

# Progress in implementing “Finding a Place”

## The Department of Housing & Works 24 item Action Plan 2006-7

Eighty-eight responses to the Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into Aboriginal housing and indirect discrimination (Western Australia)

Status of implementation, progress to date as at: 24 November 2006

How to understand the Action Plan - Colour AND Number keys, legends:

				<b>REPORT</b>	<b>REPORT and STATISTICS</b>
Not yet commenced	Behind	Underway	Complete	On-going; <b>REPORT = monitoring required</b>	On-going; <b>REPORT = monitoring &amp; statistics required</b>

*Who in DHW ?* **AH** (Aboriginal Housing); **BID** (Building Industry Development); **BS** (Business Services); **CD** (Corporate Development); **CM** (Communications & Marketing); **HD** (Housing Development); **HM** (Housing Management); **RR** (Review & Reform); **BW** (Building & Works); **ALL**: Shared

### Current and future DHW Workplan areas based on the Joint Department of Housing and Works (DHW) and Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) Statement on Aboriginal Housing June 2006c

1. <b>Building on the best</b> ♯	Learning from successful initiatives in Western Australia and elsewhere and using these to provide better housing for Aboriginal people.
2. <b>Communicating</b> 🗣️	Making our message clear and finding the best ways to deliver it to Aboriginal people.
3. <b>Responsiveness</b> ⚙️	Engaging more with Aboriginal communities in the design of any new housing to meet local needs, and improving our response to complaints and appeals.
4. <b>Review and Reform</b> ⚡	Seeking new ways of doing business and making sure that these new ways cater for the most disadvantaged people.
5. <b>Training</b> Δ	Making sure staff participate in high quality and relevant training that improves their capacity to deliver services to Aboriginal people.
6. <b>Reporting &amp; Monitoring</b> 📊	

Action Plan Theme 1 - Promoting accessibility, awareness and understanding to reduce indirect discrimination

Action Plan Theme 2 – Review policy to remove indirect discrimination

Action Plan Theme 3 – Property management and administration without indirect discrimination

Theme 1 - Promoting accessibility, awareness and understanding to reduce indirect discrimination	Workplan	Who	When	Status Nov 06	Status May 07
<b>Item 1.0 – Training on systemic discrimination and related issues put in place</b>					
1. Regional Office staff need a comprehensive training plan. This has been commissioned and is due for completion on 31 August 2006 and will incorporate an understanding of systemic discrimination.	5: Training	HM	Complete		
2. Cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism training is regularly conducted and is compulsory for all staff members but only 200 have participated over 5 years. Monitoring of staff participation will be introduced. Cross-cultural training will be revised to increase its relevance to the experiences of Aboriginal clients and staff. It will include local Aboriginal presenters. All managers to participate in this new customised training by June 2007.	5: Training	BS	30/06/07		
3. Human Resources is planning to deliver 8 metro and 7 country Cross Cultural Awareness training courses during 06/07 - up from 4 metro courses in 05 /06. Expenditure will be above the \$350,000 currently allocated	5: Training	BS	30/06/07		
<b>Item 1.1 – Plain English brochures/fact sheets</b>					
4. DHW uses standard letters to communicate with its tenants, 120 letters have been prioritised into three categories. 41 Category A letters have been redrafted and a Plain English consultant has completed final editing. The remaining letters will be redrafted once the results of the first 41 have been reviewed. It is aimed to have them completed by 31 December 2006. Stakeholders have been asked to identify specific letters that remain of concern in the way in which they are disseminated and consideration will be given to any suggestions.	2: Communicate	HM	31/12/06		
5. A document targeted toward tenants with low literacy levels is being prepared and it will be appropriate for both public and private rental.	2: Communicate	HM	31/12/06		
6. The literacy level of all clients is to be taken into account in all publications	2: Communicate	CM	Ongoing		

