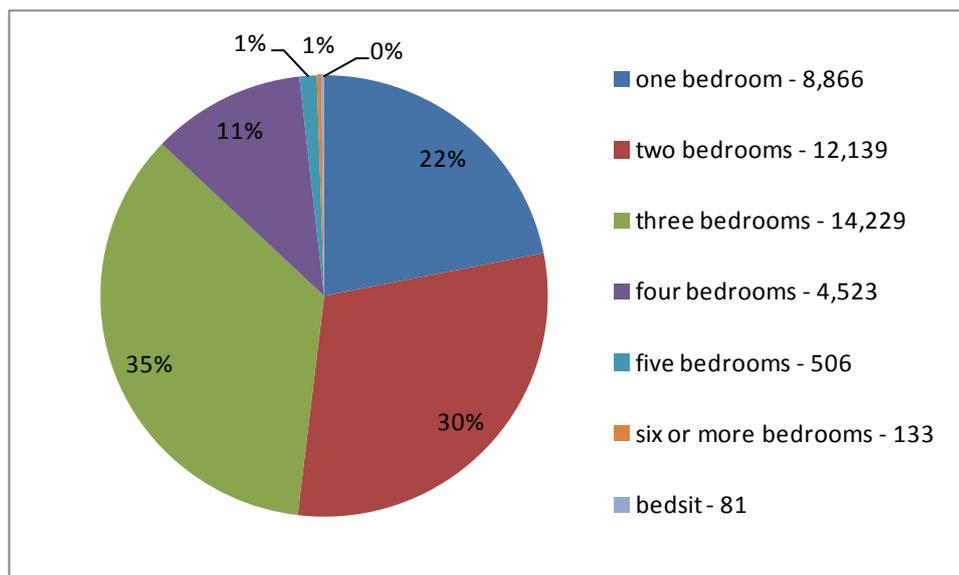
Single detached residences account of 78.5% of non-remote Aboriginal housing, compared with only 39% of DOH's housing stock over all. The percentage of single detached houses amongst remote Aboriginal housing is even higher at 95.5%, meaning 84% of all DOH's Aboriginal housing is single detached houses.

The number of bedrooms in all Aboriginal housing (including remote) divides as:



All the five- and six-bedroom residences are single detached houses, but cluster homes, duplexes, and single- and two-storey townhouses all have examples up to four bedrooms.

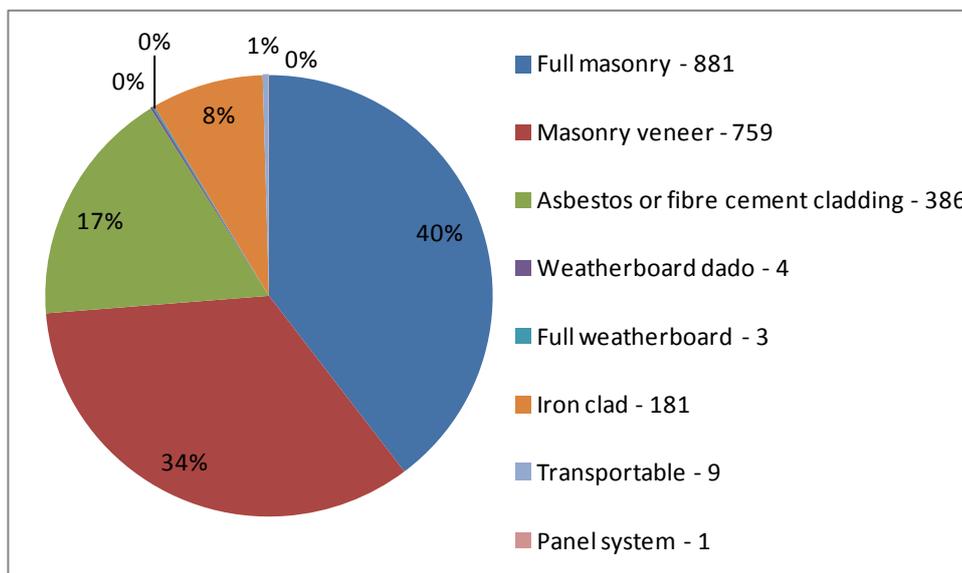
By comparison, non-Aboriginal DOH housing divides by number of bedrooms as follows:



The stock of five- and six-bedroom houses includes 52 six-bedroom houses and 95 five-bedroom houses from 2009 to 2011, when places were no longer designated as 'Aboriginal' housing, which may also have been designed for Aboriginal families. There are also 14 seven-bedroom and three eight-bedroom houses (mostly shared disability group homes built in the last ten years) and one ten-bedroom house (1983, family use).