<b>Item 1.2 – Cultural and language needs identified and taken into account; Indigenous customer needs, impact of service assessment carried out</b>					
7. The Department has contributed to funding to an Aboriginal interpreting service in the Kimberley. This agreement expires in 2006/07. Unfortunately there are no recognised government interpreters in Aboriginal languages because Nationally Accredited Training for Indigenous interpreters is only available at the lowest of four levels.	2: Communicate	AH	04/05 to 06/07 (NOTE)		
8. The impact of any changes on service delivery for Indigenous applicants and tenants will be monitored. A process is being developed.	6: Monitor	HD	31/12/06	Report	
<b>Item 1.3 – Identify how Indigenous customer self service can be carried out</b>					
9. Touch screens are an expensive strategy but establishing strategies to increase client self service is of general concern. Opportunities for customer self service will be incorporated within the Department's review and reform program and specific ideas are sought.	4: Reform	RR	02/03/07		
<b>Item 1.4 – Identify best avenues for regional training updates and assessment</b>					
10. Regional offices are provided regularly with updated policies. Regular training is to be provided to all staff on policies and policy changes. The new Training Plan will consider delivery strategies as well as content.	5: Training	HM	Complete		
		BS	Ongoing		
11. Resources for the delivery of Cross-cultural communications will be increased and as a result training will be delivered in the City and at eight regional locations.	5: Training	BS	30/06/07		

**Item 1.5 – Identify how anti-racism training can improve service delivery**

<p>12. DHW Appeal Committee members receive customised training developed in response to the needs of new members. The training programs involve the presentation of case studies, role playing and panel discussion on the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- roles and responsibilities of the Appeals Committee members;</li> <li>- access and equity issues;</li> <li>- appeals procedures;</li> <li>- dispute resolution;</li> <li>- about the appeals hearing; and</li> <li>- decision making and negotiating.</li> </ul>	3: Respond	<b>HD</b>	By Dec 2006 and then annually.		
<p>13. Ongoing training is encouraged to assist DHW staff and community members maintain a consistent level of understanding of DHW policy, their role as a HAM member and customer rights within the appeals mechanism.</p>	4: Reform	<b>HD</b>	31/12/06	<b>Report</b>	
<p>14. DHW is supporting a pilot program in Midland aimed at assisting Aboriginal households into private rental. It is anticipated that this program will mitigate any racism in accessing the private housing market.</p>	1: Build on best	<b>AH</b>	Ongoing		
<p>15. The feasibility of an integrated training and development program to provide a more holistic approach to equity and diversity training is currently being investigated.</p>	5: Training	<b>BS</b>	30/12/06		

<b>Theme 2 – Review policy to remove indirect discrimination</b>	<b>Workplan</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Status Nov 06</b>	<b>Status May 07</b>
<b>Item 2.0 – Operational policy reviewed to take account of discrimination and Indigenous customer needs</b>					
16. DHW is working with the EOC and other stakeholders to review policy from a substantive equality perspective to ensure it does not directly or indirectly disadvantage Aboriginal tenants, tenants with a disability, or tenants from emerging ethnic communities. It will work collaboratively with the Equal Opportunity Commission on how to address practices and policies identified as direct or indirect discrimination as well as discrimination hidden within business systems. It has contributed to the funding of a position in the EOC.	4: Reform	CD	31/12/06		
17. A Policy Review Working Group was established to assess how best to incorporate the Report's Recommendations into DHW Policy. The Group has reviewed the following operational policies: Eligibility, Waiting List, Accommodation Offer, Emergency Housing and Priority Assistance, Family and Domestic Violence, Rent to Income, Transfer policy, Tenancy Management and Anti-social Behaviour (changes are in Attachment 1).	4: Reform	HM	First review completed	Report	
18. DHW will provide the public with user-friendly copies of policy and processes applied so that decisions made are transparent, accessible and able to be readily explained	2: Communicate	ALL	Ongoing		
<b>Item 2.1 – Eligibility criteria take account of discrimination and Indigenous customer needs</b>					
19. DHW now makes special provision for Aboriginal people in terms of its criteria for proof of identity.	3: Respond	HM	complete		
20. It is clear that, for a minority of Aboriginal tenants, fulfilling the requirements of a tenancy is beyond their current capacity. These high need tenants with complex physical, psychosocial and addiction problems require specific support mechanisms best delivered by non-government providers and the Department of Community Development.	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
21. The DHW Eligibility policy has been reviewed by the Working Group and has been redrafted to clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conditions to be met by applicants with a poor tenancy history in order to rehoused; and</li> <li>- additional ways Aboriginal applicants can satisfy proof of identity requirements, including a letter from an elder.</li> </ul>	4: Reform	HM	First review completed	Report	
22. Applicants who are refused housing must be offered an interview to explain the decision, the applicant is to be encouraged to bring an advocate to the interview and be assessed for their ability to access alternative housing. If after this process the applicant is still refused housing the decision must reviewed by a more senior officer	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		