Overall, 26.5% of Aboriginal housing has four or more bedrooms, compared with 13% of non-Aboriginal housing.

Non-remote Aboriginal housing divides into the following construction materials:



Full masonry and masonry veneer together account for 73.5% of non-remote Aboriginal housing.

Community Housing largely does not identify whether accommodation is intended for Aboriginal occupants. However, 79 housing units are listed with providers that appear to be Aboriginal organisations and probably provide Aboriginal housing.

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Clare Menck: personal collection (images from 2014)

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## 24 APPENDICES

### 24.1 GLOSSARY

Affordable housing - public or private housing, rental and owner-occupied, that is financially accessible for prospective residents. Defined in 1992 as housing available to persons with the lowest 40% of income without having to pay more than 30 per cent of household income to meet housing costs, either as rent or as loan repayments.

Apartment – individual housing unit within one building of grouped units, where each unit has its own laundry

Army Camps – former army camps taken over by the SHC from 1946 to provide emergency housing for homeless families. Intended as a temporary measure, but some families remained for long periods. Finally closed in 1958.

Cluster house – semi-detached or conjoined residences sharing access and some outdoor space, but not arranged in rows. Intended to have greater private outdoor space than row housing, but remembered by some as not having separate yards. On-site parking provided but not generally enough bays for every unit. The style appears to have been used from the 1970s to the 1990s, particularly in the Northwest, after which it was largely replaced by single-storey townhouses.

*Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements* – Agreements from 1944, legislated 1945, for distribution of Commonwealth funds by State housing commissions to provide affordable housing. Initially only providing for rental homes, from 1954 the Agreement was amended to allow for purchase of rental homes and from 1956 the terms included home purchase schemes. Initially also referred to as the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme. The initial *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement* ran for ten years, but after that they were generally renewed every five years, and sometimes ran for only three.

Community Housing – rental accommodation programs, including hostels and other alternative housing forms, where a combination of government and not-for-profit funds established the housing, the government generally retains whole or part ownership, and the housing itself is managed by a non-government agency. Community housing programs often include provision of support services for residents as well as accommodation, and include youth crisis care, women's refuges and homeless shelters. Some aged care is provided as community housing and some as public housing.

Country Housing Authority (CHA) – government agency operating formed 1998 to bring together assistance for rural housing and industrial and commercial housing in regional areas, providing financial incentives and loans to support rural populations.

Crisis Accommodation – Facilities providing short term housing (generally up to twelve weeks), for individuals and families who become homeless, most commonly through situations of violence or a need to access medical treatment away from a usual place of residence. Includes women's shelters and youth services.

Duplex – two conjoined residences, generally single storey.

Economic Rent – a rental rate based on the original cost of constructing the house, intended to recoup construction and other costs over a long period. Commonwealth-State rental homes from 1944 had an economic rent calculated using a 53-year repayment period.

Emergency Housing – accommodation for those with an urgent housing need, such as applicants who would otherwise be completely without shelter. Emergency housing is sometimes temporary (eg. hotel rooms) but generally aims to place tenants into accommodation without a limitation of tenure. The exact definition of 'emergency housing' has changed over time.

Evictees – persons, generally families, threatened with homelessness on account of having their private lease terminated or under threat of being evicted. Changes to legislation in the early 1950s meant several hundred evictee families required urgent government housing assistance, with a special program initiated to house them between 1951 and 1953.

Flat – individual housing unit within one building, where individual units do not have laundry facilities and a common laundry is provided for the complex.

Freehold (Part IV) - one of two forms of housing assistance provided by the 1912 *Workers' Homes Act*, by which the government provided loans for construction of approved modest homes, with moderate repayment rates. Many freehold homes were constructed by the WHB, but loans could also be used to finance a private build or purchase of an existing house. Freehold loans were available until 1976. The new *State Housing Act* of 1981 replaced them with new home purchase schemes.

Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA) – State government statutory authority with responsibility for housing government employees, established 1964. From 2001, GEHA was operated as a separate agency under the umbrella of Department of Housing and Works (DHW), before being amalgamated with SHC in mid-2001 to form the Housing Authority, at which time it became a branch of the new agency and was rebranded as GROH.

Government Heritage Property Disposal Process (GHPDP) – a State government policy initiated in 1994 requiring all government agencies to refer to the HCWA properties they plan to demolish, dispose of or develop that have potential heritage significance.

Government housing – Colloquially used to describe government rental housing, but for this report used more broadly to mean all government housing initiatives including home finance schemes and government employee housing

Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) – branch of DOH responsible for housing government employees in non-Metropolitan areas, both in government properties and in private housing rented by the government.

Heritage Council of Western Australia (HCWA) – Statutory body responsible for maintaining the State Register of Heritage Places, supported administratively by the State Heritage Office (SHO).

Home purchase schemes – government programs to assist low-income individuals into home ownership, including rent-to-buy, providing vendor finance, linking with private financial institutions to provide loans, building for immediate sale and offering cash sales to tenants. Some homes subject to home purchase schemes were constructed by the SHC and some privately.

Homeswest – the 'trading name' of the SHC from 1986 to 2006, in later years responsible only for the rental portion of SHC operations. Remains widely in use as a colloquial name for DOH.

Hostel – a group accommodation facility, in which meals are generally provided along with furnished rooms. Particularly in aged care, hostels may also include access to facilities such as laundry services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy etc, but not nursing care.

Housing Authority – the name given to the former SHC from mid-2006, as a branch of DOH, which remains to the present.

Housing Unit – a single residence, whether freestanding or within a group. One duplex comprises two housing units; one block of six flats comprises six housing units; a four-bedroom house comprises one housing unit. 'Residences', 'dwellings', 'units' or 'homes' are also used as general terms referring to housing units.

Leasehold (Part III) – one of two forms of housing assistance provided by the 1912 *Workers' Homes Act*, by which the government retained land title and the home owner, even after fully purchasing their house, became a perpetual lessee of the land. Most Leasehold homes were constructed by the WHB. From 1935, the land could also be purchased from the government after the house had been repaid, which increased the popularity of the scheme, as entry and repayment terms were better than for Freehold (Part IV) properties. Leasehold loans were available until 1976.

Lodging House – a group accommodation facility providing furnished rooms for rental, including long-term residence, and sometimes also including meals. Also 'boarding house'.

Market Rent – a rental rate based on the potential sale value of the house regardless of its original value. Commonwealth-State rental homes were moved from economic to market rents in 1978, which increased rental payments for tenants.

McNess Housing Trust (the Trust) – State Government fund, substantially aided by private donations from Sir Charles McNess and Lotteries grants, established 1930 to provide housing for the aged, indigent and chronically ill. Initially named the Western Australian Housing Trust, it acquired McNess' name after his death and large bequest in 1938. The Trust had a separate board but all activities were administered by the WHB and then SHC. It was absorbed into the SHC in November 1968.

Ministry of Housing – short-lived rebranding of SHC from mid-1999 to mid-2001. Intended to enable amalgamation with GEHA and CHA but this did not eventuate in these years.

Nursing Home – a residential aged care facility providing 24-hour nursing care along with all meals and personal care services.

Office of Housing – policy branch of the SHC, established 1985-96. From 2000 also called Office of Housing Policy

Patio Housing - generally refers to grouped homes that share at least one party wall, especially from the 1960s. Often single storey, they at times had private patios but shared communal garden areas, or very small rear yards almost entirely covered by the patio.

Priority Housing – accommodation for applicants deemed to be in greater need of housing than the general wait list. Priority housing applicants bypass general applicants on the wait list for DOH rental housing. Includes emergency housing and in some eras is synonymous with emergency housing.

Public Housing – used by government agencies to describe the provision of rental housing where the government agency (SHC and following) remains both owner and manager of the property. Used by some commentators to refer to the government housing programs that include broader issues such as town planning and rest on principles of government support for affordable housing for all rather than 'welfare housing'. Used by the general public to mean government rental housing including community housing.

Rental – homes owned by the government (or private owners) for which the residents (tenants) pay a regular rent amount. Government rental properties were established under the 1945 *Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement*, and were sometimes called 'public housing',

'government housing' or 'social housing'. Tenants were sometimes permitted to purchase their rental home on a cash basis, sometimes at a reduced price that took into account the amount of rent they had already paid.

Row House - conjoined residences, either one or two storeys, in groups of more than two. Also called a townhouse or terrace houses.

Rural Housing Authority (RHA) – government agency operating formed 1976 to provide home finance for rural populations, superseded by CHA in 1998

Single Detached Residence – a freestanding home, generally designed for a family with two or more bedrooms. Originally always sited alone on a block, in later years infill meant some properties had two single detached residences, separately fenced and accessed. SHC did not build two-storey detached houses.

Social Housing – the term preferred more recently in DOH reports to refer to all government rental housing, covering both public housing and community housing (defined in this way in DHW annual report 2008)

State Housing Act homes – homes built after 1946 on purchase terms established by the Workers' Homes Board from 1912.

State Housing Commission (SHC) – Western Australian State Government department that expanded and superseded the WHB, becoming the chief government agency for housing support from 1947 to 2006.