23. The review and reform agenda will consider ways in which cumulative needs can be taken into account in determining priority for housing.	4: Reform	RR	02/03/07		
<b>Item 2.2 – Waiting list and building program take account of discrimination/Indigenous customer needs</b>					
24. The DHW Annual Report 2004/05 demonstrates that the DHW building program reflects demand as demonstrated by the waiting list. In 2004-05 family applicants made up 5.7% of the waitlist and 60.8% of commencements were targeted to families. The Department monitors need compared to stock and will continue to monitor this	3: Respond	HD	6 monthly reports	Report	
25. A challenge for the Department is to have its family houses fully occupied. Currently one quarter of its large family houses are under occupied demonstrating a mismatch between the location of houses and where people want to live. While some family dwellings are under-occupied, some zones have under supply problems leading to wait times well above average.	3: Respond	HD	Quarterly reports	Report	
26. Acquisition of 119 new houses with 4 or more bedrooms commenced in 2005 /06.	1: Build on best	HD	Quarterly reports		
27. The redevelopment in Halls Creek will examine different ways of working and policy changes that are necessary to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. This involves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- refurbishment of 20 houses and creating four lots for new public rental units;</li> <li>- 12 lots for rental housing and ten lots on the airport land for GEHA</li> <li>- construction of 10 new dwellings in the three major town-based communities.</li> </ul>	1: Build on best	HD	Quarterly reports; 3 year program	\$12.2 million 4FTE	
28. The Department is examining ways in which increases in affordable housing to cater for all tenants can be achieved.	4: Reform	RR	01/12/06	To Min on 18/08/06	
<b>Item 2.3 – Allocation policy takes account of indirect discrimination</b>					
29. The use of judgment in determining which specific location a successful applicant is to be housed will always require discretion. If there has been systemic bias or discrimination in relation to this it is likely to have been due to the enduring legacy of past practice.	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
30. The need for Aboriginal tenants to have wider family or interfamily disputes taken into account in their placement and choice of location will be continued, as this is a culturally sensitive housing practice	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
31. New approaches to allocation policy will be incorporated within the review and reform program of the Department. (TBC)	4: Reform	RR	02/03/07		

### Item 2.4 – Emergency housing and priority assistance take account of indirect discrimination

<p>32. The Priority Assistance Policy has been reviewed and the following changes have been incorporated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A target of providing assistance within 3 months is included at 7.1;</li> <li>- Point 4 requires an interview to be conducted as soon as possible. 4.1 provides guidelines to the interviewing officer, two instructions have been added recognising that private rental may not be appropriate for larger Aboriginal families and the second recognises that Aboriginal cultural norms may preclude sharing of housing with some extended family members.</li> <li>- An additional guideline (4.2) has been added that allows priority applicants escaping domestic violence to be housed ahead of other priority applicants.</li> </ul>	4: Reform	HM	First review completed	REPORT and STATISTICS	
<p>33. DHW does not have a stock of housing specifically for priority applicants - priority allocations are made from the same pool of vacancies as wait turn applicants. An additional difficulty for the applicants is the dwellings are let unfurnished.</p>	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
<p>34. The Department endeavours to assist people within three months and applications are reviewed after three months if a priority client has not yet been assisted. Strategies can then be put in place to hasten assistance, such as looking at making offers in adjoining zones. Waiting times for priority applicants in 2003/04 ranged from 5 weeks in the Pilbara Region to 15 weeks in the North Metropolitan (Source: DHW Snapshots 2003/04).</p>	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing	Report	
<p>35. Non-government agencies that receive Independent Living Program or Accommodation Support Program funding can apply as an agency to Lotterywest for funding to purchase furniture. The Homeless Helpline refers people to emergency relief agencies for assistance with furniture and DHW will work to develop formal agreements with these agencies.</p>	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		