Townhouse – conjoined residences, either one or two storeys, in groups of more than two. Not all townhouses are row houses, as some are arranged in clusters.

Unit – *see 'housing unit'*. Although in common use 'unit' sometimes refers to a flat, apartment or townhouse, in this history it is only used as a short form of 'housing unit'.

Walk-up Flats – blocks of flats in which each unit has an external door (rather than entries from a communal internal hallway) and no lift is provided. Generally two to three storeys. In eastern Australian cities, certain styles of walk-up flats are referred to colloquially as the 'six pack'.

War Service Homes Commission (WSHC) – Commonwealth Government department established 1919 to provide affordable finance for returned servicepersons for the construction and/or purchase of a home. The operations of the WSHC were administered by the WHB and then SHC in Western Australia. Operated until 1973.

Welfare Housing – a term not generally used by government housing agencies but used by commentators to describe the shift from government intervention as a means of ensuring the entire population was housed, in various ways ('public housing'), to the provision of government housing as part of a welfare package, where housing is perceived as one 'benefit' for those who may be in receipt of numerous 'government benefits' (eg. income support payments).

Workers' Homes Board (WHB) – Western Australian State Government department formed in 1912 to administer provision of housing assistance to workers, rebranded and expanded as State Housing Commission from 1947.

## 24.2 ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHB	Aboriginal Housing Board
AHL	Aboriginal Hostels Ltd
ALWA	Australian Women's Land Army
AMCORD	Australian Model Code for Residential Development
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BHP	Broken Hill Pty Ltd
BP	British Petroleum
CALM	Conservation and Land Management
CHA	Country Housing Authority
CHC	Commonwealth Housing Commission
CIAM	Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (International Congress of Modern Architecture)
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refining Co Ltd
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Federal)
DCW	Department for Community Welfare
DHW	Department of Housing and Works
DNW	Department of Native Welfare (State)
DOH	Department of Housing
DSC	Disability Services Commission
DURD	Department of Urban and Regional Development
EOC	Equal Opportunity Commission
FOHCOL	Federation of Housing Collectives
GEHA	Government Employees Housing Authority
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GROH	Government Regional Officer Housing
HCWA	Heritage Council of Western Australia
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration (USA)

NatHERS	Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NLA	National Library of Australia
NPASH	National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing
PMG	Postmaster General's Department
PV	photovoltaic
PWD	Public Works Department
R&I	Rural and Industries Bank
REIWA	Real Estate Institute of Western Australia
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Service
RHA	Rural Housing Authority
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SEC	State Electricity Commission
SHAP	Special Housing Assistance Program
SHC	State Housing Commission
SHO	State Heritage Office
SLWA	State Library of Western Australia
SROWA	State Records Office Western Australia
UWA	University of Western Australia
WACOSS	WA Council of Social Service
WAGR	Western Australian Government Railways
WAPC	Western Australian Planning Commission
WHB	Worker's Homes Board
WSHC	War Service Homes Commission

## 24.3 DEPARTMENTAL NAME CHANGES (HOUSING)

Workers' Homes Board (WHB)	1912-1946	
State Housing Commission (SHC)	1947-2006	
Homeswest	1985-2006	<i>'trading name' of SHC, from 2001 for rentals only</i>
Ministry of Housing	1999-2001	
Department of Housing and Works (DHW)	2001-2009	
Housing Authority	2006-	<i>under umbrella of DHW/DOH</i>
Department of Housing (DOH)	2009-	
Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA)	1965-2006	<i>amalgamated into Housing Authority</i>
Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH)	2006-	<i>no longer an agency, GROH is now a branch of DOH</i>

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## 24.5 THEMES IN DETAIL

## 24.5.1 HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WA (HCWA) THEMES

Relevant HCWA themes are as follows:

Number	Theme	Relevance
<b>1</b>	<b><i>Demographic settlement and mobility</i></b>	
101	Immigration, emigration and refugees	Post-war housing, Northwest housing
102	Aboriginal occupation	Aboriginal housing
103	Racial contact and interaction	Aboriginal housing
104	Land allocation and subdivision	SHC housing estates
106	Workers	WHB formation for 'workers' housing; housing to support industry
107	Settlements	Housing to support industry; SHC estates
108	Government Policy	All government housing
110	Resource exploitation and depletion	Housing to support mining and forestry; Northwest housing
111	Depression and boom	SHC influence on building industry as a whole, inc stimulus measures in low periods (Depression, 1970s, GFC); providing housing for those pressured out of the housing market by boom periods; providing housing support for low-income earners in periods of unemployment etc
112	Technology and technological change	Pre-cut and transportable homes; changes in housing standards in response to changing building approaches
113	Natural disasters	Northwest designs for cyclones; response to damage from floods and cyclones (Northwest & Aboriginal housing)
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Transport and Communications</i></b>	
201	River and sea transport	Government employee housing
202	Rail and light rail transport	Government employee housing
203	Road transport	Pre-cut and transportable homes; government employee housing
207	Space exploration	NASA tracking station workers' housing, Carnarvon
208	Newspapers	Media attention to post-war housing, inc SHC operations; conservation of Newspapers building Fremantle
209	Technology and technological change	Pre-cut and transportable homes; changes in housing standards in response to changing building approaches

<b>3</b>	<b><i>Occupations</i></b>	
301	Grazing, pastoralism and dairying	Country housing; Northwest housing; Group settlement
302	Rural industry and market gardening	Country housing; Government employee housing
303	Mining (including mineral processing)	Housing to support industry; Northwest housing; Government employee housing
304	Timber industry	Housing to support industry; Government employee housing; use of timber construction
305	Fishing and other maritime industry	Government employee housing
306	Domestic activities	All housing
307	Intellectual activities, arts and crafts	Changes in design esp architectural competitions
308	Commercial services and industries	SHC shops
310	Manufacturing and processing	SHC support for building industry esp post-war measures to boost supply of building materials; housing for industry (eg. Kwinana, Wundowie)
311	Hospitality industry and tourism	Government employee housing (national parks)
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Social and civic activities</i></b>	
401	Government and politics	All SHC housing
402	Education and science	Government employee housing; energy efficient design; SHC apprenticeship schemes
403	Law and order	Government employee housing; Aboriginal housing enforcing legalised discrimination; evictees
404	Community services and utilities	Welfare housing; SHC services for housing estates; Community housing
405	Sport, recreation and entertainment	Commonwealth Games and America's Cup housing
408	Institutions	SHC as an institution; government employee housing (eg. prisons)
409	Environmental awareness	Energy efficient design
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Outside influences</i></b>	
501	World wars and other wars	Housing responses to both World Wars; War Service Homes; Armed Services homes
502	Refugees	Post-war housing for European displaced persons, inc SHC employees
503	Natural disasters	Northwest designs for cyclones; response to damage from floods and cyclones (Northwest & Aboriginal housing)
504	Depression and boom	SHC influence on building industry as a whole, inc stimulus measures in low periods (Depression, 1970s, GFC); providing housing for

		those pressured out of the housing market by boom periods; providing housing support for low-income earners in periods of unemployment etc
505	Markets	Depression; 1960s & 2000s Pilbara mining boom; 1970s oil crisis; 2008 GFC
507	Water, power, major transport routes	Government employee housing; SHC housing for South Fremantle power station 1950s; housing for coal mining at Collie
<b>6</b>	<b><i>People</i></b>	
601	Aboriginal people	Aboriginal housing
602	Early settlers	Areas where SHC was involved in the establishment of a town/area eg Wittenoom, Group Settlements, South Hedland
603	Local heroes and battlers	SHC clients on low incomes ('battlers') esp in housing estates
604	Innovators	Changes in design; energy efficient design; innovative government policies
605	Famous and infamous people	Charles McNess, Krantz & Sheldon; Margaret Feilman; John Oldham; apartment blocks named for Housing ministers or senior officers (eg. Brownlie Towers, Graham Flats)
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Other</i></b>	

Many themes could be added at 'other' but as this list has not been used for further analysis the 'other' section has not been expanded.

## 24.5.2 AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COUNCIL (AHC) THEMES

A full list of AHC themes relevant to the history of government housing in Western Australia follows. This has been used to inform the thematic framework at [Section 5](#).

AHC No.	Theme	Relevance
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Peopling Australia</i></b>	
2.1	Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants	Aboriginal Housing
2.4	Migrating	Post-war housing
2.4.5	Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration	Post-war housing, inc migrant workers brought to work for the SHC; European settlement and ongoing encroachment creating Aboriginal housing need
2.5	Promoting Settlement	Group settlement; SHC housing subdivisions; SHC housing to support development of regional settlements; housing for regional industries; Northwest expansion
<b>3</b>	<b><i>Developing Local, Regional and National Economies</i></b>	
3.4.2	Fishing and whaling	Government employee housing
3.4.3	Mining	Housing to support industry; Northwest housing; government employee housing; country housing
3.4.4	Making forests into a saleable resource	Housing to support industry; government employee housing (forestry); country housing
3.5.3	Developing agricultural industries	Government employee housing; Group settlement housing; country housing
3.6	Recruiting labour	Government employee housing; housing to support industry; post-war housing; Northwest housing
3.7	Establishing communications	Government employee housing;
3.8	Moving goods and people	Government employee housing (includes railways, roads, harbours)
3.11	Altering the environment	Government employee housing (includes irrigation schemes, water supply)
3.12.5	Retailing foods and beverages	SHC shops
3.13	Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity	Post-war housing; housing for industrial areas (eg. Maniana for Welshpool)
3.14	Developing an Australian engineering and construction industry	SHC as major builder/developer; SHC support for & influence on building industry more generally; post-war measures to produce building materials locally inc housing to support industry; Depression and GFC stimulus measures to boost building industry
3.14.1	Building to suit Australian conditions	Energy-efficient design; Northwest housing; remote Aboriginal housing