Item 2.5 – Rent to income policy takes account of indirect discrimination					
36. Market values are determined on the basis of data provided by the Valuer General's Office, this provides the Department with independent expert advice.	3: Respond	HD	Ongoing		
37. Any tenant who claims to have a nil income is assumed to be receiving the minimum relevant Centrelink benefit. When additional occupants are living with the tenants, their incomes are not taken into consideration when setting rent until they have been resident in the property for 8 weeks.  DHW recognises that there are a few cases of Aboriginal people, such as those normally resident in remote area Aboriginal communities, who may receive no income whatsoever until they are made aware of their entitlement to apply for a Centrelink benefit. DHW will refer such persons onto appropriate agencies and assume that they will tap into Centrelink benefits and review assessment processes so no clients are disadvantaged due to 'living on the land'.  CDEP recipients are not disadvantaged in comparison to Centrelink benefit recipients. Rent payable is calculated using the same formula. While DHW requires all new tenants who are Centrelink recipients to use the Centrelink Direct Deduction Scheme, there are no fees, charges, hidden expenses or requirement to visit to make payment.	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
38. Rent subsidies are provided to tenants on low incomes to ensure that no tenant pays more than 25 % of their income on rent. Only those who can afford to pay market rent, do so and market rent is the maximum rent that any tenant can be charged.  The income confirmation scheme is available to all tenants in receipt of a statutory income. This removes the requirement to obtain and return verification of income to the Department. Participation in this scheme reduces the likelihood of issues arising that could lead to problems.	3: Respond	HM/ HD	Ongoing		
39. Deductions for damages/tenant liability, water consumption and sundry costs are only made with the permission of the tenant. Tenants receive these accounts separately.	3: Respond	HM/ HD	Ongoing		
40. DHW understands tenants may be difficult to contact due to "sorry business", cultural and family practices (e.g. law time), and other factors. Some measure of leeway is given to tenants who fail to lodge forms (tenants receive several reminders before the subsidy ceases).	2: Communicate	HM	Ongoing		
41. DHW will investigate ways of communicating with tenants using local, regional and national Indigenous press and specific targeted newsletters (Social Justice Networks, Advocacy Groups, Prison News) to ensure that people are not indirectly discriminated due to a temporary transience (TBC)	2: Communicate	HM/ HD/ M			
42. The DHW acknowledges some Aboriginal tenants can be difficult to contact, as such, it will not backdate rent increases until at least two letters and a series of phone calls have failed to track down the tenant and eight weeks have passed since the first formal communication failed.(TBC)	2: Communicate	HM			

<b>Item 2.6 – Transfer of tenancy policy takes account of indirect discrimination</b>					
43. The Transfer Policy has been reviewed and the following changes made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The accommodation manager will assist the tenant to complete the Transfer Form and this can be done face to face in the tenant’s home, at the DHW Office or over the phone;</li> <li>- Allegations of anti-social behaviour will be investigated and must be substantiated before having any impact on a priority transfer; and</li> <li>- Debt to DHW will not be a barrier to priority transfer as long as the tenant agrees to an arrangement to repay the debt (see Eligibility Relating to Applicants with a Debt to Homeswest), this may include access to the debt discount scheme once transferred.</li> </ul>	3: Respond	HM	First review completed	REPORT and STATISTICS	
44. Domestic and family violence policy, eligibility policy relating to applicants with a debt (Preamble), Discretionary Decision Making Policy (Preamble) have all been changed to address the circumstances of tenants who may face life-threatening situations. DHW always has the option of exercising discretion in serious situations to ensure they are resolved positively	3: Respond	HM	Complete		
45. DHW always endeavours to ensure that the principles of natural justice are adhered to in all its dealings with clients. If a tenant disagrees with a charge they have the option of appealing.	3: Respond	HM	Complete		
<b>Item 2.7 – Tenancy management takes account of indirect discrimination</b>					
46. DHW conducts annual inspections and endeavours to visit each tenant twice a year. Inspections only occur more frequently where there are specific issues such as property standards or maintenance that needs to be resolved or at the request of the tenant themselves.	2: Communicate	HM	Complete		
47. DHW conforms to the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act in terms of the notice required prior to conducting an inspection.	<b>2: Communicate</b>	HM	Complete		
48. The Department is currently rolling out Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs - Pocket PCs) that will revise and standardise the creation of property condition reports and enable them to be printed in typed form rather than hand written as at present. The devices have the capacity to take digital photographs and these will be taken as necessary where defects are noted. Photocopies of photographs can be provided to tenants from the local office or they can simply view these at the office. Pre-vacation inspections will usually to be conducted with the tenant present and an advocate may also attend. All tenants are encouraged to take advantage of this service as well as keeping a copy of the original written report and viewing the original photographic report in order to minimise debate about potential tenant liability charges.	<b>2: Communicate</b>	HM	31/3/07		
49. DHW carries out emergency maintenance within 3 hours, priority maintenance within 48 hours and routine maintenance within 10 days.	<b>3: Respond</b>	HM	Ongoing		