3.14.2	Using Australian materials in construction	SHC preferred materials list; development of local building supplies esp post-war; alternative materials in Northwest designs
3.15	Developing economic links outside Australia	Kwinana (BP); Northwest housing
3.16.1	Dealing with hazards and disasters	Northwest designs for cyclones; response to damage from floods and cyclones (Northwest & Aboriginal housing)
3.18	Financing Australia	WHB/SHC home-purchase schemes/low-interest loans/vendor finance etc
3.19	Marketing and retailing	SHC shops
3.22	Lodging people	Lodging houses inc Aboriginal hostels; crisis and homelessness services
3.26	Providing health services	Government employee housing
3.26.4	Providing care for people with disabilities	Disability housing; later aged persons housing
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Building Settlements, Towns and Cities</i></b>	
4.1	Planning urban settlements	SHC estates; SHC land release; Radburn designs; urban renewal; New Living
4.1.1	Selecting township sites	Housing to support industry – Kwinana, Wundowie, Wittenoom; Aboriginal remote community 'village' housing – One Arm Point, Looma, etc; SHC development of South Hedland
4.1.2	Making suburbs	SHC estates; SHC contribution to suburbia more generally especially by scale of development in post-war years; WHB/State Housing Act/War Service homes creating suburbs but not SHC estates; SHC shops; integration of Aboriginal housing into 'white' suburbs; urban renewal; New Living
4.1.3	Learning to live with property booms and busts	SHC influence on building industry as a whole, inc stimulus measures in low periods (Depression, 1970s, GFC); providing housing for those pressured out of the housing market by boom periods; providing housing support for low-income earners in periods of unemployment etc
4.1.4	Creating capital cities	SHC estates' contribution to development of Perth; SHC housing for low-income earners influencing the general non-development of slums in Perth; WHB shift of focus 1930s from country to metro housing; renewal and redevelopment projects
4.2	Supplying urban services	SHC development of government and private serviced residential estates; Government employee housing (esp. fire); SHC shops & community services

4.3	Developing institutions	SHC as an institution, with changing meaning over time; Aboriginal housing; government employee housing (eg. prisons)
4.4	Living with slums, outcasts and homelessness	Post-war housing shortage; Army camps; Aboriginal housing esp reserves; Homelessness and crisis housing services; New Living and other renewal projects; stigma and social issues associated with SHC housing
4.5	Making settlements to serve rural Australia	Country housing; Government employee housing; Pre-war esp Group settlement; remote Aboriginal communities
4.6	Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities	SHC as significant influence in many phases, esp establishment of estates and shift in densities (low-high-low-medium); renewal/redevelopment changing the nature of whole areas
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Working</i></b>	
5.1	Working in harsh conditions	Northwest design; Government employee housing (esp remote areas); country housing
5.1.1	Coping with unemployment	Public housing as welfare; Depression
5.2	Organising workers and work places	Union involvement in government employee housing standards; union pressure in allocation of post-war housing for workers; housing for industry
5.3	Caring for workers' dependent children	WHB home-purchase schemes; government employee housing; housing for industry;
5.4	Working in offices	Government employee housing; SHC branch offices
5.6	Working in the home	All housing, as it relates to domestic work/unpaid work/women's work/etc
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Educating</i></b>	
6.2	Establishing schools	Government employee housing
6.3	Training people for the workplace	SHC apprenticeship schemes
6.4	Building a system of higher education	Government employee housing
6.5	Educating people in remote places	Government employee housing
6.6	Educating Indigenous people in two cultures	Aboriginal children's hostels; SHC programs to 'train' Aboriginal people in construction and 'domestic skills'
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Governing</i></b>	
7.6.1	Developing local government authorities	Government employee housing – shire housing schemes
7.6.3	Policing Australia	Government employee housing
7.6.4	Dispensing justice	Government employee housing
7.6.5	Incarcerating people	Government employee housing

7.6.6	Providing services and welfare	Public housing; McNess housing; army camps; emergency housing; shift towards 'welfare housing' 1970s; expanded eligibility criteria 1984; crisis accommodation and homelessness services; disability housing; increased public housing stock through GFC stimulus measures; Aboriginal housing
7.6.7	Enforcing discriminatory legislation	Aboriginal housing; housing in early periods with limited client groups; EOC inquiry 2004 – findings of institutional discrimination
7.6.8	Administering Indigenous Affairs	Government employee housing; Aboriginal housing
7.6.9	Conserving Australian resources	Energy-efficient design
7.6.10	Conserving fragile environments	Government employee housing (includes Parks & Wildlife)
7.6.12	Conserving Australia's heritage	DHW/DOH projects repurposing old commercial/industrial buildings for housing
7.7	Defending Australia	Armed services housing
7.8	Establishing regional and local identity	SHC estates; government housing in remote areas where it is a high proportion of a settlement; Northwest housing; remote Aboriginal communities
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Developing Australia's cultural life</i></b>	
8.1.1	Playing and watching organised sports	Commonwealth Games athlete's village; Fremantle housing for America's Cup
8.1.3	Developing public parks and gardens	Radburn planning; SHC apartments' playgrounds and gardens
8.5.2	Helping people	McNess Trust; crisis accommodation and homelessness services
8.5.3	Associating for mutual aid	War Service group housing schemes; housing collectives; 'self-help' building programs for Aboriginal communities
8.10.4	Designing and building fine buildings	Good examples of affordable design in different periods; various awards won
8.10.5	Advancing knowledge in science and technology	Energy efficient design; SHC design competitions encouraging innovation; experiments and improvements in Northwest design; government employee housing (eg Agricultural research stations)
8.12	Living in and around Australian homes	All housing
8.13	Living in cities and suburbs	Metropolitan housing
8.14	Living in the country and rural settlements	Country & Northwest housing
8.15	Being homeless	Emergency housing inc army camps; response to post-war housing shortage; crisis accommodation and homeless shelters; high rates of Aboriginal homelessness

<b>9</b>	<b>Marking the phases of life</b>	
9.2	Growing up	Family homes; youth accommodation
9.3	Forming families and partnerships	Family homes; creation of WHB in response to increasing numbers of households; new families formed post-war wanting houses and fuelling housing crisis; GEHA family residences
9.4	Being an adult	All housing, esp home-ownership schemes
9.5	Living outside of a family/partnership	Elderly and singles housing; expanded eligibility criteria 1984; crisis accommodation; disability housing; GEHA house share policies
9.6	Growing old	Elderly housing
9.6.1	Retiring	1990s WiseChoice; Elderly housing
9.6.2	Looking after the infirm and the aged	Elderly housing; McNess housing

The AHC framework was designed to have additional themes added as relevant for particular places. Additional themes relevant to this project that expand the AHC's framework follow. They have not been given specific numbers but an approximate grouping number is indicated and is the number used at [Section 5](#).

AHC Group	Theme	Relevance
3?	<i>Being poor/living with poverty</i>	<i>McNess housing; Crisis accommodation and homelessness services; welfare housing; Aboriginal housing</i>
3?	<i>Financing home-purchase schemes</i>	<i>WHB; pre-war era; McNess; War Service; Menzies era; Keystart; Aboriginal home purchase scheme; Country Housing Authority</i>
3?	<i>Providing services to support industrial development</i>	<i>Housing for wartime and post-war industry; Pilbara mining-boom housing; recent housing for Pilbara service workers; country housing</i>
4?	<i>Living in rental accommodation</i>	<i>Commonwealth-State rental housing; evictions from private rentals in 1950s creating urgent public housing need; Aboriginal housing</i>
4?	<i>Utilising Lotteries funding</i>	<i>McNess housing; 1950s-1960s elderly flats; 1950s country flats;</i>
4?	<i>Increasing residential density</i>	<i>Moves from single detached homes to duplexes, later flats, high rise, townhouses, etc; elderly housing; new estates 1960s-1970s; urban renewal 1970s-1990s; new developments past decade.</i>
4?	<i>Progressively improving and upgrading to increase housing amenity</i>	<i>Retrofitting of features for resident comfort eg hot water heaters, screen doors, fencing, carports</i>
4?	<i>Attending to security, safety and privacy</i>	<i>1970s-2000s improvements to housing security; planning changes to increase privacy esp by amending Radburn designs; urban renewal</i>