50. DHW has acknowledged concerns and is considering structures to address the issue of the need to gain more technical expertise. Currently Accommodation Managers conduct all inspections; where technical expertise is required, building consultants are engaged to inspect, report and if necessary, provide a scope of works and supervise the repairs. The Department does, however, have specialist technical officers on staff to deal with plumbing and electrical issues. Both are fully qualified in their respective trades	<b>3: Respond</b>	HM	Ongoing		
51. As part of the process of improving the relevance of cross cultural communication training, case studies involving maintenance issues will be developed and included in the new training materials	<b>5: Training</b>	BS	30/06/07		
<b>Item 2.8 – Management of, and policy about, antisocial behaviour takes account of indirect discrimination</b>					
52. The Good Neighbour Policy will be reviewed in line with the DHW continuing to take a proactive approach to improve communities. DHW is looking at engaging other government departments and agencies to tackle anti social behaviour.	<b>3: Respond</b>	HM/ HD	Ongoing		
53. Currently, Cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism training is regularly conducted and is compulsory for all staff members. Resources for this are to be increased. Training program will include Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal perceptions of anti-social behaviour and nuisance.	<b>5: Training</b>	BS	30/06/07		

Theme 3 – Property management and administration without indirect discrimination	Work plan	Who	When	Status Nov 06	Status May 07
<b>Item 3.0 – Policy reviewed so that property is managed in a customer-centred manner</b>					
<p>54. Maintenance services provided by DHW includes a 7 day a week after hours emergency service.</p> <p>55. Technical specialists from central office inspect maintenance carried out to ensure adequate standards of work by contractors. Work is not offered to those who do not meet the standards required as per the contract. In general the only areas that can be multi-skilled are carpentry and painting services, so this approach will not hasten maintenance or repairs.</p> <p>56. The Department charges tenants only where property neglect misuse or wilful damage results in a loss.</p> <p>57. The Department has increased its maintenance budget by an additional \$5 million p.a. since 2003/04.</p> <p>58. Maintenance requests that do not comply with policy are stored in the Caretaker system under Maintenance Request Slip but this information has not been analysed. The new Complaints system should be used for concerns about the policy or the way in which it is implemented. (see 5 9).</p>	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
<p>59. In line with Government policy, the Department has installed a new complaints management system that has the capacity to record, analyse and report on all complaints received. Where a client request for maintenance is not entered on the maintenance data base because it does not accord with maintenance policies, and clients express concern about this, it should be registered as a complaint. Similarly, clients will be able to enter these complaints themselves on-line or in writing.</p> <p>Staff awareness of the need to register complaints will be included in induction training and subject of regular review.</p>	3: Respond	CD/ BS	Complete  Ongoing		
<p>60. A new tenant handbook will be available by December 2006 to inform tenants of their rights and responsibilities when they enter a lease.</p>	2: Communicate	HM	30/12/06		