4?	<i>Designing using architectural competitions</i>	<i>Commonwealth Games Village; various 1980s-1990s competitions (eg singles housing); energy efficient design; Northwest housing; Wheatbelt housing</i>
4?	<i>Providing temporary housing</i>	<i>Sustenance workers; government employees tent camps; repurposed army camps</i>
7?	<i>Negotiating Commonwealth-State relationships</i>	<i>Commonwealth-State Housing Agreements, esp 1945; Armed forces housing; Aboriginal housing post-1972; turbulent housing policy 1970s</i>
7?	<i>Responding to government inquiries and policy changes</i>	<i>Wartime government inquiry into housing, with subsequent rental program and establishment of SHC to administer it; 1947-48 SHC Royal Commission; rental legislation causing private evictions (1950s); Aboriginal citizenship 1967; Government directive to provide housing in advance of 1980s Northwest gas project; expanded eligibility criteria 1984; State Government sustainability policies 2001-08; Gordon Report; EOC Inquiry 2004 (Aboriginal housing)</i>
7?	<i>Redressing discrimination</i>	<i>Provision of elderly persons' housing; disability housing; responses to EOC Inquiry (Aboriginal housing)</i>
7?	<i>Engaging with housing policy through government</i>	<i>Establishment of WHB/SHC; failure of government to provide Aboriginal housing (disengagement)</i>
8?	<i>Pursuing home ownership</i>	<i>Establishment of WHB; War Service Homes; home-purchase schemes</i>
8?	<i>Significant individuals</i>	<i>Charles McNess, Krantz &amp; Sheldon; Margaret Feilman; John Oldham; apartment blocks named for Housing ministers, senior officers or social housing advocates (eg. Brownlie Towers, Graham Flats, Talbot Lodge)</i>
8?	<i>Maintaining hierarchy, distinction or social status</i>	<i>Government employee housing designed to demonstrate status; Aboriginal housing designed to maintain inequalities of power</i>
8?	<i>Developing and applying standard plans</i>	<i>1920s WHB houses; McNess homes; SHC plans post-war; plans based on architectural competitions; country housing; Aboriginal housing</i>
8?	<i>Designing to address particular needs or problems</i>	<i>Prefab Austrian houses to address materials shortage; expansible housing in response to shortages; flats &amp; higher densities to address housing shortages; pre-cut homes to address labour shortages; design to blend in; energy efficient homes; Northwest cyclonic homes; various Aboriginal housing designs, including several later considered inappropriate</i>

8?	<i>Living with social stigma</i>	<i>Army camp 'slums'; SHC estates esp higher density areas; disability housing esp for intellectual disabilities and psychiatric conditions; Aboriginal housing</i>
9?	<i>Living as single-parent families</i>	<i>McNess; Housing for smaller families from 1953; women's refuges</i>
9?	<i>Living as women in Australian society</i>	<i>McNess; early elderly housing; increasing female SHC clients from 1970s; women's refuges; security features in response to women's safety concerns</i>
2/3/8?	<i>International events impacting on Australian domestic life</i>	<i>World Wars One &amp; Two; Depression; post-war materials shortages and migration; 1970s oil crisis; 2008 Global Financial Crisis</i>
3/4/8?	<i>Applying international ideas to Australian contexts</i>	<i>Garden City planning; Radburn design; Green streets</i>
3/7/8?	<i>Working as government in partnership with private or community groups</i>	<i>Joint ventures in aged care; Community housing; crisis accommodation; projects with local councils; joint venture subdivisions and redevelopments with private developers</i>
4/7/8?	<i>Responding to changing standards and social norms</i>	<i>Housing upgrades and urban renewal programs; changing attitudes to Aboriginal people; increasing house size and quality; increased interest in sustainability creating momentum for energy efficient design; GEHA standardising employee housing standards</i>
4/8/9?	<i>Responding to lack of services</i>	<i>SHC shops; development of women's refuges and other crisis services; disability housing; government employee housing for officers providing regional services</i>
4/8?	<i>Implementing a new idea, concept, design or ethos</i>	<i>Lowered ceilings post-war; energy efficient design; 'firsts' eg first flats, first duplex, first Radburn design; new approaches eg Aboriginal transitional housing scheme, pre-cut homes, transportables, cluster homes</i>
7/8/9?	<i>Responding to family violence and abuse</i>	<i>Women's refuges; increased security features on SHC rental homes</i>
8/9?	<i>Servicepersons returning into the community</i>	<i>War Service housing; returned servicepersons exacerbating post-war housing crisis</i>

## 24.6 PLACES REMAINING (31 MAY 2014)

This section is not available to the public. It contains confidential information indentifying government housing addresses.

All information in this section is summarised at the end of each chapter from Sections 6 to 21.5

If you believe you have a legitimate reason to view the full information as presented in the confidential appendix Section 24.6, please contact the Department of Housing to arrange access.

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