<b>Item 3.1 – Tenant liability policy is reviewed/applied in a customer centred manner</b>					
61. The Department takes the ingoing condition of the property into account at the time of occupation and subsequent fair wear and tear.	3: Respond	HM	Complete		
62. Tenant liability is a common contributor to Indigenous tenants being evicted and later, can present a barrier to tenants with a prior history being rehoused. The Department will negotiate an affordable payment plan with applicants to pay off the tenant liability. This enables the applicant to be rehoused. Once the applicant pays half of the debt they are eligible to have the remaining debt waived under the Debt Discount Scheme.	3: Respond	HM /HD	Ongoing		
63. Tenant Liability accounts are to be reviewed so that all technical terms or abbreviations that may be unclear to a tenant are explained as part of the new "Plain English" approach to communication.  Refer also 5 4-5 8.	2: Communicate	HM	01/12/06		
<b>Item 3.2 – Appeal mechanisms allow for openness and fairness to Indigenous tenants or applicants</b>					
64. In October 2003 the Auditor General found that, "[t]he DHW Appeals Mechanism (HAM) lacks transparency and due process and is not consistently applied". (page 21).  The Department will review process on a continuous basis as part of its audit and monitoring role reporting initially on a 6 monthly basis and then annually	3: Respond	HD	Report 6 monthly		
65. HAM will be placed under a different area of DHW to the delivery arm to enhance transparency and independence.	3: Respond	HD	Complete		
66. Members from outside the Department already receive policy training and the Department will extend this to include cross cultural and anti racism training (see 1.5 for details of training offered to HAM members). A comprehensive training program is to be developed and delivered	5: Training	HD	31 Dec 2006		
67. The Department endeavours to deal with all appeals in a timely manner. The vast majority of appeals are completed in the policy timeframes. Appellants who engage a community based advocate may run over time.	3: Respond	HD	Report 6 monthly	Report	

<b>Item 3.3 – Administrative practices applied from Indigenous perspective, not commercial practice</b>					
68. The office of the State Ombudsman has worked constructively with DHW over many years, identifying administrative issues of concern on a case by case basis and recommending change where needed.	3: Respond	HM	Complete		
69. Formal advisory mechanisms for the Department are currently being reviewed. The Department will seek advice from the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council on the implementation of actions arising from this report.	2: Communicate	AH			
70. Data collection instruments are currently being updated so that the demographic field seeks a YES/NO response. This is expected to increase the likelihood that people will complete the field thereby improving the integrity of the data collected.	6: Monitor	HD	Report quarterly		
71. Information on client records should clearly indicate the extent to which negative comments have been validated. This concept will be included in induction training. (TBC)	5: Training	HM/ BS			
<b>Item 3.4 – Accommodation managers apply customer perspective first, then housing practice</b>					
72. DHW has recently reviewed all aspects of the Accommodation Manager's role in the Accommodation Manager's job task manual, giving equal weight to landlord responsibilities. This review has seen more Accommodation Managers and Senior Accommodation Managers appointed with enhanced career structures and more emphasis placed on enhanced customer service and cross-cultural awareness training. The review has also resulted in fewer properties per round for Accommodation Managers and a focus on customer service. Through the Review and Rebuild process, the DHW is redirecting resources to customer service and reviewing process, procedures and structures.	3: Respond	HM	Complete		
73. The new career path for Accommodation Managers is in the level 3 to 4 range. Accommodation Managers may progress to level 4, Senior Accommodation Managers, by completing at Cert IV in Social Housing which includes cross cultural training.	5: Training	HM	Complete		
74. Arrears and anti-social behaviour are factors not entirely outside the control of Accommodation Managers. Good debt management practices and fair and consistent application of the RTA can produce positive outcomes in these areas. DHW will continue to manage its tenancies responsibly but agree that measures designed to respond to and manage problematic tenancies should be rewarded and acknowledged as much as efforts to reduce debt.  DHW will consider how best to apply policy in a positive customer-centred way.	3: Respond	HM			

75. The DHW is actively recruiting Indigenous staff throughout the organisation and is establishing a mentoring project.	3: Respond	BS	30/09/06		
76. While DHW staff are required to attend Equal Opportunity Training approximately every 3 years, there does not appear to be any reporting on attendance or consequence of non-attendance. In addition, the training budget has insufficient to meet this target. The training budget is to be increased substantially in 2006/07 and other strategies to increase attendance will be identified.	5: Training	BS	30/06/07		
<b>Item 3.5 – Aboriginal staff supported and good recruitment of Indigenous staff carried out</b>					
77. It has been an Ongoing DHW objective to employ at least Aboriginal employees in 10% of its positions, as a step toward reflecting its customer base and has that since mid 1990's when it was originally set. Since 2002 percentage has not risen above 8.5 %.  The Department actively uses S5 0d of the Equal Opportunity Act. The Department's Recruitment Selection and Appointment Policies and Guidelines state - ... <i>a number of positions with the Department of Housing and Works have been designated 'Section 5 0' position and in these cases advertising may be targeted accordingly.</i> "	3: Respond	BS	Ongoing	REPORT	
78. The Department operates a mentoring program to support Aboriginal trainees. The Indigenous mentor program is a group of volunteers who provide support to trainees for as long as they need it. The group has been running for 3 or 4 years. New trainees are given profiles of the individual mentors and they make a choice about which mentor they would feel most comfortable with.	5: Training	BS	Ongoing		
79. An Aboriginal recruitment, retention and career development plan will be developed.	5: Training	BS	30/06/07		

<b>Item 3.6 – Property development/home design carried out so Indigenous need considered as good practice</b>					
80. DHW allocates capital works funds to reflect the proportion of Aboriginal clients seeking housing, that is, it targets its funding and services in accordance with demand. DHW targets its Capital Works Program to the areas of greatest demand and where waiting lists become excessive. This includes the provision of more five-bedroom houses to cater for large families for all West Australians. DHW are also looking at strategies to increase the supply of larger homes by addressing the issue of under occupation of existing 4 and 5 bedroom family properties.	1: Build on best	HD	Report quarterly	Report	
81. DHW proactively seeks and develops sites for the construction of well-located housing for young single people. As much as 30% of demand for public housing in some areas is from young single people. A major impediment to providing housing for young single people is the frequency of protests from local residents against the suitability of placing such housing in residential suburbs. A review of circumstances impeding development of seniors and singles housing will be carried out to inform any future consultation strategies that may emerge.	1: Build on best	HD	30/09/06		
<b>Item 3.7 – Review New Living Program</b>					
82. DHW housing is constructed within the confines of the Standard Design Brief.  No tenant is required to relocate without consent as part of a New Living Program. No tenant is forced to relocate and any tenant who elects to remain in a suburb undergoing redevelopment may do so. Those who move to others areas, do so at their own request. A review of this program is to be undertaken.	1: Build on best	HD	31/03/07	\$30 000 to \$40 000	
83. The review and reform agenda will consider strategies to increase access to affordable housing	4: Reform	RR	01/12/06	To Min on 18/08/06	

### Item 3.8 – Evolve support, advocacy, and specific accommodation programs for Aboriginal people

<p>84. Aboriginal Tenant Support (ATS) workers placed in some Regional Offices. These Workers are able to provide early intervention and have been successful in assisting many Indigenous tenants of DHW avoid eviction. Participation in programs designed to save a failing tenancy have an excellent success rate and are considered to be an important tool in saving failing tenancies and preventing homelessness or bad tenancy behaviour being shifted to another area. DHW funds the Aboriginal Tenant Support Service.</p>	2: Communicate	AH	Ongoing	\$4m pa	
<p>85. DHW will reserve the right to make participation in a support program compulsory in some cases where a tenant has a history of problem tenancy or tenancies.</p>	2: Communicate	HM	Ongoing	Report	
<p>86. DHW understands that the level of home ownership remains below levels that would lead to major improvement in life outcomes for Aboriginal people in WA. DHW fully informs clients of the costs involved in home ownership as part of the application and approval process. The Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme is managed by a senior Aboriginal officer and has an emphasis on not placing clients in housing poverty.</p>	1: Build on best	HD	Quarterly report	Report	
<p>87. The role of the Helpline is to achieve housing outcome by a variety of means, not just via the direct provision of accommodation. The Homeless Helpline is operated by DHW on a 24-hour basis. The Help Line commenced in May 2001, and provides a direct, freecall access point for people who are sleeping rough.</p> <p>The Helpline operates in conjunction with the Salvation Army Careline, which deals with after-hours calls and the Crisis Care Line run by the Department of Community Development. The Homeless Helpline coordinates the collection of client particulars, liaises with welfare and government agencies and works directly with the Department's regional offices, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services and private operators to secure shelter or support for homeless people as quickly as possible. However, the SAAP NDC, Unmet Demand for SAAP Services from homeless people 2003/04 Report, demonstrated that in WA during the survey period, 73% of homeless people trying to access SAAP were turned away because of insufficient accommodation.</p>	3: Respond	HM	Ongoing		
<p>88. Improving housing for Aboriginal people is a priority for the Department and Key Performance Indicators will be developed.</p>	1: Build on best	HD & AH/ BS			

## OUTCOMES OF POLICY REVIEW

### Eligibility Policy Preamble

The report recommended that the interests of the child should be paramount in all decision-making in accordance with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Australia's commitment to this International Convention means DHW is bound to incorporate this principle into its decision-making where it may affect a child.

### Eligibility Policy Relating to the Proof of Identity of an Applicant

The documents required to prove identity have been expanded to include ' A letter from any reputable person (e.g a doctor) or elder who is able to confirm identity' ( s 21).

This recommendation makes it easier for Aboriginal applicants to provide identity as it is sometimes difficult or impossible for Aboriginal applicants to provide the documents listed in the policy in categories A, B and C;

### Eligibility Relating To An Applicant With A Previous Tenancy History With Homeswest- Such as Debt, Antisocial Behaviour, Previous Property Standards

The policy has been amended to include that applicants:

- will be offered an interview if an adverse decision is going to be made; and
- are encouraged to bring an advocate to the interview.

Also added to the policy is that the interviewing officer is to assess the applicant's current circumstances and their ability to access alternative housing options. A refusal decision is then to be reviewed by the Regional Manager. This process ensures tenants' circumstances are considered in their entirety before a final decision is made to refuse assistance. A list of alternative options has also been included in the policy to help applicants who may be refused DHW assistance.

## **Waiting List Management Policy**

Preamble updated to clarify that 'the next client on the waiting list is offered the next available suitable property.' This clarifies current practice.

A dot point has been added to s 7.2 to include that frequent changes of address may be a reason to reinstate an application which was previously withdrawn. This is to ensure tenants who move frequently are not disadvantaged.

## **Allocations Policy**

Clearer definitions of 'valid offer' and a 'valid decline' of a property have been added into s 8,8.1 and 9 and 9.2. This helps to clarify the intent of current policy. The inquiry also recommended that a valid refusal for accommodation for victims of domestic violence should be that the property lacks security. Given this is a reasonable decline in the circumstances the working group concur this should be in the policy at s 9.2.

## **Priority Assistance Policy**

S 4.1 has been amended to guide decision makers to consider that private rental or sharing with family and friends may not be a viable option for some Aboriginal applicants. This ensures individual circumstances and cultural factors are considered when making decisions on priority assistance.

An update to s 7.2 means victims of domestic violence may be assisted ahead of other priority applicants. This aims to help people whose safety is at immediate risk.

Applicants with a prior debt to DHW or previous breaches of tenancy may have conditions placed on their prospective tenancy before assistance or a transfer is approved. S19.2 has been added to the policy to ensure that when negotiating a payment arrangement for an outstanding debt, with people transferring for serious and significant reasons such as domestic violence; the negotiation should be favourable to the applicant.

Under the existing priority policy a tenant approved for a priority transfer may formally vacate their tenancy and retain their priority listing date ( s25 ) . Recent approval was given to update this section to reflect that where a tenant's life or safety is at risk they will be able to vacate the property and retain the original priority listing date. The s 80 enquiry recommended this be available for victims of domestic violence however the recent change expands this to all tenants whose safety is at risk.

## **Transfer Policy**

The transfer policy has been re written to be easier to follow and read and also includes further detail about cross transferring. The changes for this were approved some months ago. The EOC inquiry recommended also that the policy should include that the listing date for a transfer is the date of initial contact; the application must be made in writing and that the Accommodation Manager can assist with completing the application form. This recommendation has been inserted into the transfer policy at s 9.1.